



# SEASON OF CREATION

## CELEBRATION GUIDE TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION



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## INTRODUCTION

### Welcome!

Welcome to this year's Season of Creation. Thank you for bringing your community together for this special season of ecumenical solidarity.

Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home. It is a special season where we celebrate God as Creator and acknowledge Creation as the divine continuing act that summons us as collaborators to love and care for the gift of all that is created. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common call to care for Creation. We are co-creatures and part of all that God has made. Our well-being is interwoven with the well-being of the Earth.

We rejoice in this opportunity to safeguard our common home and all beings who share it. This year, the theme for the season is **"To hope and act with Creation"**. Amid the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, many are beginning to despair and suffer from eco-anxiety. As people of faith, we are called to lift the hope inspired by our faith, the hope of the resurrection. This is not a hope without action but one embodied in concrete actions of prayer and preaching, service and solidarity.

This season, we are also uniting our Christian voices through a joint advocacy initiative to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty which calls for a halt to new fossil fuel projects.

This guide will help you learn about and plan for this season. It includes ideas for prayer, including an ecumenical prayer service and ways to incorporate and reflect on this year's theme and symbol. In addition, it offers ways to participate in this year's joint advocacy initiative to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty which calls for a halt to new fossil fuel projects.

We look forward to praying, celebrating, and advocating together in hope and action with Creation this Season!

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*"We must shift away from fossil fuels and move towards renewable energy in a fair and organised way. Our faith calls us to support vulnerable communities who are most affected by the climate crisis" – Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, General Secretary, ACT Alliance.*

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## Season of Creation 2024 Theme and Symbol

Each year, the Season of Creation Ecumenical Steering Committee proposes a theme for the Season of Creation.

The theme for 2024 is **“To hope and act with Creation”** and the symbol is **“The first fruits of hope”**, inspired by Romans 8:19-25.

A special note about this year’s theme: We have decided to capitalize Creation for several reasons. Our theme this year emphasizes that Creation is not an object that has been created for human use, but rather a subject that we are called to relate to and collaborate with as fellow creatures. By capitalizing Creation, we refer to both the created order and the mystery of God’s continuing act of creation. We acknowledge the whole created order, or the whole cosmos, including all living and non-living parts of God’s Creation, showing our theological respect, reverence, accountability, and interdependence with the natural world.

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*“The Season of Creation is such a good way for your church to engage with caring for God’s world. Do sign up. Make the most of the resources. And let’s worship and take action because together we can make a difference.” – Dr. Ruth Valerio, Director Global Advocacy and Influencing, Tearfund.*

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### Creation is groaning in the pains of childbirth (Romans 8:22)

The biblical image pictures the Earth as a mother, groaning as in childbirth. The time we live in show that we are not relating to the Earth as a gift from our Creator, but rather as a resource to be used. Saint Francis of Assisi understood this when he referred to the Earth as our sister and our mother in his Canticle of Creatures. How can Mother Earth look after us we do not look after her? Creation is groaning because of our selfishness and the unsustainable actions that harm her.

Along with our Sister, Mother Earth, creatures of all kinds, including humans, cry out because of the consequences of our destructive actions causing climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and human suffering as well as Creations suffering. And yet, there is hope and the expectation for a better future. To hope in a biblical context does not mean to stand still and quiet, but rather groaning, crying, and actively striving for new life amidst the struggles. Just as in childbirth, we go through a period of intense pain, but new life is coming both.

## **Creation is standing on tiptoe waiting for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19)**

Creation and all of us are called to worship the Creator, working together for a future of active hope and action. Only when we work together with Creation can the firstfruits of hope be born. Pauline theology reminds us that both Creation and humanity are conceived from the beginning in Christ and, therefore, are entrusted to each other.

Creation is standing on tiptoe waiting for the manifestation of the children of God! The children of God are those who stretch up their hands towards the Creator, recognizing themselves as humble creatures, to praise and respect God, and at the same time to love, respect, care for, and learn from God's gift of Creation. Creation is not given to humanity to use and abuse, rather, humanity is created as part of Creation. More than a common home, Creation is also a cosmic family that calls us to act responsibly. This is how the children of God have an intrinsic vocation and an important role to play in the manifestation of the kingdom of justice (cf. Romans 8:19).

