



Season of Creation Year A

CHURCH IN CREATION

As we move back into our buildings, there are still concerns around health risks with COVID19. What better time than to take our services outside during the month of September and to worship God in Creation. Here are some practical suggestions.

1. REGULAR SERVICE – TAKEN OUTDOORS

If you hold your regular Sunday service outdoors, here are a few things to bear in mind

- **Seating** – if you don't have plastic chairs, ask people to bring camp chairs or sit on blankets
- **Music** – it is often quite hard to sing without accompaniment, so do choose very well known hymns or choruses.
- **Preaching** – sound is likely to be tricky so do keep the preaching very short
- **Prayers/liturgy** – to reduce paper, just print out the responses, or you can have a few copies and ask people to take a photo with their cellphone take the challenge to go as paperless as possible
- **Weather:** for the leader of the service, think about wind – candles will blow out and papers blow around so be prepared! Ask people to dress warmly or bring sunhats as required!
- **Fun and fellowship** – ask families to bring their picnics and combine with some fun!

2. CREATIVE CHURCH IN CREATION

This is an opportunity to be creative and to combine the service with a short walk, visit to a place of beauty or environmental destruction

- Gather for some opening prayers. Keep the responses short so that you don't need extra papers.
- Walk in silence meditating on the prayers, gather together for the readings and prayers, walking in between each section.
- Gather at a site of environmental degradation for the confession
- For the sermon/homily – a short message works best. You can then give people a question to reflect on (can be written on a small piece of paper, or make a few copies for people to copy on their cell phone), and then they find a place on their own to sit to reflect.
- Singing- choose well known songs/hymns/ or a repetitive chant such as Taize music
- Consider those who will need to sit in a chair, and bring a few folding chairs for them
- If you are leading Eucharist in Creation, you will need a backpack to bring all the requirements (unbreakable!)
- End with fellowship snacks and fun!

FOREWORD

#APARTTOGETHER

2020 is a year that we will never forget, when COVID-19 struck, shutting down churches, schools and businesses. Many have lost loved ones, jobs, education, and livelihoods.

Our cover picture “#aparttogether” reflects that even though we were separated, we were still able to be together as the body of Christ – via technology, we met via zoom, worshipped via Facebook live or whatsapp. The church buildings had to shut, but the church was always open.

COVID-19 taught us many painful lessons. We learned that what is important in life are family, health, our faith. COVID-19 brought into stark reality the inequalities in society - lack of access to clean water, housing, food security

“We can also turn this (COVID) crisis into opportunity, taking advantage of the disruption the virus has brought to the world to think anew about how we want to live our lives, both individually and collectively. In many areas of our lives, the impact of the virus has exacerbated and brought to the surface long-neglected deprivation. The virus has opened the lid of a pot under which a cauldron was simmering, a cauldron in which the poor could barely breathe and which had the potential to boil over and blow the lid sky-high.”
Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

COVID-19 is only one example of the rising trend of diseases – from Ebola to avian flu, from mad cow disease to swine flu – that have jumped from animal hosts into the human population . The rising trend in such diseases (called zoonotic) is driven by the degradation of our natural environment – deforestation, resource extraction, increased demand for animal protein; a rise in intense and unsustainable farming; the increased use and exploitation of wildlife and the climate crisis.

We must choose which part of ‘normal’ we want to go back to. To avoid future pandemics we must care for the health of people, animals and the environment.
It is time to build back better.

Rev Dr Rachel Mash
Environmental Coordinator
Anglican Church of Southern Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sermons:

- Love your neighbour- Bishop Geoff Davies
- A Living Community- Rev Shaun Cozett
- Need not greed- Canon Janet Trisk
- Water is Life - Rev Dr Rachel Mash

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Week Three	Need not Greed	Exodus 16:2-15	Psalm 105; 1-6, 37-45	Philippians 1:21-30	Matthew 20: 1-16
Week Four	Water of Life	Exodus 17:1-17	Psalm 78:1-4, 11-15	Philippians 2:1-13	Matthew 21:23-32
Week Five	St Francis Day	Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, 12-20	Psalm 19	Philippians 3:4b-14	Matthew 21:33-46

This Season of Creation we are using the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary rather than themes. Each section contains sermon notes and liturgical resources.

