27TH SEPTEMBER: WEEK 4:

Prayers.

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Notes

These prayers are based on motifs and themes found in the lectionary readings (and their alternates) for Proper 21 (Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost). I have tried to write them in a way which will work with whichever of the OT readings are used. The thing that struck me as I read these texts was that they all, in some way or other, relate to foundational stories - the things which (knowingly or unknowingly) inform and shape our sense of who we are whether as individuals, families, political or religious groupings. Many of the huge issues with which we are grappling in 2020 - climate change and the emergence of Covid19 among them - deeply challenge some of the narratives which we take as ‘givens’ and ask us to reflect critically on whether they are helpful, necessary, or indeed even true - and whether we need to reimagine the world and our own identity and actions within it. Just as the Gospel does in fact!

Practicalities

In the opening prayer I have split the responding voices into two. In view of the fact that dividing responders according to a Male/Female binary can be seen as excluding, I have simply labelled these V1 and V2 but the responders can be divided by different criteria as appropriate. Similarly I have given ‘their’
and ‘they’ as alternative personal pronouns to ‘he’ and ‘his’ with respect to God.

In the prayer of approach there is an additional optional line which can be used if the service involves Communion.

In the assurance of forgiveness I have offered two possible options: in one the payer is said by the whole congregation and in the other by the person leading the service. In the latter instance there is also the option for the person leading to use a ‘we/us’ form rather than a ‘you/your’ form.

In the blessing there is also a ‘you/we/us’ alternative.

Opening responses

L: We meet in the name of God
V1: whose speech began the story of life
V2: whose words brought form into being
All: and who ordered creation in harmony and goodness.

L: We meet in the purpose of Jesus
V1: whose life was the speech of God
V2: whose words show the shape of his Kingdom
All: and who draws those who hear into its unfolding story.

L: We meet in the power of the Spirit
V1: whose breath tamed the primordial chaos
W: whose tongue shapes the words of change
All: and who energises the ones who give them voice.

L: We meet in the name of the Triune God
the Source, the Sharer, and the Shaper,
All: Who was, and is, and will be
as long as the Story of Love is told.

Approach

L: God, in the story of your people
on their journey through the wilderness
All: we see and hear many things which we know and recognise.

L: God, in the words of your Son as he journeyed through life
All: we see and hear many things which challenge our cherished ideas.

L: God, in the passage of your Spirit as she journeys through history
All: we see and hear many things which show us that change is possible.

L: God, constantly present in human story, we open ourselves to all that you would show us now though worship and song word and prayer (bread and wine)
All: Meet us where we are show us where we need to be and then go with us as we move.

Thanksgiving

*we say together -*

God the Source we give you thanks that, from the very beginning, you have been part of creation - inextricably woven into its story; feeling its glory and greyness; knowing its potentials and possibilities…

Jesus the Sharer we give you thanks that, through your humble Incarnation, you became part of the human story - inextricably woven into its experiences; feeling its delights and dilemmas; knowing its potentials and possibilities…

Spirit the Shaper
we give you thanks that, throughout all stories of human history, you have been part of the arc towards justice - inextricably woven into its trajectory; feeling its freedoms and frustrations; knowing its potentials and possibilities…

Triune Three -
Source, Sharer, and Shaper,
we give you thanks that, though we may not understand you, yet you understand us and our stories and help us discover and explore their potential and enter and engage with their possibilities

**Confession**

O God
you intended the world to be a place of provision and plenty for all.
We confess that sometimes in our attitudes or actions we have taken more than we need at the expense of others. Forgive us, and by your Spirit help us as we try to live differently in the week ahead.

*Silence or kyrie*

O God
you intended the world to be a place of fairness and flourishing for all.
We confess that sometimes in our attitudes and actions we have lived as though
we alone mattered.
Forgive us,
and by your Spirit
help us as we try to live differently
in the week ahead.

