



**This year our opening week coincides with CTBI's Climate Sunday
Various different churches will have all sorts of materials available.
We hope that what we are able to present will promote prayer, thought,
and action.**

6TH SEPTEMBER: WEEK 1:

Prayers:



Rev'd Andy Braunston

**is a URC minister, working with a group pastorate
South of Glasgow.**

**Andy co-ordinates online 'Daily Devotions' for the
United Reformed Church. This project grew hugely
in scope during the 'lockdown' crisis this year.
A DD audio service has been prepared for this Sun-
day.**

Call To Worship

**The Creator of the Universe calls us to leave the darkness behind and live in
the light.**

**Our Lord Jesus Christ who lived and died and rose again greets us this day.
The One who danced at Creation's birth calls us now into His presence.
So come let us worship.**

Prayers of Approach, Confession and Pardon

**O God,
you adorn the poor**

binding rulers in chains
and allowing the people to rejoice;
rise up O God anew,
adorn your creation,
bind all that seeks to destroy it,
that we may not perish but live.

O God,
often it seems we have to eat bitter herbs
as the Angel of Death has not passed over us;
we grieve those who have died from Covid 19,
lives lost from all over our land,
old and young, fit and frail,
care-worker and bus driver, nurse and doctor.

As we grieve we have to accept:
our complicity,
our failure to plan,
our failure to learn the lessons,
our failure to care for our world,
and our failure to treat nature and animal life with respect.

Forgive us, good Lord,
and help us to turn our sorrow into action,
our failure into change,
our guilt into grace.

pause

God, the source of all mercy,
has sent the Holy Spirit amongst us
for the forgiveness of sins,
the equipping of the saints
and the fine tuning of our hearts.
Know that you are forgiven,
know too that you, with all of humanity,
need to use the grace of forgiveness
to be an energy of change. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Sometimes, O God,
Your Word is hard for us.

Sometimes, O God,
we don't want to hear You.
Sometimes, O God,
we'd rather sing our nice hymns,
pray our comforting prayers,
and turn away from what You require.
Send Your Holy Spirit,
that we may turn to You,
in Word read and proclaimed,
that we may listen, understand, change and obey.
Amen.

Blessing

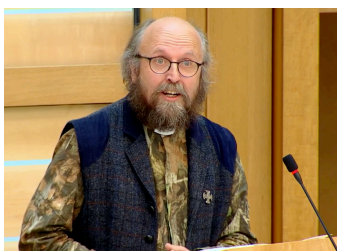
May the One who adorns the poor,
binds the rulers,
and causes the people to rejoice,
adorn you with love,
bind all that seeks evil,
and give you cause to rejoice
and the blessing of Almighty God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you,
and all whom you love,
now and ever more
Amen.

or

...and the blessing of Almighty God,
the Three-in-One
be with you,
and all whom you love,
now and ever more
Amen.

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Framework for prayer of Intercession in Creation Time



Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland.

Things are changing so fast that particular pressing concerns cannot be anticipated. Thus a framework is offered, which can see us through the Season of Creation, and give continuity.

Let us pray with Christ:

God, who makes us with the Earth
God, who gives us to the world
God; God-with us in our struggles:

**Hear us, stand with fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.**

for the world

*What have we heard, in the news this week?
Who is in need and who should give thanks?
How far have we got, and where have we stumbled?*

*And what seems completely beyond us?
Listen for Earth's voice: what is it saying?
We remember our neighbours, of whatever species
We pray for our enemies, and those we fear.
And pray for peace throughout Creation.*

**Hear us, stand with fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.**

for the church

*Give thanks for the faithfulness, undergirding prayer.
Be open about continuing divisions, including local ones.
Look to a greater integration of environmental concern in our life and work.
And seek openness to the joy of deeper fellowship with all Creation*

**Hear us, stand with fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.**

for ourselves

*In silence: bring to God what no one else need hear: not for God to 'hear'
but to remind ourselves that God knows and understands.*

*Pray for those we pray with, acknowledging and respecting
what they cannot share with us.*

*Look for support and perseverance,
and some sustaining sign when we get things right.*

*Pray for 'impatience' - not simply to accept 'the way things are'
And pray for peace in our heart, and the fuller joys of Christ.*

**Hear us, stand with fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.
AMEN**

Exodus 12:1-14:



Patsy Thomson:

Warden of Lay Readers for Moray, Ross & Caithness Diocese of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Initial comment:

The food shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat it .