Five Movements of the Liturgy

The following five movements form the order of the liturgy: God gathers us, Service of the Word, Responding to the Word, Service of the Table and Commissioning.

- **The Gathering:** The congregation is welcomed, and the theme of the service is introduced. The penitence can be positioned here, or it may follow the sermon.
- **The Proclamation of God's word:** Here the word of God is read and preached.
- The affirmation of our Faith can be an important part of the Proclamation
- **Responding to God's word:** Prayers of the People are included here. Creative responses such as drama, liturgical dance or short video clips can be used. The penitence may follow the word.
- **The peace** may be shared according to custom
- **Celebrating at the Table:** Natural elements can be used, either a whole loaf or small rolls. This could be baked by a family. Local wine can be used.
- **Sending out:** Post Communion prayers, prayers of commitment on the theme of the day and a blessing.



FIRST EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God of all of Creation

It is right to give God thanks and praise

You spoke the Word and all that is in heaven and on the earth, all things, came to be. Your Spirit hovered over the primal elements, and you brought forth life in forms innumerable, including this our fragile earth, and we amongst its inhabitants.

As our past is in you, so our hope for the future rests with you. As we have turned from your way, so we turn again to the warmth of your love. Through you all things are brought to new life.

And now we give you thanks for the glories of your creation given into our care, and for the opportunities we have to share that richness with all your people.

And so with the wonders of creation and the songs of praise of all your creatures both in heaven and on earth we praise you now and forever saying:

Holy, holy...

In the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, work of human hands, gift of our earth, and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread to speak to us of the breaking of his body upon the cross.

He gave it to his friends and said:

Take and eat, for this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

He took the wine, work of human hands, gift of our earth, and gave thanks to God, Creator. He poured out the wine to speak to us of the pouring out of his blood. He gave it to his friends saying:

This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for all creation for the forgiveness of sins. Every time you drink of the wine, do this in remembrance of me.

So we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

Therefore God, we who seek your reconciliation; we who need reconciliation one with another; we who hope for reconciliation with all creation, draw close to this mystery.

In being broken, poured out and buried, life sprang forth again. In the breaking, there is an opening up; in the pouring out, there are the roots of sharing; in death and burial, there is the seed of the new life to come.

As we look in our world, in our lives, and in our hearts, for his second coming, keep us close to this vision that we have seen. Through the giving in the bread and wine,



reconcile us to our world. Send upon us, and upon all your creation, the life-giving Spirit who first moved upon the waters of the deep. Stir in us the creative and redeem the destructive. Unite us with you through the body and blood of your Son, your Word made flesh.

By whom, and with whom and in whom, in the unity of your Creative Spirit, with all that has been, is, and will be in your universe, we stand before you and worship you, God of all, in songs of everlasting praise,

Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer etc

Final blessing

Go out into the world rejoicing, and encounter the Creator who waits to meet you there;

Rejoice in its richness and diversity and live as those who praise God for its bounty;

and the blessing of the Creator God, the Eternal Father, the Risen Son and the Promised Holy Spirit

bless you that you might be a blessing to others today and always.

Amen

SECOND EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up unto the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

We thank and praise you almighty Father. In wisdom you guide the course of the world and cherish us with all tender care.

We thank you that we can come together around this table in the name of Jesus your Son, the first born of all creation. In him all things were created, visible and invisible, and all things hold together in him.

We thank you that you have sent your Holy Spirit to make of us a new community of faith to serve you within your creation.

And now we give you thanks because you have given the earth into our care, and call us to praise you day by day for the marvels of your creation.

And so with the wonders of creation and the songs of praise of all your creatures both in heaven and on earth we join in one great act of awe and adoration:

Holy, holy, holy...

God of all creation, send your Spirit upon the goodness of the earth, and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that in them we may recognize and receive



the fullness of the Risen Christ: bread broken and wine poured, Body given, and Blood shed.

On the night he sat at table with his disciples and with them recalled the wonder of your creation and the wonder of your covenant with your chosen people, He took bread, gave you thanks, blessed it and broke it, saying:

Take this all of you and eat it. This is my Body, which will be given up for you.