Silence or kyrie

O God
you intended the world to be a place
in which all play their part
in the health and wholeness of creation.
We confess that sometimes
in our attitudes and actions
we have avoided our responsibilities
or prevented others from fulfilling theirs.
Forgive us,
and by your Spirit
help us as we try to live differently
in the week ahead.

Silence or kyrie

Assurance of forgiveness

Either

All: God
the life and words of your Son -
his compassion and care for others
even as he himself was dying
assure us
of the generous depths
of your forgiveness
and of its restorative power.

Help us now
through the energy of your Spirit
to love and live differently,
that we, and our world,
might become
all that you intended.

Amen
or

**Leader**

The life and words of Jesus
even as he was dying
assure you/us
of the generous depths
of God's forgiveness
and of its restorative power.

Through the energy of the Spirit
may God help you/us now
to love and live differently,
that you/we and this world
might become
all that he/they intended.

Amen

**Collect**

God - Source, Sharer, Shaper -
though you have many names
your story moves constantly and consistently
towards a world
in which all can flourish
as you intended.
Help us to grow in clear-sightedness
of how our own names or narratives
can hinder our understandings
of your love and purpose,
that we may join more fully
in the story of your Kingdom.
Amen

**Blessing**

May the God whose names are many
but whose nature is constant, 
the One whose story is complex, 
but whose purpose is clear, 
enable you/us to deepen in love, 
develop in understanding, 
and be determined in action

that you/we and the world you/we inhabit 
can move ever nearer 
to that which God intends. 
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

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Exodus 17:1-7

Rev Jenny Adams:

Trustee of EcoCongregation Scotland,

and Church of Scotland Minister: Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman Parish.

This story is one of a series which can be seen as rebellions or tests of the Hebrew people, which get increasingly exhausted responses from Moses and gracious
provision by God. These relate to many of the most basic needs of human beings: clean safe water (15:22-27 and here), food (16), and security (17:8-16) – not unreasonable things to raise with those in leadership.

There is an increasing threat to those basic needs because of the climate emergency – access to safe water is reduced by shrinking glaciers, disrupted rainfall patterns, drought and floods. Those threats clearly affect access to food, and conflict over water brings security risks. God’s desire to see those needs met should influence our lifestyle & policy choices.

There are also familiar dynamics at work, when a difficult situation finds people seeking someone to blame and someone who should do something to fix it. Here the people attribute blame to Moses, either choosing to ignore the agency of God in their situation or avoiding a more difficult discussion. Faced with the many challenges on the Earth, we all face the temptation to either blame others, expect someone else (governments, corporations) to fix it, or avoid facing up to a difficult bigger picture.

One way of considering the story would be as a movie scene:

Cast of characters: within the story, Moses and the narrator recognise the active involvement of Moses, the people, a group of elders within the people, and the Lord. However, the people do not appear to acknowledge the agency of the Lord in this episode, directing all their questions and complaints at Moses alone.

Location: this is a stop on a journey from the wilderness of Sin (picture a movie montage or map?). It is clearly rocky and dry. The reference in verse 6 to the rock at Horeb places it at the Mountain of God, though 19:2 suggests there is further journeying to get there – the editor may have used some poetic licence in ordering scenes. (Horeb and Sinai are both used for the Mountain in Exodus.)

Timeline: a) The use of the staff which struck the Nile (v5) could bring flashbacks to 4:1-5 then 7:14-21 (and more). These were actions meant to demonstrate who the Lord was – to Moses as well as to Pharaoh. 7:14-21 is a mirror image of 17:1-7, as then the water was made undrinkable, here those with nothing to drink are given clear water.

b) There are also glimpses forward. The Lord goes ahead of Moses to the rock at Horeb, looking ahead to the greater revelation of the Law on the Mountain, meeting another fundamental need of the people, to know God's ways.
Psalm 78.1-4, 12-16

Richard Murray:
Lay reader in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and trustee of EcoCongregation Scotland

The beginning of Psalm 78 is unusual because it is not addressed to God but to "my people," placing it within the wisdom traditions of the Hebrew Bible.