## **Firstfruits of hope (Romans 8:23-25)**

Hope is an instrument enabling us to overcome the natural law of decay. Hope is given to us by God as a protection and guard against futility. Only through hope we may realize the gift of freedom in fullness. Freedom to act not only to achieve enjoyment and prosperity but to reach the stage in which we are free and responsible. Freedom and responsibility enable us to make the world a better place.

We act for a better future because we know Christ has overcome the death caused by our sins. There is a lot of pain on Earth because of our shortcomings. Our structural and ecological sins inflict pain on Earth and all creatures, including ourselves. We know that we have caused a lot of damage to Creation, and to the world we are living in because of our negligence, because of ignorance, but as well, in many cases, because of our unrelenting wish to satisfy unrealistic selfish dreams (cf. Romans 8:22).

There's a phrase commonly attributed to Saint Augustine that says: "Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things is, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are." As we witness the cries and sufferings of Earth and all creatures, let holy anger move us toward the courage to be hopeful and active for justice. We believe that the incarnation of God's Son offers guidance enabling us to face the troubling world. God is with us in efforts to respond to the challenges of the world we are living in (cf. Romans 8:23).

There are different forms of hope. However, hope is not merely optimism. It is not a utopian illusion. It is not waiting for a magical miracle. Hope is trust that our action

makes sense, even if the results of this action are not immediately seen (cf. Romans 8:24). Hope doesn't act alone. Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul the apostle explains the close relationship of hope as a growth process: "endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:4). Patience and endurance are close associates of hope. These are qualities that lead to hope.

We know how much bold action to restrain the climate and ecological crisis is urgent, and we also know that ecological conversion is a slow process as humans are stubborn to change their minds, their hearts, and their ways of living. Sometimes we don't know what our actions should look like. As we journey in life, everyday we get new ideas and inspirations to find a better balance between the urgency and the slow rhythm of long-lasting change. We might not fully comprehend all that is happening, we might not understand the ways of God, but we are called to trust and follow with concrete and sustained actions, following the example of Christ, the redeemer of the whole cosmos (cf. Romans 8:25)

In some languages, the translation of the Pauline passage expresses that hope is not a passive waiting but rather an active hope (cf. Romans 8:20-21). There is much we can learn from other cultures and countries on how to hope and act together with Creation. The Portuguese verb "esperancar", as well as the Spanish "esperanzar", express well that hope must be understood as an active verb to avoid falling into the trap of superficial positivity. In French, there are also two different ways to speak about this notion: "Espoir", which evokes the attitude of waiting, and "espérance" which expresses the active hope in the light of God. The same nuance appears in the Arabic language which distinguishes between "'amal (لما)" and "raja' (ءاجر)", showing how there is much more to reflect about what we mean we speak about "hope".

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*"We should not disappoint the Creator by spoiling His creation, with which He entrusted us from the dawn of the times and keeps protecting us from ourselves. We have to say STOP somewhere to the damage we are inflicting on purpose to the creation, blinded by our greed and lust for profit. We, who are aware of the gravity of the issue, should raise our voice in a relentless attempt to spread this awareness and make it become a part of the daily culture and pattern of behavior of individuals as well as business enterprises. A paradigm shift is of utmost necessity." – Prof. Michel Abs, Secretary General, the Middle East Council of Churches.*

## **Season of Creation | 2024 Prayer**

**Triune God, Creator of all,**

We praise you for your goodness, visible in all the diversity that you have created, making us a cosmic family living in a common home. Through the Earth you created, we experience love and nourishment, home and protection.

We confess that we do not relate to the Earth as a Mothering gift from you, our Creator. Our selfishness, greed, neglect, and abuse have caused the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, human suffering as well as the suffering of all our fellow creatures. We confess that we have failed to listen to the groans of the Earth, the groans of all creatures, and the groans of the Spirit of hope and justice that lives within us.

May your Creator Spirit help us in our weakness, so that we may know the redeeming power of Christ and the hope found in him. May the groans of the Spirit birth in us a willingness to serve you faithfully, so that we may hear and heal Creation, to hope and act together with her, so that the firstfruits of hope may blossom.