Fair shares. The meal is eaten in community. Nothing is wasted.

We can recognise that this may be difficult passage for pacifists and vegetarians. Other folks will have significant challenges elsewhere! Here, in the devotional life of God's people we encounter whole-scale slaughter and blood. Firstborn animals struck down as well as humans .

As we encountered earlier in the year, when people are under pressure, Times and Seasons still give shape to our lives . Here. Passover is declared to be Day One of Year One .

Freedom beckons . We can resolve to start afresh - begin to treat creation differently. Sharing resources, acting inclusively and responsibly - not forgetting our ongoing need for memorials and community rituals to mark our salvation and liberation and our ongoing need to recommit to caring for creation, Sunday by Sunday, season by season.

Scripture Passage overview

The commandments begin with instructions about time, identifying that the current month will henceforth signify the beginning of the year for the Israelites. When the Israelites are no longer locked down as slaves, they will be able to take control of their time in ways they could not have done previously. The new year also signifies the start of a new way of life, when God will have redeemed the people from Egypt. These are communal commandments addressed **“to all the congregation of Israel”** (Exodus 12:3) When they share the feast of the Passover together, people strengthen ties. Verse 11 explains how the Israelites are to eat their meat, with sandals on, loins girded, and a staff in hand: ready to move. This first Passover was not an end in itself but the beginning of a new way of living and being.

In the Abrahamic faiths, chronological reckoning begins from what is considered the decisive point in history after which nothing remains the same. In Christendom, with the birth of Christ; in the Islamic world the Hijra, Muhammed's flight from Mecca; in Judaism it begins here, at the deliverance out of Egypt. Chronological reckoning began at that point where God was perceived to begin creating a community of redemption. In addition to experiencing God's redemption, Israel becomes the people of God by memorialising it in a ritual for the sake of later generations who were not there to experience for themselves the transformation from slavery to freedom, from death to life.

This text is also appointed for Maundy Thursday each year. The Gospel record conspicuously associates the death of Jesus with this Passover memorial, and churches often refer to this in Communion/Eucharistic services. In the New Covenant way of memorialising, the death of Jesus is woven into the memory of divine action bringing deliverance. As in Egypt, we exist in this world as the people of God not solely by virtue of the death of Jesus, but also in our re-membering of it; of bringing together what should not be apart.

The Israelites' escape from Egypt is a well-known story - breaking free from Pharaoh's control it suggests the freedom to become a new people. In Exodus 12:1-14 the rite of passage begins with the Israelites' status as slaves to Pharaoh (their old identity), advances to a period of preparation for the next stage ("liminality" - or being in transition), and concludes with crossing over into a new status as the people of God (their new identity). They are still in the land of Egypt on the verge of departure, so freedom is only a future hope.

The occasion is fraught with danger and uncertainty and possibility.

The emphasis is both on God's salvation from bondage / shielding from death, and also the response of the community: they are to prepare for a journey (12:11). The saved community must be ready to go, must be prepared for a trek that will move through difficult terrain (12:11).

PSALM 149



John Collings :

lay preacher in the United Reformed Church,

Trustee of EcoCongregation Scotland, and Secretary of URC Church & Society Committee in Scotland

This Psalm is almost in two halves. The first is easy to read as it is full of rejoicing and joy and resonates with our modern idea of a kind and just God. The second section is far more difficult to read in modern times as it talks of vengeance and punishment, concepts that are alien to people today. Or if not alien, we avoid talk of them. Some people believe it was written to celebrate some great victory, possibly when David had taken the stronghold of Zion (2 Samuel 5:7.) We may find the idea of v6 strange: how can we praise God while holding a weapon of war?

Looking at the great changes in the psalm can remind us of how our relationship with creation has changed. We can look back through history when we lived in harmony with nature. The victory that this psalm was written about was during the bronze age and at that time there was no wholesale destruction of the earth. People lived far more in harmony with nature and mining for copper and tin were on a small scale.

