

SEASON OF CREATION 2023

PRAYERS AND WORSHIP MATERIAL



Week 4

Week 4 Opening [cf Exodus 15, John 1, Genesis 9, John 3]

Whom do we serve?

The God of the poor!

Who is God's Word?

Christ become Flesh!

What says the rainbow?

God for the Earth!

For whom is Christ given?

Sky, sea and soil!

Prayer of Approach: [Job 12: 1Kgs 4:33 Matt 6:25, Luke 21:29, Rev 22]

Sustaining God, Leader, the Way and the Life
we're in need of good guidance today;

And so we've come looking for wisdom and hope.
To the books of your Word, both in language and life
To the treasures of faith you've made known.

We read:

'Speak to the Earth, who will teach you and guide you;
to fish in the water and birds of the heavens;

We read:

Kings given wisdom will speak of the insects,
the trees, and the creatures who fly and who swim

Christ says:

Look at the birds, and not one tree, but all trees

And at last, can a city be holy
unless streets are green?

Sustaining God, now lead us in wisdom:
break open once more as we pray
our names as they're written on Heaven and Earth
that joy, hope, and faith may reward and enrich us
As friends of Christ Jesus
AMEN.

Confession, Pardon

Christ the powerless,
who still gave leadership and friendship
who spoke firmly and strongly

but always in love;

Be ready with rebukes to change lives
Be ready to pick up the pieces when truth hits home
Be ready to receive with understanding
the truth, that when confessed, can set us free.
the truth that when denied, imprisons us
and all who have breath to your praise.

So we name the things we're part of:
not blaming first those who hurt least
nor hiding injustice behind its victims
human and other;
our trampling of the Earth we're made to cherish
Our burning and our smoke that chokes their life.

Heal our nations, our churches
from the despair that drives us
to carry on as we have done.

Make plain the empowerment of forgiveness
the joy of different ways.
feed us with new possibilities
and lead us in the Fruitful Path
AMEN

Thanksgiving: Christ the teacher of true teachers,

Christ the teacher of true teachers;
leader of those who serve;

We give thanks for this continuing Season
in which Earth's voice cannot be silenced;
so that we discover more and more
that nothing is too holy to be green
nor too green to be holy

We are grateful for the initiatives of our land
Reserves and Parks, sanctuaries of green
and colleges of birdsong

which conserve and protect the “nature”
we once thought merely lovely;
nature: now no more expendable
than the livelihoods that dictate our agenda.

We ask blessing on the volunteers and wardens
the litter-pickers and the watchers
whose commitment enriches all.

And having been appalled
by damage done
by those who screamed ‘dominion’
We claim a deeper gratitude
for the place and purpose people still retain.

We give thanks for every moment
when standing back
or stepping in
our human thread brings
happiness or harmony
to life’s tapestry today.

Lead us in your green pastures
that feeding, we may tend our Common Home.

AMEN

Intercession [Vote-ive prayer]

(please add or subtract sections according to local need. Conclusion in italics may be recycled from previous week)

God of election and choosing
of discernment and decision:

we stand in prayer beside leaders of church and of society:
the lawmakers who determine conditions
for just transition or entrenched injustice.

We cast the vote of prayer,

discerning, relying on your Spirit
the Wild Wind who knows no bounds but love.

We ask for courage, in voters and leaders,
in bishops, moderators, local pastors and elders.

We ask:

for the courage of love to stand up to those we care for
And the grace to listen when they stand up to us.
For the breadth of mind to include the personalities of creation
and the rights of fellow creatures;
reshaping law and custom, prayer and worship
where these things for now exclude.

For faithfulness will not endure
where "faith" refuses justice.

Give us grace to call out greed
and the sectarian selfishness
which in the end serves no creature well or long.