Loving and Creator God, we pray that you will make us sensitive to these groans and enable us to have the same compassion as that of Jesus, the redeeming Lord. Grant us a fresh vision of our relationship with Earth, and with one another, as creatures that are made in your image.

In the name of the one who came to proclaim the good news to all Creation,  
Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**



## **Addendum 1 | Ecumenical Prayer Service Liturgy**

### **Opening Words**

In the words of Archbishop Tutu “Hope is being able to see that there is light – despite all the darkness”.

As faith without action is dead (James 2:26) – so hope without action is meaningless and, in this service, we acknowledge and lament our sense of despair, cling to our faith and hope, and commit ourselves to act with Creation for the renewal of life. We hold our prayer service today as part of the ecumenical Season of Creation, a season of prayer and action for our common home that takes place every year from September 1 to October 4. The theme for the Season of Creation this year is “To hope and act with Creation”, and the symbol is “The firstfruits of hope”, inspired by Romans 8:19-25.

### **Welcome**

Blessed be the name of God, God of our ancestors, God of the generations yet to come

#### **Blessed be the Creation God, Redeeming Son and the Sustaining Spirit**

As we gather, we hear the groans of creation and the cries of our sisters and brothers. As we gather, we bring our seeds of hope, the firstfruits of the Spirit.

### **Greeting and Call to Worship**

Come, let us worship God, who gifted us with life and creation to sustain life

**All: We praise God for the wondrous creation.**

Come, let us follow Lord Jesus Christ, who inspires us to hope and act for justice and righteousness.

**All: We give glory to God, who restores the groaning creation and the vulnerable.**

Come let us move with the Holy Spirit, striving to establish justice and produce the firstfruits of hope.

**All: We praise God for the abundant life that is assured to all creation.**



Heavenly Triune God and Creator of all,  
We gather here, made in the image of Creator,

**All: who created in love**

We gather in the name of the redeemer, our Savior Jesus Christ

**All: who reconciles all of creation**

We gather in the presence of the life Giver, your Holy Spirit

**All: who inspires new life and instils hope**

*[World Council of Churches (WCC) Eco-School at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, Greece, 11-18 November 2023]*

### **Psalmody: Psalm 42**

As a deer longs for flowing streams,  
so, my soul longs for you, o God.

**My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.**

**When shall I come and behold the face of God?**

My tears have been my food day and night,  
while people say to me continually,  
Where is God?

**These things I remember,**

**As I pour out my soul:**

**how I went with the throng  
and led them in procession to the house of God,  
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,  
a multitude keeping festival.**

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,  
My help and my God.

**My soul is cast down within me;**

**therefore, I remember you  
from land of Jordan and Hermon,  
from Mount Mizar.**

Deep calls to deep  
at the thunder of your torrents;  
all your waves and your billows  
have gone over me

**By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.**

I say to God, my rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I walk about mournfully  
because the enemy oppresses me?”

**As with a deadly wound in my body,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me continually,  
“Where is your God?”**

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit  
As it was in the beginning is now and will be for ever.**

## Kyrie Eleison

Eternal God, the whole world is full of your glory.

We bear forth the anguish of creation in the time of the climate crisis to you.

In your grace, grant us the opportunity to do good, as your created co-creators,

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

Jesus Christ, you have walked the Earth and lived in our midst.

Make us sensitive to the suffering of humankind and the entire creation.

Strengthen us in our endeavours to create a life of dignity,

In justice and solidarity with those who live and will live.

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

Holy Spirit power of courage and self-control, you speak to our consciences. Comfort us when we suffer and are plagued by anxiety.

Make us worry when we are numb in the calmness of complacency.

Re-create us to become what we are: one humanity under the same sky

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

*[Adapted from: Prayer for the Climate from the "Bishops Letter for the Climate" of the Svenska Kyrkan/Church of Sweden]*

## Thanksgiving Prayer for the Earth

God of Holy Dreaming, great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of the mother Earth.

You spoke and the trees grew.

In the vast desert and the dense forest, and in the cities and at the water's edge,

Creation sings your praise.

Your presence endures at the rock at the heart of our land.

When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones:

*[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Liturgical Resources].*

the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.