In the same way he took the cup and giving you thanks and praise, He gave the cup to his disciples and said:

Take this all of you and drink from it, this is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

So we proclaim the mystery of faith

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again

As we remember the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we celebrate the goodness of the earth, our companionship in this world and the sharing of all skills and arts that

enrich our lives. We share the cup of our humanity matured over the unnumbered centuries of the long struggle that has gone into making of this world; our living and dying, our fears and our hopes.

Together with those who have drawn sustenance from this soil, those with whom we share it, and those to whom we pass it on, we share this bread and raise this cup in fulfilment of the Lord's command: through him, with him, in him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer etc

Final blessing

Go forth confident in the hope in which you have been saved:

praise God in all creation:

follow Christ through whom all things are made:

in the power of the Spirit become a beacon of hope to the world:

and the blessing of the Creator God, the Eternal Father, the Risen Son and the promised Holy Spirit bless you that you might be a blessing to others today and always. **Amen**

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WEEK ONE

Who is my Neighbour?

Exodus 12:1-14	The ten commandments give guidance for how we should live
Psalms 149	A great song of Praise
Romans 13: 8-14	Love of your neighbour may lead a call for civil disobedience
Matthew 18:15-20	How we can challenge each other as members of the Christian family

COLLECT

Lord of all existence
Of land and sea and sky
Fish and fowl and butterfly
Help us to find each other in the fellowship of created beings
And to celebrate our diversity
In love and praise of you,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen



SERMON

Introduction

How do the Scriptures, written two to three thousand years ago, relate to life in our current challenges? COVID-19 has turned our country, our communities and our churches upside down. We don't know exactly where it came from, but it seems that it probably came from a pangolin, jumped to a bat and at a "wet market" – where sick animals and raw meat were lying together, jumped to humans. More and more diseases are jumping from animals to humans, as we continue to destroy eco-systems. Ebola, SARS, swine flu, avian flu, were all wake up calls, but we didn't listen.

COVID-19 has taught us that the whole world is interconnected, as it has moved across the globe. We have also been made aware of the plight of our neighbours, the homeless, the hungry, the sick and bereaved, and even as the church buildings have been shut down, the church has been at work, being church in the world.

What does Scripture say about our relationship with the rest of the web of life, our relationship with people from other countries, and our relationship with those who are vulnerable in our own context? Who is our neighbour?

Exodus 12:1-14

The Passover is a key event in the salvation of God's people. God had a plan for the Israelites, apart from liberating them, which was to set up a new society based on ethical principles. During the Israelites' time in the Wilderness God gave us the Ten Commandments to guide our behaviour and show us the way to living in peace and harmony with God and our neighbour.

The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. We are called to worship God alone, but we have turned instead to worship 'mammon' – money – and we idolise our consumer goods, be they the latest car, cell phone or jewellery or fashion clothes. The remaining six commandments provide essential principles for our behaviour towards our neighbour – and we know how devastating and disrupting to our social

and personal well-being transgressions of any of those six Commandments can be. We continue to steal - corruption occurs on a massive scale in our contemporary world, and we are also stealing from future generations. We continue to kill, failing to recognise the sanctity of life, violence including gender-based violence is rampant in society. On a global scale we still threaten others with weapons of mass destruction.

We don't speak the truth; we bear false witness, particularly in politics. The tenth commandment -thou shalt not covet - might seem to be the most innocuous, yet our present economic system encourages and drives us to covet, increasing inequalities in our world.

Psalms 149

The last three Psalms in the Psalter are all praise Psalms to God. Praise for God's Universal Glory (Psalm 148); Praise for God's Goodness to Israel (Psalm 149) and Praise for God's Surpassing Greatness (Psalm 150).

It is good to read Psalm 149 in conjunction with Psalm 148 where we hear not only people but all of Creation praising God. Praise comes to God from the highest heavens, from the Sun and Moon, from the Earth and the deeps of the sea, from the mountains and hills, from fruit trees and Cedars, from wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds, kings of the earth and all peoples. Psalm 149 continues the praise, now from Israel and the children of Zion. As humans we praise God with our human neighbours, but also in the company of our neighbours from the great web of life.