The second part is far more like the situation since the industrial revolution. We could be described as being at war with the creation with pollution, emissions, massive mines for a variety of minerals, plants fed artificial fertilisers. Wars usually end - eventually, though it takes a lot of work to end a war. People need to accept that things have to change; to agree terms and eventually to live at peace together. We can do this with creation if we are willing to listen to the groaning of the world. We need to stop the war by reducing

emissions, considering the environment is every decision that we make and get back to the start of the psalm and “Sing to the LORD a new song” of freedom from the fear of rising oceans and climate chaos.

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Ezekiel 33.7–11



Hannah Brown.

Campaigns and Church Engagement Officer for the Joint Public Issues Team. (In which the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church consider matters of justice and peace).

This passage comes from the prophet Ezekiel, called by God to be a prophet to the people of Israel. The early part of Ezekiel 33 offers an image of the prophet as a ‘sentinel’ (33: 7). A sentinel was a guard, employed to stand and keep watch over the city. Their role was to warn the people if danger was imminent. The sentinel was not responsible for whether the people took heed of the warning and responded well. Their task was simply to blow the trumpet and warn the people – the people’s response was in their own hands. It is in this context that we see Ezekiel’s message of warning to the people of Israel.

The passage can be split into two parts. Firstly, verses 7-9 hears God telling Ezekiel his role. If he shares the message God sends him and the people do not respond, it is their fault. If he does not share the message and the people are placed in danger, then Ezekiel is to blame.

Secondly, verses 10-11 set out the message that God wants Ezekiel to pass on. He articulates the collective guilt of the people of Israel – they have realised their sins, and believe that their struggles are connected to their transgression (v10). In response, Ezekiel emphasises God’s desire for renewal and redemption. God cares much less for the punishment of the wicked than for the renewal of those who see their sin and turn towards a different journey. It is this call, therefore, to turn back to God that Ezekiel shares with the people of Israel.

Splitting the passage into these two sections helps us to consider the different messages that can be drawn. In the first few verses, the reader can more easily position themselves in the shoes of Ezekiel. What is our role in sharing the warnings we hear from creation's cries, as we witness the effects of the climate crisis and other injustice? What role does the church have to play in standing watch over creation, and calling the people of God to response when danger threatens our communities?

The second part of the passage enables us to position ourselves as the people of Israel, as we both hear and respond to the cries of warning. Who are the sentinels – the prophets – standing watch and sharing warning that danger is coming our way today? Do we listen to their cry? Furthermore, how do we respond? The cry of the people in verse 10 suggests that the danger is not only coming from outside of the city walls but within. Where is our collective guilt, in accepting responsibility for the dangers before us? And when we realise this, what should our response be? Positioning ourselves here as we read the passage also gives us the chance to hear and receive God's merciful response, and the call to renewal as a way forward.

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PSALM Psalm 119.33–40



Richard Murray:

Lay reader in the Scottish Episcopal Church

Psalm 119 is an alphabetic acrostic, (a poem in which the first letter of each line spells out a word, message or alphabet) in which its 176 verses are divided into stanzas of eight verses, each of which begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This mathematical cleverness was a common wisdom teaching aid, partly to catch our attention and partly to aid memory in public or private recitation.

Its aim was to provide instruction in the faith and how to live well, through adherence to the Torah, the law (and moral will) of God, for the safety and well-being of all. (As in our call to collaborate with lockdown this year).

As is common in the Hebrew language the same word may have different meanings, each to be interpreted in context, so 'torah' usually translated as law can refer to a decree, precept, statute, commandment, ordinance, word, or promise. The Psalmist seeks to persuade the readers or listeners to lead their lives in a particular way, or walk particular path, with a spiritual buoyancy; finding the conduct that will lead to living in the 'right way'.

None of these verses contain specific injunctions invoking the Ten Commandments, the laws in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Rather, 'torah' is here presented as a way of life that brings one closer to God.

The Psalmist makes number of petitions, 'teach' , 'give me understanding,' 'lead me' , 'turn my heart' etc. The word 'fear' (v.38) appears many times in the Bible and some people have a problem with it. Does it mean we should be frightened or intimidated by God? Or does it mean we hold God in awe and wonder. Or, does it mean simply that we should treat God with utmost seriousness? Fear, therefore, is about attentiveness towards God. As Proverb 1.7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

So what wisdom and instruction should we seek to deal with the climate emergency? Clearly, we need to consume less and choose more low-carbon alternatives. If we eat less meat and consume more greens this should lead us to a healthier lifestyle. Giving up flying is a bold decision but rectifies the gap between our values and actions. Redemptive actions can get the attention of family and friends, yet, ultimately, can have a virulent effect in our communities. We need a new acrostic: simple to understand, easy to follow.