And even in their imperfection
Help our leaders choose
your greenest way
AMEN

*We pray for courage amongst our leaders,
to shape the conditions
in which change may be rapid and just,
and the grace to tell them when they get it right.*

*We pray for peace amongst the nations
and an end to the hatred of God
expressed in war
where Creation is always the first casualty*

*God, keep us going, that our worry over tomorrow
may not overcome our joy, hope and commitment
to the goodness of this Day you have made.
AMEN*

Week 4 Closing

When we take notice
Wonders encourage us.

When we share Good News,
Then loved ones will learn.

When leaders serve God
We will support them

May we live faithfully
Loving God's Earth.



MUSIC:

We recommend the use of the choices suggested via Trinity College, in which Eco-Congregation Scotland trustee Iain McLarty is fully involved.

<https://www.trinitycollegeglasgow.co.uk/post/creation-time>

**We might add this week: CH4 375: "Servant King"

This week's 2x New Words to a recycled tune:

The burden [*cf matt 10:16]

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ECS Staff

1) Our leaders, God-given need prayer and support
The long view, of selflessness, Creation's court
will hold to account every misuse of powers
God granted to nourish God's Earth as rain showers.

2) Bucks pass and they stop, when we need folk to serve
to count on support and the trust they deserve
to grasp the green nettle, to warn in love's way
and not to postpone what is urgent today.

3) Though Christ be our leader, we know he sends out
diverse folk with stories and lives full of doubt
along with the faithful, and barely awake:
discipleship needs both the dove and the snake!*

From Roberta Ritson, completing training in URC ministry at the Scottish URC College.

A SONG/POEM WITH QUESTIONS, LOOKING AT THEMES IN JONAH FOR THESE PRESENT TIMES

The folk tune 'Early one morning' may be suitable

Jonah lay sound asleep
While breakers lashed the sturdy ship,
Wrecking the confidence
of seasoned sailor folk.
"Why are we destined so?
What, Jonah, might you know?"
"I was called to prophesy and gladly take God's yoke."

Jonah looked overboard,
He'd run away, ignored the Word.
Storms brewed within his heart -
Such deep remorse and rue.
"Don't dodge the call divine,
Pray, let your truth now shine,
Change your ways, commit your days
As God requires of you."

Jonah was swallowed whole -
Hurtled like a ton of coal
Down into the belly
of a most gi-normous fish.
Weeds danced around his head
Words rose, as from the dead:
"Bring me to your Presence, Lord",
Came Jonah's trembling wish.

Jonah, he got spewed out;
For Nineveh he made, no doubt.
A hundred thousand people now
Should heed what he would say.
Each one from kerl to king

U-turned from evil's cling.
Ev'ry creature, ev'ry human
chose the better Way.

Jonah was fuming cross,
Why had the city been let off?
He sulked about,
Redundant now, as
people chose what's right!
Lay down such vanity,
God wants humility.
A task fulfilled is ample
And such change of heart shows might.

Accompanying questions and devotions:

- In what ways do we continue to sleepwalk (individually and collectively)?
- Are you aware of bypassing the urgency and 'taking trips to Tarshish'?
- Given that we all find ourselves on 'a dangerous ship' who currently bears the worst suffering? Do we support them meaningfully?
- How might we best give time, resources, prayer and energy to such a predicament? Are we doing what God requires?
- How can we join with others, sharing our particular faith perspectives and listening to them so that voices are joined up and amplified?
- How can we transform our own remorse into constructive, vibrant and inspirational living?
- Can we celebrate simpler life styles, interconnection and shared responsibility in ways that attract and do not repel?
- Where is God in these decisions? (Do we pray, avoiding the temptation of 'going it alone'?)
- How do we sustain connection to God when surrounded by darkness and despair? A short prayer might be 'knit me to thyself'.
- Is it easier to face up to large scale calamity than to admit our personal errors and faithlessness?
- When there's a genuine change of heart why ever not share God's delight?

- We heard how God's mind changed. It is the nature of God to be merciful, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Do we recall this frequently? Might we adopt these characteristics ourselves?

"Let mercy, grace, forbearance and steadfast love temper our clarity."
AMEN