The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew, and bathed it in glorious hope.

In Jesus we have been reconciled to you, to each and to your whole creation.

Lead us on, Great Spirit, as we gather from the four corners of the earth; enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and shame of the past into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

**Song | A suggested or creation themed hymn can be sung here**

**Readings / A short silence for reflection can be held after each reading**

### **Bible Reading 1 | Micah 7: 1 – 4, 7**

Woe is me! For I have become like one who,

After the summer fruit has been gathered,

After the vintage has been gleaned,

Finds no cluster to eat;

there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger.

The faithful have disappeared from the land,

And there is no one left who is upright;

They all lie in wait for blood,

and they hunt each other with nets.

Their hands are skilled to do evil;

the official and the judge ask for a bribe,  
and the powerful dictate what they desire;  
thus, they pervert justice.

The best of them is like a brier,  
the most upright of them a thorn hedge.

The day of their sentinels, of their punishment, has come;  
now their confusion is at hand.

But as for me, I will look to the Lord;  
I will wait for the God of my salvation;  
my God will hear me.

**Bible Reader:** This is the word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God**

## **Bible Reading 2 | Romans 8:18 – 25**

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains

of labour, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope, we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

**Bible Reader:** This is the Word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God**

### Bible Reading 3 | Gospel Reading Matthew 9: 35 - 38

**35.** Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.

**36.** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

**37.** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few;

**38.** therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

Bible Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God**

### Reflection on the theme | "To hope and act with Creation – the firstfruits of hope"

#### **Romans 8:19-25**

**19** *For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.*

**20** *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope*

**21** *that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

**22** *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

**23** *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.*

**24** *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?*

**25** *But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

**Bible Reader:** This is the word of the Lord.

**ALL: Thanks be to God**

## Reflection

This Scripture reading was part of a devotion and bible study during the Otin Taai Plus 20 Pacific Churches Climate Change Conference, held earlier this year, commemorating 20 years since the first major declaration on Climate Change by Pacific Churches.

This passage from Romans reminds us that Christianity and Indigenous spirituality both call us to have a holistic vision of the world - all of creation groans. It brings the focus out of our own personal lament to see the great need of the world – In the context of our vulnerability and lamentation of the impacts of climate change in our oceans and on our islands, while pain can draw us inward- we are called to an outward interconnectedness that doesn't deny our pain, but allows us to see and serve the world through it.

If we bring this down to the community level, to our villages, to our people and connect this to our traditional way of life, God's deep love for the universe, for all Creation and not just humankind, manifested in the renewing and restoring work of Jesus, we are called to recognise our environment, trees and plants, animals, birds and fishes, rivers, lakes and lagoons as not only created by God, but also beloved of God. Humankind is redeemed and restored by Jesus as a part of and not separate from Creation. All Creation is meant to be seen as Sacred.

Our traditional knowledge and wisdom acknowledge this by giving a sacredness to nature. I am not talking about animism or pantheism where we worship nature as God, but the recognition that God is present in and beyond nature which was made by the power of the Logos, the Word.

In Fiji like many parts of the Pacific, each clan and tribe have a sacred tree, a sacred animal, fish or bird, river or mountain that we hold sacred from our cultural identities. They serve to remind us of our interconnectedness with the environment and how we express that relationship.

In the Encyclical, "Laudati Si: Care for our Common Home," Pope Frances writes:

"In the beginning there existed a relationship of interconnectedness amongst all things in the whole of creation. Today we are losing our interconnectedness. Our common home, Mother Earth is becoming a pile of filth. We have to reweave the threads of our interconnectedness. Where do we look to for resources and inspirations for interconnectedness? We look to indigenous and native cosmology and the spiritual traditions."

As we begin this Season of Creation in the midst of the continuing climate crisis, we are reminded by the reading from Romans that the waves of vulnerability and resilience make for choppy seas – that the roar of the waves, breaking on the reefs are also the cries and the salt water tears of the Moana Pasifika, the Wai Tui, the Solwara... as the coral that make up these protective rings around our islands are



dying ...as plastic – a fossil fuel product is choking fish, turtle and whale. The roar of the waves is an echo of the groaning of creation.