Our God is not a God of arbitrary rules and regulations. God gave the Israelites a means for living as God's people, not to restrict them, but to free them to be the people of God. We too are looking for a fresh start, freed from the bondage of a consumerist lifestyle of vain imaginings in a shop window or on-line screen. We too need to implore God to teach, give, lead, and turn us in subtle ways so that we can become faithful servants, creative collaborators with God and each other, if we are to avoid the 'disgrace' that we dread.

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Romans 13.8–14

Rev Alex Mabbs:



URC Minister Brighthelm Centre, deeply involved, for many years, with environmental spirituality & issues.

Urgency is no cause to set aside justice: quite the contrary.

In verse 8, Paul continues his theme of paying your dues from verse 7, which itself moves from debts of money to debts of virtue (respect and honour). Verse 8 repeats but deepens this same structure, with love being the ultimate (and only) debt to remain. It may be that Paul has in mind the encouragement of the Lord's Prayer to forgive debts. Any money-based economy is built on debt; perhaps Paul is arguing for a changed basis for our life together, where love is the top priority and all else is built on that love for others. Verses 8-10 recall Jesus in Luke 18.18ff, where he uses the first three of these commandments, in the same order, and then goes on to tell the rich ruler to sell all his possessions and give to the poor.

Time and again, the bible writers insist on applying faith to finance.

These verses also recall the words of Jesus in Matthew 22.34-40, in which Jesus sums up the law and the prophets in two commandments to love: loving God and loving neighbour. Jesus there says that all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments and here Paul says that love for neighbour fulfils the law. Neither Paul nor Jesus seem to argue for replacing the law's specific commandments with an alternative ethic of love. Rather, love is the rationale for the law, whose commandments show how love can be expressed not just for a few neighbours but for all, including justice and care for the poorest, for animals and even for the land, addressing life from every angle, including the sabbatical commands concerning debt and the structure of the economy (e.g. Leviticus 25). That is why love is the fulfilment of the law.

Verses 11-14 inject a sense of urgency. Paul hasn't written this letter for endless discussion, or for referral to a committee, to report years ahead. It's a call to action now: to live the life of Jesus today. It's a call to live out our new lives in Christ as if his day had already dawned. Verses 12 and 13 have this sense of living as if in daylight while the night has not yet passed, letting our lives now be shaped by our hope in the world to come. There are echoes here of 8.9-17, where the Spirit gives us, now, the life of the resurrection as children of God and joint heirs with Christ of the glory that is to come. Verse 14 may help us understand how we can do this. The instruction to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' is similar to that in Galatians 3.27 where baptism clothes us with Christ. Paul's language in these verses may indicate a daily spiritual practice of clothing oneself with Christ and his light. Surely the alternative of gratifying the desires of the flesh (v.14), including holding onto grudges and debts, is how we end up in a climate and environmental crisis.

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Matthew 18.15–20

Mike Mineter

Mike is a Roman Catholic, a member of the Iona Community; passionate about connecting with wilderness, as a grounded sea kayaker he is now giving overdue attention to his garden. He works as an expert in computing for climate research at the University of Edinburgh.

There are times when the Bible gets approached as an instruction book: we find the bit we want, the verses that resonate with our prejudice or political aims, and with a triumphant "Aha!" feel vindicated. The need for a more nuanced approach is well-known, including a) allowing for development of understanding within the Bible; b) seeing verses in the wider context of revelation in the whole Bible; c) alertness to the context when a text was written and d) allowing the Spirit to speak through the Bible into our own contexts. As I look at this passage following these tracks, a warning light is flashing... I write this sitting alone (in lockdown)... This passage itself says that true wis-

dom comes in the gathered community, and discernment comes with the presence of Christ where two or more are together. It is then that the community can discern what is destructive or creative; the latter discernment leading into their prayer and other actions.

This passage is written from the early Church, a community sometimes having to deal with wrongdoers. Expelling someone as “a pagan or a tax collector” echoes the Jewish culture of those times..... after all these are the marginalised people whom Jesus had chosen to move among. We see in Acts and the Epistles how the early Church had difficulties reconciling their Judaism with the experience that the Spirit was also given to all people.