The psalm is often called historical, recounting the story of God’s care of Israel in the wilderness, and Israel’s woeful response. But the poem does not does not follow a chronological order because this is not the aim of the Psalmist, who calls it a “parable” to give it importance, with “dark sayings” or mysteries or riddles, giving it enigmatic dimensions. The poet is full of wonder. It’s the re-telling of a story, figuratively.

The Mosaic stories are the geographical setting for the theological understanding of God’s covenantal guardianship and tutelage of rebellious humanity. Israel’s vocation was to be a distinct and representative presence in the world, contemplating the world, and mediating and upholding the presence of God in the world. However, Israel rebelled against God, for they quickly forget that, in the wilderness, the basic essentials of life, both bodily and spiritual needs, were provided for them by God’s act of free grace.

How can we re-imagine the text and bridge the gulf between the ancient religious world and our contemporary secular world so that we can learn how to trust in God and not forget the divine teaching? We share some things in common. The wilderness wanderings of the Israelites, as re-told by the Psalmist, come from the perspective not of a desert-dweller but of one who had become domesticated; notions of wilderness and lostness were counterintuitive and their agricultural economy was dependent on the God of Israel. When they felt that God had let them down, they put their faith in other gods and the work of their own hands.

Our contemporary ‘chaos’ has come about through our materialistic daily living. The causes of climate change and the spread of Covid-19 are a consequence of our actions. In a sense, God is inviting us back into the wilderness to be tested, to hold us to account, to hear again the spirit of wisdom. But to argue that our current situation is divine punishment would be a misinterpretation.
Punishment implies a judicial process, so where’s the justice in the disproportionate effect that this existential crisis is having on the vulnerable, the poor and the marginalised?

God is not punishing us. This is not divine wrath. The God of Jesus feels and suffers with us. We are being called to face up to what we have done. We are living in a world that is part of God’s dominion, so we must become participators in a new creativity that will bring us through the chaos of the waters, standing like a ‘heap’ ready to engulf us. The key lesson is that our systems of life, our economics and our politics are being tested and that we need to re-learn God’s wisdom to discover the route to a sustainable and healthy world.

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Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32

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

Initial comment
“Leaning into the green” - enough with the climate change excuses, already! Don’t dare escape into collective fatalism. It’s up to each one of us to act now to avoid environmental ruin.

No good pointing helpless, hopeless fingers at past perpetrators of crimes against the planet. “We’re all doomed” won’t cut it. Indefensible/immoral to write off our responsibility for the environmental mess we are in. Time to take action to make things better for future generations. Stop dwelling on the incremental, death-dealing tragedy of climate change - turn away from contributing to all the degradation and pollution, and live. We’ve to get ourselves a new heart and a new spirit pronto.

Scriptural overview
Ezekiel - a seriously weird, grotesque and tantalising book, ands that’s the verdict of serious biblical scholars! the . Throughout the book, Ezekiel the priest/prophet exhibits what we might prematurely diagnose as signs of mental illness. These are not to be written off, but rather it should be realised that the extreme nature of the language and imagery results from the sense of urgency for change which makes these scriptures relevant and appropriate for our day and world.

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Ezekiel sees himself as witness to (sentinel over) Israel writes in exile in Babylon.

Ezekiel responds to the Isrealite tradition that “the sins of the parents are visited upon the children” by arguing each individual is responsible for his/her sins. The question of responsibility would have been crucial during the Exile. The sour grapes proverb handily deflects responsibility into the past, in a tone of complacent self-pity. But now is the time for the people to get themselves “a new heart”. The text is grounded in “the land of Israel” but calls to” the house of Israel”- how we treat one another and our environment - inextricably linked and interdependent.