The theme for Season of Creation 2024 is “To Hope and Act with Creation”

In the context of this theme, we are reminded by Paul that to hope is a powerful action, particularly in the face of the impacts of climate change, unsustainable extractive and exploitative industries.

As a Pasifika Household of God:

What does it mean to worship a Creator of land, sea, sky and all that inhabit this world – seen and unseen, whose wisdom guided our ancestors of these sea of islands to traverse their liquid continent in ancient times?

What does it mean to believe in Jesus who is Redeemer of humanity and creation alike?

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit that hovered over the face of the waters before darkness became light and chaos became order? What does it mean that our ancestors of the Pacific harnessed this breath of the Spirit in the sails of their giant canoes and reading stars, wave and current?

In these challenging times, we have been reminded that your grace has been sufficient for us.

You challenge us to look beyond our own difficulties to those whose needs are greater than ours, whose cries for justice are louder than ours.

All of creation is groaning as a reminder that a renewal is required to address the loneliness of spirit that the world feels, the hunger of the human heart that material gain cannot satisfy.

Amidst the pain and suffering of so many in Christ who makes all things new (Revelation 21:5) we have the hope of a renewed world, a reweaving of the divine mat on which all creation sits together, each a sacred strand of God’s design that was very good.

This season of Creation may we journey into a profound, a deeper relationship with both Creator and all Creation.

May we touch the soil and tend to the earth; protect the ocean and move gently upon it; and learn to sing a new Lord’s song and work together so that everything that has breath: the trees and the seas that make oxygen, and the creatures that breathe it to live – everything that has breath – may praise the Lord!

*[Prepared by Rev. James Bhagwan – General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches]*

**Song: | A suggested or creation themed song can be included here.**

## Affirmation of faith

We have faith  
**in one God, one Source of all life,  
 one Ground of the whole Earth,  
 who created all things good.**

And we have faith  
**in Christ in whom we have been  
 shown the special role of humanity  
 to bear**

**God's likeness in working and  
 caring for Creation,  
 in seeking to understand her  
 mysteries and powers,  
 in working with these powers**

**for the wellbeing of life on Earth.**

And we have faith  
**In God's Spirit who leads us to a  
 meek, unselfish and compassionate  
 lifestyle**

**So that the Earth is inherited in  
 peace,**

**her life is transformed for all  
 creatures and her bounty shared  
 justly.**

**So be it.**

**Amen.**

*[Adapted From India. Source: Sinfonia Oecumenica, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh 1998.  
 Reproduced by ECEN for Creation Time 2003]*

## Offering and Offertory Prayer

You might like to have an offering, perhaps a collection for a particular project or ministry that contributes to ecological restoration, or an aspect of climate justice, or you may want to showcase local plants, animals from your area as a way to raise awareness of the rest of your local habitats' needs.

## Song | **A hymn may be sung**

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*"Climate change and disasters are already upon us. The planet is in trouble and 'creation is groaning' as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 8. In the midst of this, we are called to be responsible stewards and citizens as we care for and sustain the earth which belongs to the Lord. This is hope in action as we pray and yearn for a better and safer world for all people and creation. We each need to do our part for creation care." – Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary, World Council of Churches*

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## **Intercessory Prayers | “To hope and act with Creation”**

God of the land, the sea, the sky:

Creator of all that is seen and unseen.

Open our hearts to the rhythm of creation in the swells of the ocean, the movements of air and wind, the breath of all living things

Open our eyes to the fragile beauty of the biodiversity of which we are a part.

Open our ears to the sounds of life around us.

Open our minds to the awareness of our deep relationship with all your creation.

Creator God:

**“May we hope and act with creation”.**

God of truth and justice:

Fill us with your spirits of compassion so we may live and act with and in solidarity with creation.

Guide us in paths of righteousness that help us to tread softly on the land and sail gently on the sea.

Give us wisdom and courage to recognise our role in the evil of systemic exploitation and extraction and to speak truth to power.

Give us strength of heart and arm to be agents of the ecological conversion the world so desperately needs.