Romans 13: 8-14

In the opening verses of Chapter 13, Paul tells us that every person should "be subject to the governing authorities". These verses were notoriously used and quoted by the Apartheid government of South Africa and continue to be used by authoritarian and undemocratic governments to justify their unjust and often corrupt rule. It was the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town at the time, Bill Burnett, who stated that we could not be subject to the governing authorities if these authorities were



not being obedient to God. The principle of civil disobedience has been followed by many Christians fighting unjust laws.

Globally we are now seeing the younger generation rising up in protest and civil disobedience, such as the school strikes and Extinction Rebellion protests, speaking out about climate change.

Paul quotes four of the Ten Commandments: “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and concludes that all the commandments are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbour as yourself.....Love is the fulfilling of the law”. (v 8-12)

In our modern society we need to ask ourselves – who is my neighbour? Our neighbours are the people who live downstream of our waste. Our neighbours are those who are impacted by climate change because of our choices of energy or investment income. Our neighbours are the generations to come who will live on a bleak and barren world because of our consumerist society. Our neighbours are also the many living creatures who make up the web of life on which we depend, and which God has called us to safeguard. Might we be called to civil disobedience on behalf of our neighbour?

Matthew 18: 15 – 20

This passage explains how we should react if a brother or sister, a member of the Christian Church sins. This shows the early church community, who were Jewish converts, grappling with the issue of how the community could save a brother or sister and restore them to the flock or family of the church.

If they do not listen, they would be excluded from the church in the way tax collectors and Gentiles were excluded from the synagogue. There should be discipline and disciplinary action by the faith community.

We are faced with a new theological question for our time - how do we respond to Church members who are sinning against God’s Creation? For a long time, the Church has focussed on individual sins, particularly sexual sins. And yet our lifestyle is destroying the web of life and hurting the most

vulnerable of society.

The Patriarch of the Orthodox church says this “We have traditionally regarded sin as being merely what people do to other people. Yet, for human beings to destroy the biological diversity in God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by contributing to climate change, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, land and air – all of these are sins.”

The question is deep – how do we challenge our brothers and sisters in Christ to stop sinning against Creation and the generations to come?

Living the word

How do we love our neighbour in the current ecological crisis? We know that we must feed the hungry – but the question today is “how do we stop people from becoming hungry?” How do we establish justice and equity for people and all of life? There is enough on this planet for our needs, but not enough for our greed. The destruction of planetary life is not God’s will. This must be loudly proclaimed from every pulpit and Bible study around the world. Environmental care must become a priority.

We are commanded to love our neighbour, the vulnerable, the future generations and the whole web of life. To do so, we must consciously seek to live in harmony with God, one another, and the natural world. And we must be an example to all of humanity that we must stop being so selfish in the way we treat nature and our fellow human beings.

Encourage your worshipping community to get involved in caring for creation, keep informed about social and environmental issues, and develop a voice to encourage political authorities, locally and nationally, to recognise their environmental responsibilities and to take appropriate action. By establishing Eco-Justice, that is ecological and economic justice, we shall overcome the huge inequality and poverty existing in our world today. Here are some practical examples of actions you can take:

- Forty percent of food is wasted every day while two and a half billion people go hungry.



Examine your life- style and commit to reducing food waste.

- We must establish natural reserves, both on land and in the oceans, so that all God's creation can not only survive but thrive. Connect with your nearest reserve, grow indigenous plants. Do not use pesticides that destroy biodiversity.
- Do not litter - it is a contemporary form of blasphemy; we sin against God as we throw our plastic out of the car window. Campaign for the end of all plastic packaging and advocate for responsible, returnable containers.
- Advocate for the end of fossil fuels. We have been given all the energy we need through renewable energy resources. It is blowing in the wind and shining on us daily.

- Insist on sustainable fishing practices.
- Reduce your meat consumption. Modern meat production is both cruel and a major cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

“Resolving the ecological crisis of our planet is no longer a problem we can leave to the scientists. Just as we are all part of the problem, so we are all also part of the solution. We all need to come to terms with the forces that have created this crisis and the resources within our traditions that can motivate us to resolve the crisis. One of those traditions is our biblical heritage”ⁱ. Archbishop Tutu

In the words of Pope Francis, let us hear the “Cry of the poor and the Cry of the Earth’ and commit to loving our neighbour.