This chapter identifies collective sins as the problem. This is pertinent for an assessment of our global emergencies. A fixation on small individual misdemeanours can mean we miss the point. Repentance is not a matter of bearing guilt as a burden, neither is it the cultivation of remorse or regret. Instead, it is the first step toward transformation — what Ezekiel calls getting a new heart and a new spirit. Repentance is an active, deliberate step in a new direction. It is a step into the future, into life itself.

Ezekiel nonetheless gives value to the individual as a moral agent and the present moment as the moment of moral significance. Like our small-scale environmental initiatives, righteous action is not pointless as some of the exiles claim(33.10). Ezekiel articulates a responsibility and opportunity for each individual to “turn and live” on the basis of new choices and righteous acts.

Ezekiel leads us into reflection on what we have begun to see as “‘Generational justice’ - as well as the longing of many in our own generations that those who follow after them might bless, rather than curse our current conduct in the face of emergency. This gives context to our reading of this conversation of the Prophet with a God giving every opportunity for a change of course, but stopping short of making the decision for a people hell-bent on catastrophe, whilst blaming everyone else.

The key question, then, from an incredulous God: “Why will you die, O house of Israel?”

Why choose what you know is the wrong path?

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Psalm 25.1–9

Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland.

Perhaps this is one of those many parts of scripture which have given comfort through the identification of emotional and national turmoil, rather than offering an exemplary outlook on life, or a model of robust
and gracious worship. Even the grim verses of the book of Lamentations - because in them people still think it’s worth crying out to God when all rational hope seems gone - are now helping encourage and sustain folk in places where environmental damage has permanently disrupted daily life.

Reassurance seems far from the hopes of this desperate, immature, and fragile singer, needing to be able to rely on forgiveness, vulnerable to embarrassment and looking, perhaps rather too much, for God to do everything for them; even holding God to account on the off chance that God will turn out to be the God they hoped God might be. All of this, we hear and assess.

The Psalms here offer us a role-play to learn about some of the deepest, and not always most admirable parts of who we are under pressure. But role playing comes into its own when we also take care with the de-brief. In this song, we feel what it’s like. Then, thank God, we can also come to ourselves.

As a poem preserved with reverence over centuries, its naked emotional honesty is almost too much to bear. The singer even grovelingly hopes to win favour by cursing the enemies of God.

Maybe at the end of the Psalm, when the singer had run out of this barrage of protective and defensive words, they might have been able to hear the loving, forgiving, enabling voice of God. Our widely shared predicament is the feeling of helplessness. Which is both realistic, as regards ‘solutions’, but far from it, as regards the value of our commitment and participation in the care of Creation.

Finding texts such as this in our Holy Scriptures, we realise that ‘it’s all right not to be all right’, and that if that’s the case, then there’s every reason to turn to God, as and when and how we are right now.

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Philippians 2.1–13

URC Minister Brighthelm Centre, deeply involved, for many years, with environmental spirituality & issues.
At the core of this reading is the well-known ‘Christ Hymn’ of verses 6-11. It’s tempting to rush headlong into the hymn and so miss the wisdom in the verses that enclose it. The whole passage advocates humble service, but while the great example of Christ’s humility is, well, exemplary, the surrounding verses give us some clues about how we ordinary Christians can follow that great example.

Paul, in chapter 1 of the letter, has used his own suffering to encourage the Philippian Christians in their hardships. Now, in 2.1-2, he urges them to have the same mind as him, in love, fellowship in the Spirit, compassion and sympathy. These are virtues that can be chosen, but if they feel too abstract, in v.3 Paul contrasts ambition and pride with the humility that regards others as better than one’s self, choosing to serve the interests of others. From attitude to action, this is how the readers of this letter can, like Paul, find hope and courage in the face of adversity.