Creator God:

**“May we hope and act with creation”.**

**Amen.**

*[Rev. James Bhagwan – Pacific Conference of Churches]*

**Lord’s prayer |** in the language of your choice

**Closing hymn |** a suggested or creation themed song may be sung

## **Sharing the Peace**

In Christ, we are called not to conform to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds

**We seek to discern the will of God, to do what is good and acceptable and perfect**

Let us not lag in zeal but be ardent in spirit and serve God

**We intend to live in harmony with one another and with all of creation**

Let us strive to live peaceably with all and share a sign of peace with one another.

The peace of God be with you.

**And also, with you.**

**Amen.**

## **Benediction**

May God who can set creation free, show us his glory.

**Glory to God.**

May God who knows our groaning and crying, bring about new life.

**Now and always.**

May God who helps us in our weakness, give us the firstfruits of hope.

**Lord is our hope**

And may the triune God sprinkle into our hearts the dew of his grace and bless us all.

**Amen.**

## **Addendum 2 | Talking points to reflect on this year's theme and symbol**

### **The different dimensions of hope**

- *Christian hope is not superficial—it's concrete. Our hope is rooted in God's character, promises, and actions.*
- *Needs for metanoia, ecological conversion, and reconciliation with the Earth. The Spirit is the one guiding our conversion, leading us deeper into the comprehension of being a cosmic family.*
- *Repairs the broken relationship between humans and Earth, human creatures and other creatures, humans and God. Repair and repentance.*
- *To change the system, we must change our mindsets.*
- *Important for us is to listen to the voices that cry out and groan, communities who are losing land and livelihoods due to climate change, species and ecosystems being lost, victims of extraction and fossil fuel industries.*
- *Active hope in our Christian communities can be seen in the care of creation, hearing the voice of the poor, hearing the cries of the Earth.*
- *Hope inspires us to act; because we are hopeful we can act and so see what we hope for. Because we are hopeful, we are willing to act.*
- *Collective action creates grounding hope for those suffering from climate anxiety, being overwhelmed that time is running out. Christian hope fuels transformative action.*
- *Transformation takes time, we have to be patient. Hope is also a process, requires patience.*
- *Hope is faith in the things we do not see, hope is knowing that tomorrow will be better because Christ is resurrected, He defeated all evil, life overcomes all things.*
- *Active hope is a non-monetary value that has the power to change the world.*

## Action as a sign of the first fruits of hope

- *You don't see hope, hope is like a seed you have to be patient and nurture it with water to make it grow. If you don't include hope, the seed might not grow. We know sometimes the seed might die, but hope reminds us to keep planting other seeds.*
- *The first fruits of hope are born when we work collectively, regenerating peace and harmony in all Creation and with Creation, nurturing peaceful coexistence, fidelity, honesty, and transparency among the whole cosmos.*
- *The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT) is a global initiative that strives for an international regime that complements the Paris Agreement in addressing the still-growing supply of fossil fuels. It is a concrete action that can serve as a compass for a hopeful future.*
- *The FFNPT is a call for a transformation, not just adjusting our GHG outputs, but which points to a change of life that goes to phasing down and out of fossil fuel production.*
- *Action as the first fruits of hope can look like many different things: advocacy campaigns, sustainability initiatives, and educational formations to help upskill Christian communities in their awareness of how care for Creation is central to our faith.*
- *The first fruits of hope can be seen when we think and work collectively, when we recognize how we depend on Creation, when we listen to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the poor, when we listen to the voices of our global neighbours impacted by climate change, when we listen to the prophetic voices of indigenous sisters and brothers, when we listen to the different creatures that are going extinct and the ones still striving to live, when we listen to the voices of young people and children, when we learn from the slow and powerful cycles of life of different species, ecosystems, and biomes, when we work together with Creation and all creatures for a better future.*

*"In the face of climate crisis, protecting God's Creation is a spiritual imperative for Christians throughout the global Church. The Season of Creation has inspired us to come together in prayer and action – to safeguard, sustain and renew the life of the Earth" – Most Revd. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglican Communion.*