Bishop Geoff Davies
(Adapted from Word and Worship)

References

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A E Harvey, Companion to the New Testament (Oxford/Cambridge)

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK ONE

CALL TO WORSHIP

So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.’ (Matthew 7:12)

Christ teaches us to love all our neighbours, not just our own family and friends. This love extends to our grandchildren and future generations. Loving our neighbour means that we need to think about our life-style choices for the sake of our neighbours, both human and the whole natural world.ⁱⁱ

CONFESSION

Lord God our maker and our redeemer
this is your world and we are your people:
come among us and save us.

We have misused your gifts of creation, and have regarded them as nothing more than resources for us to exploit.

Look with mercy on your people:

All: and forgive us.

We have seen the ill-treatment of others
and have not gone to their aid.

Look with mercy on your people:

All: and forgive us.

We have not loved you with all our heart,
nor our neighbours as ourselves.

Look with mercy on your people:

All: and forgive us.

May God who loved the world
so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour,
forgive us our sins, pour into our hearts his
compassion, his wisdom, and his strength, and
make us holy to serve him in the world,
that all creation may recognise its worth
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen ⁱⁱⁱ

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Creator God, how deep are your designs!
You made a living earth, cloud, rain and wind, and
charged us with their care.

We confess that the way we live today is changing
the climate, the seas and the balance of life,

dispossessing the poor and future generations.

Build our lives into an Ark for all creation, and, as you
promised Noah never to repeat the flood, so make
us heralds of a new rainbow covenant:

Choosing life for all that is at risk – for creation,
neighbours near and far, our children and ourselves.

Amen. ^{iv}

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

I never intend to become adjusted to segregation
and discrimination.

I never intend to adjust myself to religious bigotry.

I never intend to adjust myself to economic
conditions that will take necessities from the many
to give luxuries to the few, and leave people by the
thousands and the millions smothering in an airtight
cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society;

I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of
militarism and the self-defeating effects of physical
violence. – *Dr Martin Luther King*

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

O God,
your Son made himself known to his disciples in
the breaking of bread:
open the eyes of our faith,
that we may see him in his redeeming work,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

Tend the earth, care for God’s good creation,
and bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

Love your neighbour and
Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.’





WEEK TWO

A Living Community

Exodus 14:19-31	A free community is formed as the slaves cross the Red Sea to freedom
Psalms 114	We see the power of God the Creator in the parting of the Sea
Romans 14:1-12	Do not judge others
Matthew 18:21-35	Honour in the community

COLLECT

Lord you called your people out of Egypt
to new purpose and responsibility in the Promised Land.
Bind us together in care for each other
and deepen in us our vocation
to care for the community of life
through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen



SERMON

Exodus 14:19-31

Today we read about the Israelites passing through the Red Sea. The pillar of fire that had led them at night was placed between the Israelites and the pursuing Egyptians so that the Egyptians could not see them. God, through Moses, parted the sea so that the Israelites were able to cross to the other side. Reading the text within the Jewish tradition one would be acutely aware that God acts on behalf of the Israelites as part of God's promise to Abraham that they would be God's people.

The Abrahamic covenant also indicates that God would give the Israelites the land that was being occupied by the Canaanites and the exodus from Egypt begins the journey by which the people are to receive that portion of the covenant and be established in the Promised Land. Here they will be called to live out God's laws in society as the people of God. As we reflect on God acting on behalf of the Israelite community we are reminded that under the new covenant we are incorporated into the community of faith through the sacrifice of Jesus. As we reflect on this story during the time of Covid-19, we are reminded that God is able to act, not only in the best interest of the individual but also of the family, the community, the country and church.

Psalms 114

Psalms 114 retells the story of the exodus from Egypt and how the people of Israel escaped from Egypt. The Psalmist focusses here on the parting of the Red Sea and questions why it took place. The Psalmist asks "Why sea, did you flee? And the reply points us to the power of God the Creator – "Tremble Earth at the presence of the Lord". This story mixes the past and present tenses as a way of blurring the lines between what God has done in history and what God is able to do today. Thus, the story of the liberation of the Israelites in history helps us to see that God is able to act for us today. This passage also shows us the importance of asking questions. During this time of Covid-19 scientists are asking questions about how the virus emerged, how it spreads and how the disease should best be treated and ultimately cured. As people of faith we

take the example of the Psalmist and ask why? Why do diseases flourish during our lifetime? Why are so many underlying social conditions (eg. inequality, substance abuse and gender based violence) being manifested during the lockdown? Why are we called to be the church during a time such as this?