In this text the goal is to restore the wrongdoer to the community, to restore relationship. The wrongdoing is not specified as being against the person identifying the need for correction. It might be, or the harm might be done to the community or its resources, or its ability to sustain itself or to be missionary disciples.

In our times, we have been forced to a new and wonderfully enriched view of our own core relationships: we are a part of a glorious yet vulnerable Earth, a gift to all people. It is to the poor, to future generations, to the Earth’s ability to sustain healthy life and to its inherent preciousness that so much current wrongdoing does harm. The wrongdoers are often not individuals – but international corporations and global economic structures. Where is the forum that can hold these to account? The UN and International Criminal Court are undermined and attacked by isolationist, self-seeking powers. Can we challenge governments so that these organisations are reinvigorated, given effective power, and protected? We should also hold corporations to account, including by morally responsible investment, demanding corporations repair the damage they cause. Such action is vital, but not enough.

This passage might prompt us to reassess our own relationships including with the Earth. It invites us to join together in commitment to pray for and with creation; to live more simply, and to discern how we can advocate and act to protect our common home [2].

Refs

[1] John McKenzie, Jerome Biblical Commentary 43:128

[2] The “Laudato Si” pledge, <http://livelaudatosi.org/>

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Sermon ideas

(Three suggestions for this first week: pick what works best for you)



1)Rev David Coleman
Environmental Chaplain with EcoCongregation
Scotland,
Member of the Iona Community,

As we begin this year's Creation Time/Season of Creation, turning in faith to the various readings, we discover how love, forgiveness and faithfulness are utterly prominent in the calling of humanity to be partners with the rest of Creation, the fellow participants in God's Covenant. We don't need to dig for 'green references' in a Bible immersed in the life and the care of the Earth, "in which Christ became incarnate" (Iona Community Communion service).

'Seasons' have given us regularity, though seasons, even when reflected in ceremony, are not confined to dates in a diary. The disruption of migration, growing, and harvest seasons prompts us to a greater respect for the fragility of everything we might have taken for granted - our traditional interpretation of the Scriptures included, along with the 'eternity' of the rocks and the seas. In Exodus 12, regulations clearly designed for the long haul, are nonetheless clearly designed to mitigate against complacency: the tradition is observed by the trappings of urgency, rather than or relaxed reassurance. A very valuable learning point for our day and age.

Whilst we always learn from the Scriptures, this needs to include the freedom to be outraged by the gleeful unforgiveness of Psalm 149, even when 'the poor are adorned with victory'. Under no circumstance should followers of Christ feel an obligation to hatred, 'because it says so in the Bible'.

The love of the 'Law' in Psalm 119 needs also to be taken carefully. 'Torah' is the moral will of God, and thus reminder (2 Corinthians 3) that that 'the letter kills, the Spirit gives life' is not inconsistent with a thoughtful and discerning approach even to the most revered of texts: indeed, this is the way they are best honoured, rather than in crass, 'blind' following. Romans 13: "The one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

A thread of responsibility runs through the passages: but not the responsibility of rulers undergirded by coercive power. For Ezekiel, the predicament of the prophet is this: that without power or authority, nonetheless, they bear responsibility for speaking out and warning their fellow citizens of danger.

That survival and rehabilitation is more important to God than following through the results of self-destructive decisions is a valuable message.

Then, finally, in the Gospel “manual for church order” of Matthew 18, the value of responsible witnesses, as well as of seeking to avoid the escalation of divisive situations is placed before us here.

Climate science offers a **testimony** which we can take note of or ignore. There’s also a sting in the tail for the complacent here, in the instruction to treat offenders” as a Gentile and a tax-collector” - that is, as those in particular need of support to change their mind and ways. The aim is always reconciliation, not exclusion.

Globally, we don’t have anywhere else to go; nowhere to send our offenders away to.

And might we be these offenders?



2) Patsy Thomson:
Ordinand: in training for ministry in the Scottish Episcopal Church

(Maybe we need to be aware of the centrality of sacrificial meals in the culture in which the Bible arose, which made sacrifice so central to Jewish and Christian memorial imagery. Of course, this would currently be controversial, recognising the cultural dissonance for many)

Where and how are God’s people and God’s creation enslaved today ? Who is Pharaoh? What ‘plagues’ people and environments? And what might we learn from the experience of this year? Keep an eye on the news. What are the dangers and uncertainties we face ? How can we gird up our individual and community loins and start on a journey of liberation? How to we leave our old identity (gung-ho wasteful exploiters of the planet, obsessed with GDP) and prepare in these liminal times for a new identity as thoughtful , sustainable earth citizens attuned to the needs of all God’s creation? How do we learn, in the way that Pharaoh tried not to?