## How we are called to hope and act together with Creation

- *To hope and act together with Creation we must truly listen to how and why Creation is groaning. We need to push for more action, we're more aware than ever of the problems.*
- *Creation is groaning. Creation is part of God's revelation; we must learn from and with Creation to know how to hope and act for a better future.*
- *Although the testimony of indigenous Christians and their spiritualities are respected, they are not listened to. Usually, Christian churches find resistance to speaking about Earth or Creation as a being, while for indigenous and original peoples this is an intrinsic part of their cosmic worldview and way of living.*
- *Creation groans as fossil fuel industries create greenwashing campaigns for clean energy. They are expanding their energy businesses instead of actually phasing out of fossil fuels. They talk about energy transition, but they are only doing an energy expansion to keep their profits high.*
- *We must acknowledge the damages caused by selfish and foolish decisions that disregard the cries of the most marginalized, including refugees, or those displaced by climate change, mining, and ecological devastation. The presence of big oil companies at COP28 we saw last year is a clear example of this.*
- *As resources diminish and access to them diminishes, there's more war. The inevitable result of the climate crisis will be more violence. You can't have peace without an equitable sharing of resources.*
- *The African wisdom of Ubuntu teaches us that the sense of self is shaped by relationships with others. It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a cosmic collective family to care for Creation. I am because we are, the same goes with Creation. We are nature, nature is us, we are God's hands for global and cosmic justice.*

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*“Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident. No one can ignore the fact that in recent years we have witnessed extreme weather phenomena, frequent periods of unusual heat, drought and other cries of protest on the part of the earth that are only a few palpable expressions of a silent disease that affects everyone. I ask everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful.” – His Holiness Pope Francis, Bishop of Rome, Roman Catholic Church.*

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## **Addendum 3 | Advocacy ideas to reduce fossil fuel use**

### **Preserving Creation requires action**

“Creation is groaning” (Romans 8:22). Daily, weekly, and monthly we see, sense, and hear about Creation’s suffering. Humanity extracts and uses the bountiful resources of our mother, the Earth, primarily for human greed rather than human needs, and with too little regard for the impact on all creatures and biodiversity. These unsustainable actions have led to the current climate crisis and loss of biodiversity while increasing human suffering.

One clear example is the impact of fossil fuel extraction and use on the climate. Whether it is the smoke of burning arboreal forests or tundra, the unrelenting impact of superstorms in the Pacific Ocean, or the years-long drought in the Horn of Africa, the Earth, and the bounty it produces is diminishing due to massive changes in our climate. It’s estimated that thirty percent of the greenhouse gases that are impacting the climate are created by fossil fuel extraction and use.

### **Signs of hope for Creation**

The Season of Creation empowers communities at a local level and prepares us for action at the global level, particularly the annual United Nations climate conferences. This is where 182 countries come together to commit to actions such as reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Last year, at the 28th meeting of the United Nations Climate Conference in Dubai (Conference of the Parties, COP28), the need to reduce fossil fuel use made it onto the agenda for the first time ever and was agreed to. More is needed. The agreement was weak and did not set the targets needed to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. We need a stronger agreement if we are to have any chance of preserving biodiversity and life on Earth. Reducing fossil fuel extraction and use, sometimes called a fossil fuel phase-out, will be on the agenda again at this year’s climate conference, COP29. It is often linked to a just transition so that the phase-out is implemented in as fair a way as possible. This is meant to ensure that lesser-developed countries have a chance to catch up economically, while wealthier countries start to pull back meaningfully on fossil fuel use and extraction. By engaging with the range of actions outlined below you can support the cry for a stronger phase-out.

### **Join Us: Support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

This year the Season of Creation encourages parishes and faith groups to engage with the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT). The Treaty brings together nations, civil society, and faith groups to reduce fossil fuel use. According to their website, “The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative is a global effort to foster

international cooperation to accelerate a transition to renewable energy for everyone, end the expansion of coal, oil, and gas, and equitably phase out existing production in keeping with what science shows is needed to address the climate crisis.”

21 September is scheduled as the Global Day of Action for individuals, communities, organizations, and all levels of government to endorse the Treaty. All signatures will be used to influence decision-makers at the next UN conference on climate change, COP29, scheduled for November 2024 in Azerbaijan.

As a member of a parish or faith group you are invited to approach your faith leaders and let them know of the Treaty and how to support it. Encourage knowledgeable faith leaders to approach political leaders for their endorsement. Faith leaders and church can endorse FFNPT through the Faith Letter, available at <http://fossilfuel treaty.org/faith-letter>.