Romans 14:1-12

In this passage we see Paul addressing the question of religious dietary laws; should the new followers of the way adhere to the dietary laws. Paul explains that some will choose to obey the laws and others will choose to forgo them. What is important is not whether we choose to adhere or forgo the rules but rather that in eating or not eating we do so in order to honour God. Paul reminds us that our aim is not to be right and judge those who are wrong, our aim is to be faithful to God and to our calling. It challenges us to be non-judgemental to those who make different choices to ours even for environmental reasons. Some may choose to be vegans, some may choose to eat fairly sourced meat, some reduce their meat and become "flexitarians", we may make different choices to honour God and creation. Ours is not to judge others, it is to be faithful to what we believe God is calling us to do, to serve God and protect creation.

Matthew 18:21-35

In today's passage, Matthew discusses the importance of forgiveness. Using the parable of the forgiving king, Matthew juxtaposes the king with a servant who was unable to forgive. In doing so, Matthew instructs the community to follow the example of the king who forgives and not that of the servant who is unable to forgive. We need to understand this passage within the cultural understanding of success. In particular, how do we define a successful person today, versus the definition during Biblical times?

Most of us would probably use terms like rich, flashy cars, big houses and so on to define success. That would make sense because our current worldview is based on Economics. The pursuit of money and goods dominates our thinking and determines our behaviour and status. It determines aspects of our identity; including where we live, what health care



and education we have access to and who we associate with.

In ancient cultures the attitude to money was different – these cultures held honour to be the highest value. Success was determined not by what you have, but by the opinion that the community had of you¹. The opinion of the community was formed primarily based on the family you came from; if the family was wealthy or powerful then all the members of the family were seen as honourable. A child born into this society is therefore regarded as honourable if the family into which that child is born is seen as being honourable. Another way to acquire honour was to do an honourable deed, for example giving to the poor or saving a life.

If the community had a negative view of a person's status, that would be called shame. As is the case with honour, it was possible for a person born into a shameful family and to thus be seen as shameful, or to do deeds that destroy and thereby be regarded as shameful. The low status of shame was apportioned based on the social categories of family, tribe, gender, slave vs. free etc. A person could also be seen as shameful if they committed shameful acts. The thinking and behaviour of people within honour and shame cultures was driven by the desire to refrain from being seen as shameful and if honourable to maintain that status at all costs.

It is important for us to understand the culture of honour and shame as we preach this week's sermon. We could easily take this parable about money and make money itself the centre of our sermons, as a reflection of our current society, but in the Biblical context money and forms of exchange were far more about ensuring a positive opinion from the community than about acquiring wealth. As we read the texts today, we use the historical lens and gaze back at what it might have meant in the context and then draw lessons on what it could mean for us.

Today's readings aim to show us that true honour comes not from being born into the right family, but rather in how we treat each other. The person who failed to forgive the debt of another failed to understand the importance of community and would have been seen as self-interested. Peter would have understood that such a person is not

favourably viewed or considered successful.

Preaching the Word

In 1964 Garit Hardin wrote his famous piece "Tragedy of the Commons". In it Hardin tells the story of two adjacent properties, one privately owned and one common property. Hardin observes that the state of the private farm is much better than that of the common. He explains that the owner of the private property understands that moving the cattle from one patch to another in order to allow the grazed patch to recover is important because the owner has a personal interest in the longevity of his property. At the same time, the common becomes overgrazed because herders have no personal interest in protecting what is held in common.

This story of the tragedy of the commons has become an important story in understanding how we are to care for the environment. Hardin's story tells us that unless we begin to care for common property as shared property for the benefit of all we will suffer the consequences of systems breaking down. Already we are beginning to see the impact that our use of fossil fuels has on the climate. For the past two decades the leaders of the world have been meeting to discuss how best they might respond to the impending climate crisis. The basis of all these talks has been that every country is focussed on their own needs and talks have often stalled because one country waits for another to make the first move. All this while carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere increase, storms become greater in number and severity and record high and low temperatures are set on an almost annual basis.