Concentrating on a sense of unjust entrapment of peoples and marine and animal landlife can lead us to find examples of disempowered, vulnerable populations and places very much at risk of the plague of floods, fires and natural disasters (which the press routinely describes as being “of Biblical proportions”). You could ask your congregation what are the plagues they see in the world and environment around them? overconsumption and waste, plastic and pollution, homelessness and inequality? mental illness and addiction?

We are people of Easter hope who stand ready to be delivered. Ready to start on Day One of a New Year. Ready to commit to changes in how we live. How can we work alongside God to create a community of redemption among us? What are do-able small changes for us as we set off, from this church service on our journey. Offer some examples of how we can recycle more, reuse more, reduce our individual and church carbon footprint. Though these are encouragements, rather than ‘badges of office’. Every Sunday we remember God’s love for all creation, God’s grace in redeeming us, God’s gift of a new start.



3) From Hannah Brown
Campaigns and Church Engagement Officer for the Joint Public Issues Team.

The climate crisis is one of the starkest warnings we have ever heard as a global community. Whilst the warning signs have been growing for decades, the science and the stories of those on the frontline of environmental change have been getting stronger and clearer by the month. Reading Ezekiel 33:7-11 in

this light invites us to consider how we hear and respond to this collective threat.

From the different perspectives the passage offers us, we can hear different messages. Firstly, the role of the prophet. It is not the prophet’s job to shape how people respond. In fact, as we know from later in the passage, this is the work of God, who offers partnership in renewal and response. But the prophet has a responsibility to share the call of danger with the people, that they might hear and realise their own place within it.

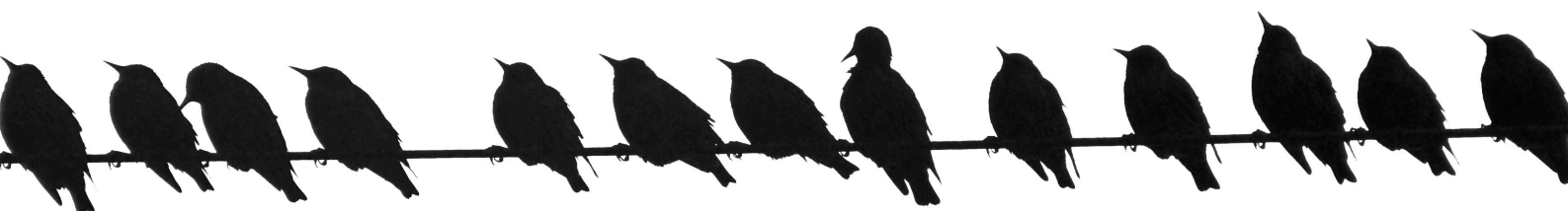
As the Church, a global body with brothers and sisters around the world feeling acutely the impact of the climate crisis, what is our role in sharing this message? If we have begun to highlight this issue – are we doing enough? The warning to Ezekiel from God is clear – this is a heavy responsibility. He must play his part in moving the people to change.

But he realises God's part also – to offer mercy. As the Church speaks out alongside the other prophets of our time warning us of the dangers of the climate crisis, how can we make sure this message of mercy is heard too? Next, we step into the shoes of the people of Israel, hearing the warning of the prophet. The prophet has stood watch, and has heard from God the warnings of danger for the community.

Who are our prophets today? From whom have we heard the warnings of the climate crisis? Is could be communities in the global south, on the frontline of the climate crisis and feeling its effects acutely. Where has their vulnerability to disaster been a warning that our global community was at risk? Has it been activists, who have been campaigning on this issue for years? New voices such as Greta Thunberg's might have broken through the noise, but have we heard what they have to say?

Or, is creation itself the prophetic voice we need to hear? Should we be listening to the pain of wildfires, flooding, tsunamis and earthquakes? The passage not only calls us to hear these prophets, but respond. The cry of the people of Israel is a collective one. It suggests that the danger these prophets warn of is one in which we are all complicit. We waste away because of our transgressions and sins. Looking at the climate crisis, how is this a call to realise and lament our own part in this threat to creation?