There is a contrast between these verses and the hubris that can come out of, say, Genesis 1.26ff and Psalm 8.5-8. Indeed, once Paul moves from his own example to that of Jesus (“have the same mind” – vv.2, 5), the resonances with the early chapters of Genesis are stronger. In Eden, Adam and Eve grasp at becoming like God, as do the people of Babel. There, ambition and pride are followed by fall and loss as they exploit their power to serve their own interests. In the case of Jesus, the trajectory is opposite. Starting in the form of God, he refused to use that for his own advantage. Instead he emptied himself, humbling himself to human form and a shameful death, which resulted in his exaltation. Jesus restores the proper place of humanity in creation: to serve the good of all. Adam and Eve were appointed to tend and keep the garden – they were there for Eden, it wasn’t there for them. The same principle was true of Abraham (blessed to be a blessing, Genesis 12.2-3), Israel (“a priestly kingdom”, Exodus 19.6) and it was chosen by Jesus. It is the calling of those who would follow him.

It is this laying aside of hubris and ambition and instead acting in open-handed humility to serve the good of others, that is the way of salvation for all creation. This may be what Paul means by vv.12-13, as he reminds his readers that God is at work in their work of service, resulting in God’s good pleasure – perhaps another echo of Genesis 1, where all creation flourishing as God intended invokes God’s response: “It is very good.”

Matthew 21.23–32

Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland.

Today we are privileged to read one of the immensely significant body of stories of Jesus, effectively yelling “Get on with it!” to those who ought to know better than to keep things as they are.

As this passage shows, arguing about matters of authority when the truth is staring you in the face is not likely to get us very far.

This year we can add to this how dangerous it might be to long that we return, after such acute crises as we have encountered in recent months, to “the way things always were.” Change is inevitable and irrevocable. We “get used to that”, or perish. We are not even the same people, or the same churches we were at the beginning of this year. And it matters not to whom we might appeal to give us an excuse to deny this.
Power and privilege, in religion as in politics, can entrench the status quo, and hinder the vital responsiveness that goes with the leadership of any sustainable society.

Talking the talk is often an effective way of avoiding walking the walk. It's true that in recent years the church has learned to talk positively about ‘Creation’ and about ‘stewardship’ as if our fellow creatures were mere property that we were paid to take care of. The science is sufficiently clear, authoritative, and prominent: if you want to survive in time of crisis, the status quo has to go.

And yet, outside movements like Eco Congregation and Eco-church, the sacrificial lead is being given by young climate strikers and non-violent protest. But not just ‘of human origin’, but from God, is the mandate, expressed in covenant, to be responsible, as one might of a long-standing family business, and not merely as an employee, for what we are part of: the entirety of the World that God so loves that he gave his only Son....

In Jesus’ response to the attack on his credentials, we also note that those most marginalised (the tax-collectors and prostitutes) may also be the most responsive to the pressures to change. Those we most despise may be the ones to watch, when we’re seeking direction. Or those, in poverty, and on the sharp end of climate change, who have ‘nothing to lose but their chains’.

Finally: trust, explore and test your own inspiration and reaction to Scripture, as also to world events: as a Christian writer on environmental matters, it's frequently frustrating that so few, even amongst scholars, are prepared to stop beating around the bush and take the risk of coming out with what they think and feel. It seems Jesus had the same problem. But here, he is equal to it!

Sermon ideas

Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland.

As Creation Time draws to a close, Creation remains in crisis. God is still with us, on God’s own terms.

If this year hasn’t yet convinced all of us to set aside - or at least re-assess- the old books and sayings we have relied on to support our use of Scripture, and ask afresh “what is the Spirit saying to the churches” [cf Revelation 2:29, 3:22 ff] I dread to think what it will take.
Fires of unprecedented scope and ferocity, a speeding up of the rise of the sea-levels and the melting of glaciers, and then, of course, the Coronavirus wake-up call, not just reminding but reproving us that the out way of life in living memory is at best unsustainable, at worst, destructive not just to our way of life, but that of so many other species too.