The same can be seen in other systems such as the oceans, which are becoming more acidic, forest that are being felled, water resources drying up and arable land becoming deserts. Our current experience with Covid-19 also reminds us how failure to care for common property leads to the emergence of viruses. The changing climate has also created conditions for the emergence of water-borne diseases and mosquito-borne diseases. Deforestation and habitat loss have meant that animals and insects have to migrate to new environments, e.g. the bats that were responsible for the Ebola outbreak. Our food-production system, with its large livestock farms, has also



created condition under which diseases are able to cross from animals to humans.²

Living the Word

This week's texts remind of the importance of community. We are reminded of God establishing the people of Israel as God's own people and how God acts for them in order that the covenant that God made with Abraham may be fulfilled. A common theme across the texts tells us to value community and to do all we can in order to protect our lives together.

As we focus on the environment during the Season of Creation, we are called also to look at common property within the community and on the planet for example the oceans, the air, fresh water and open

spaces. These places are not owned by anyone, but their survival depends on all of us working together. Our failure in the past to protect common property has led to the near collapse of ecosystems throughout the world. In fact, the emergence of some viruses, such as this novel coronavirus, can be directly linked to the neglect of the global commons.

Who cares for common property? Do we have an interest in the places we do not own? Do we recognise the importance of common property for the good of the community?

Rev Shaun Cozett
(Adapted from Word and Worship)

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK TWO

CALL TO WORSHIP

Be with us Spirit of God;
for you rejoice in diversity and unity.

You generate and nurture;
you dare to risk and you hold safe.

Speak into us the wisdom of God;
bring strength, healing and peace.

CONFESSION

Dear God of healing and restoration
We have been blind to the needs of others
Blind to the hurts and abuses we have caused
Blind to the privileges we take for granted
Lord let our eyes be opened.

We have seen our neighbours as enemies
We cringe in fear of those who are different
We shame and demean the poor and needy
Lord let our eyes be opened

We have refused kindness and compassion
We have not shared our own bounty
We have not been a blessing to others
Lord, let our eyes be opened

Give us the power to follow you
Make us humble enough to carry others
Make us aware enough to see their need
Lord, let our eyes be opened.
Amen^{vi}

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

O Great Creator who paints beauty everywhere.
weeds have grown up in holy and sacred places.
All our labour of reconciliation seems in vain
and the virus threatens to undo our gatherings.

We feel overwhelmed with the troubles.
people are plagued by many worries.
The selfish and the arrogant refuse to see
that we are interdependent and one family.

You created us, diverse and gifted in beauty
with resources and talents enough to share,
yet we would hoard and hide it for ourselves
turning the strangers into our enemies.

Make us one people today, dear Lord
make us worry only about the whole family
give us your beauty and generous creativity
that we might be woven together in love.
Amen.

PEACE

You are the peace of all things calm
You are the place to hide from harm
You are the light that shines in dark
You are the heart's eternal spark
You are the door that's open wide
You are the guest who waits inside
You are the stranger at the door
You are the calling of the poor