However, the passage does not leave us here. God responds to the cries of Israel with mercy. God expresses no delight in punishment for those who do not respond to their own guilt – he does not offer 'dead end' solutions. Instead, God is more interested in repentance and renewal. Through the prophetic warning and realisation of danger, God offers an invitation for change. How might we take this up today, in the light of the climate crisis?



MUSIC AND PRAISE

It is likely that your regular hymnbook or source will have an index relating to scripture. These suggestions, including a new hymn poem each week, should supplement such resources. Bear in mind, that within the framework of environmentally aware worship, not every item may need to explicitly mention trees, earth, soil, etc, though an introduction, explaining to a congregation that “world” really does mean “the whole world/living creation” may often be helpful.

The setting and presentation of worship will help “bells ring” for congregations as they discover the deep immersion of the language of faith and scripture in our partnership with Creation whilst also being part of Creation. Allow for surprise and delight that this also includes older and traditional hymns.

1) ***Spirit of God, unseen as the wind***, by Margaret V. Old, 1932-2001.

-Set to the Skye Boat Song, this connects scripture and the guidance of the Spirit with the need for urgent change.

Source: e.g. CH4 600

2) ***Whoever lives beside the Lord***, by John L. Bell..

A setting of Psalm 91 (though you may like to look for settings of the psalms above) which does not deny the threats that we face, though looks to God’s solidarity in the midst of it all.

Source: e.g. Common Ground 146, Psalms of Patience, Protest & Praise (Wild Goose, also on CD)

3) ***Teach me, my God and king, in all things thee to see***, by George Herbert

An insightful poem, emphasising the dignity, and the equivalence with prayer, of small steps of commitment and action.

Source: e.g. *Rejoice & Sing* 538

4) ***My life flows on in endless song*** By Robert Lowry (1822-1899) & Doris Plenn. A very spiritual and enjoyable song, acknowledging the “lamentation” of the earth. This is the spirituality we need to face the crises in which we are mired.

Source: e.g. *CH4* 565

5) ***For the fruits of all creation***, by Fred Pratt Green. Though this harvest hymn is clearly written before consciousness of the current environmental crises, the expression of gratitude, and an appreciation of the magnitude of the task of caring, should be encouraging. Take ‘neighbour’ a wee bit wider than just your human neighbour.

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New writing: Hymn poem.

For Climate Sunday: (September 6th this year)

Now Christ lives here as he promised

The promise of Jesus to prepare a place where his friends can be with him (John 14:3) need not be taken by default as being ‘post-mortem’: ‘Where Christ lives’ is in the midst of Community, engaged in friendship and partnership with Creation.

Festivals and ‘special’ days, like Climate Sunday, with which this year’s Creation time will begin, rightly help deepen our faith and commitment.

Tune laid out here to go with the tune ‘Courage, brother, do not stumble’ (CH4 513) otherwise 8787D E.g. Blaenwern, .Abbot’s Leigh, Beach Spring, Converse. Choose a tune which really carries your congregation.

1) Now Christ lives here
as he promised,
having once prepared the place:
Now we live as kingdom people

shaped, re-shaped at frightening pace;
Now, whilst still we live and struggle
Justice and Earth's voice speak loud
Now immersed in this day's trouble
Humble friends **[3x]** of Christ are proud!

2) Now the scriptures find their meaning:
told, re-told, refined by toil.
Choking air may yet be fragrant;
Fertile our degraded soil
Now the teaching we have sidestepped:
Love for all we can't evade:
Grace, forgiveness sets us free, in
joy to live **[3x]** as *Jesus prayed*.

3) Now and for our lives remaining;
Laurels offer feeble rest.
Times and seasons shape commitment
By immediacy blessed.
Be not tempted by 'Good Old Days'
Now, the days of Christ are best
Christ incarnate in Earth's family
Flesh and blood, **[3x]** God, manifest.

4) Yeast in dough and shining city
Salt for Earth and light for all
Not as domineering tyrants
but as friends for this long-haul!
Every day, the chance to follow
Not one step we walk in vain;
Green our God is, sending Spirit:
energy **[3x]** from buried grain.