Christianity offers diverse ‘models of God’, but specifically through the gift of Christ, sharing in the bodily life of the Earth, we trust that God touches our own hearts and shares in our own trials.

We have a chance, still, to discover the benefits of a humility [Philippians 2] as individuals and indeed as a species, which corrects, once and for all, the abusive interpretation of our purpose on earth as ‘domination’ [Genesis 1:26-28] rather than compassionate management in partnership with the planet and life as ‘senior partner’ in the covenant.

A humility which is not disengagement, but a sincere seeking after our place and purpose as God’s people; catalytic participants in the community of the World.

Humility, which accepts responsibility to do, pray, and be, what we can, rather than tilt at the windmills of control and solution, rather than transformation. [Ezekiel 18].

The wilder stretches of Christian scripture, like the Book of Ezekiel, have always been handled with care, a minefield for fools who rush in and try to pin down what each verse might ‘mean’. Nonetheless, the spiritual literature of crisis in the Bible supports us as we face up to crisis. We find solidarity even in the creative desperation of some Psalms and prophets. Our faith has seldom been so vital to our own survival, and it really doesn’t matter if we’ve got it wrong until now [cf the story Jesus tells of the son who changed his mind].

After this year, will Jesus say to us: “even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe”? [Matthew 21:32].
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) Touch the Earth lightly, by Shirley Erena Murray, (1931-2020)

An outstanding hymn, which allows for a change of tune part-way through, though the meter allows for it to fit with several well-known tunes.

Source e.g. CH4 243

2) Settings of Psalm 8

Although the ‘d-word’ - dominion appears in many versions, this is a chance, if the psalm is sensitively introduced, to set the human place humbly in context, whilst allowing for wonder and awe at the responsibility we have.

Source e.g: CH4 4 or 5
3) All creatures of our God and King (based on St Francis, translated by William Henry Draper)

With the authority of the centuries, this rather long hymn (you might need to select verses) presents a very wholesome all-encompassing spirituality, which does not shirk the vital consciousness of mortality, without which we are so easily seduced into “infinite growth” and “single-use” ways of life. Source e.g. CH4 147

4) Sing for God’s glory, by Kathy Galloway (b. 1952)

This hymn, when pondered on - and a leader of worship might need to point this out - presents the unity of wonder at and care for creation, with justice win human affairs. One cannot exist without the other.

Source e.g. CH4 172

5) For the beauty of the Earth, by Folliot Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917)

‘Flowers of earth and buds of heaven’. Beauty has value. Beauty is a theological category. We are part of it. May our actions, initiatives, and environmental commitment be a ‘sacrifice of praise’.

Source e.g. CH4 181

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New writing: Hymn-poem.

**Our legacy…**

There is a need to counteract the doom and gloom of the attitude that humanity is a “virus that infests the Earth”. No, we should claim our place and purpose of managing and enhancing life on earth, as well as being aware of the human injustice that has led to the crises of the environment in God’s Creation. The hymn poem below also picks up on the whinging problem encountered by Ezekiel in this week’s reading.

Tune: DCM - e.g. Kingsfold : CH4 291
(or any other DCM tune which has a change of mood mid-verse)

1) Our legacy is dire, our people trample down the Earth through fire and smoke and slavery abundance turns to dearth.

Yet Christ, opposing, crucified and risen, to transform
with hope enlists each one of us
to turn from endless harm.

2) We moan, and claim despair our lot
as if that comfort brought
And crises wait in line to bring
our vaunted wealth to naught

Yet each new day brings hope and opens
doors we never saw
The risen Christ defies denial
and only love is law.

3) We are not creatures yet to come
We’re called to choose right now
dependent on the bees, the trees,
the soil we tend, the plough,

We won’t infest, no: we’ll invest
our love, our wisdom deep
in hope beyond horizons bleak:
Sustaining-Christ’s bequest!