## What we can do

By exercising our prophetic call to speak truth to power, we grow in love and strength as we help bring about the firstfruits of hope for Creation. Below are ideas on how we can advocate for a just energy transition and support the FFNPT:

1. Raise awareness
  - To help people of faith understand the need to phase out fossil fuels and engage in the campaign for the FFNPT, raising awareness is crucial. Communities are encouraged to hold talks and sign-up events to help people understand what FFNPT is and to call on faith leaders to sign.
2. Participate in the Season of Creation global day action
  - 21 September Communities are encouraged to hold and participate in events to call on political leaders to sign the FFNPT.
  - Plan and prepare prayer services, public actions, or vigils by faith communities, or activities with faith leaders calling on political leaders to sign the Treaty.
3. Share your advocacy work
  - Follow the Season of Creation campaign on: <https://www.instagram.com/seasonofcreation/>, <https://www.facebook.com/SeasonofCreation/>, <https://twitter.com/SeasonCreation> pages, and amplify our advocacy asks on your social media channels by using #SeasonOfCreation - use this hashtag when you publish on social media is key for your actions to be made visible on the Season of Creation website.

## **Global Calendar of Events**

While each Christian community around the world celebrates the Season of Creation in its own way, a few events present opportunities to bring all communities together. However, you are particularly invited to join the two online prayer services that will mark the opening and closing of the Season of Creation, and join the day of advocacy action, as described below.

### **September 1 | Online prayer service for the Feast of Creation**

The Feast of Creation, or Creation Day, also called the Day of Prayer for Creation or World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, opens the season each year. Globally Christians are invited to join an online prayer service to come together in a joyful celebration of our common cause.

### **September 21 | Day of advocacy action**

This year we have a specific day to focus on the ecumenical common call to action on advocacy. It will be a day of action to endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNFPT). The 79th Session of the UN General Assembly will be taking place from the 10 – 24 September and it is within this context that we Christians, as a global family, will raise our voices and show how faith communities can be powerful actors for justice and hope across the world.

### **October 4 | Saint Francis Day**

Many traditions view Saint Francis as an inspiration and guide for those who protect Creation. October 4 is his feast day and the last day in the Season of Creation. The faith groups around the world will come together in an online event to celebrate our month-long journey together.

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*“In this Season of Creation, I urge all Christians everywhere to take practical steps by taking care of the environment, conserving natural resources and promoting sustainability to protect the Earth. I call on all Christians to join this Season of Creation, working with a renewed hope, as Creation eagerly awaits for the revealing of the children of God.” – Seth Appiah – Kubi, National Director, A Rocha Ghana.*

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## About the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation runs annually from September 1 through October 4. The world's 2.2 billion Christians are invited to pray and care for Creation during this time.

The Season of Creation unites the global Christian family around one shared purpose. It also provides flexibility in celebrating prayer services and engaging in a variety of actions to care for Creation.

## History

September 1 was proclaimed as a Day of Prayer for Creation for the Eastern Orthodox Church by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989:

<https://www.oca.org/news/headline-news/september-1-the-day-of-prayer-for-creation>

It was embraced by major Christian European churches in 2001:

<https://kipdf.com/time-for-god-s-creation>, and by Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic Church in 2015: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015>

In recent years, many Christian churches have begun celebrating the "Season of Creation" (also known as Creation Time) between September 1 and October 4, the Feast of Saint Francis that is observed by some Western traditions. Saint Francis is the author of the Canticle of the Creatures, and the Catholic patron saint of those who promote ecology.

Several statements from the past few years have called the faithful to observe this month-long season, such as those of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines in 2003: <http://cbcponline.net/celebrating-creation-day-and-creation-time/>, the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in 2007: <http://www.eea3.org/documenti/final>, and the World Council of Churches in 2008: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents>.

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*Caring for our common home is not just an environmentalist or technocratic cause, but a more holistic, integral, human, spiritual vision, as well as a matter of integral ecology. Through prayer, practical advocacy, and sustainable actions, this 2024 Season of Creation can prophetically renew our ecumenical unity and care for our common home.*

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# SEASON OF CREATION