The peace of the Lord be always with you

SENDING OUT

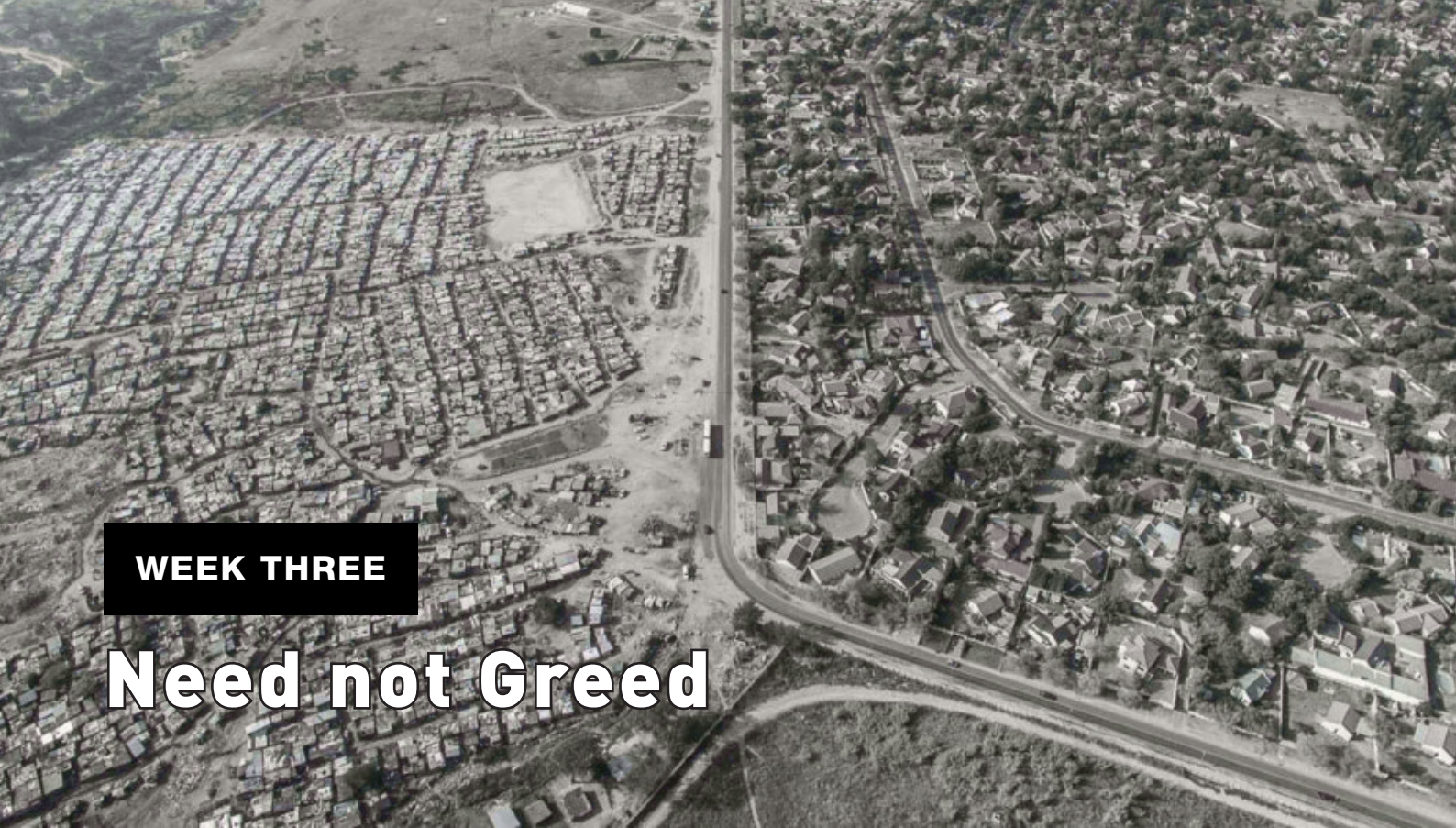
Loving Creator of seasons and lifetimes
you ask us to follow but we would lead
you ask us to be humble and deny ourselves
but we ache to return to greatness that never was.

We want so much to be renewed and energized
yet we refuse to let our power go to others
we hold on tight to the control we don't have
and refuse to see your face in the need around us.

Let us be like those ancestors before us
who always saw the holy in each and every one
who saw your imprint in the sand and mountains
who lived for others and lived for the Divine.

Strengthen us for service today and everyday
make us humble enough to follow you daily
into dark alleys and teeming streets of need
let us be the love you wish to share with our world.^{vii}





WEEK THREE

Need not Greed

Exodus 16: 2-15	God provides for our need not our greed
Psalms 105: 1-6, 37-45	God provides heat, food and water from nature
Philippians 1: 21-30	We are called to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ
Matthew 20: 1-16	Economic exploitation of workers

COLLECT

God of all that is:

Free us from the fear of insufficiency
and the clamour to possess.

Make us generous in the abundance of your love
and deepen us in the understanding
that in Christ enough has been given

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen



SERMON

Introduction

The theme running through today's lessons might be thought of as a two-sided coin. On one side of the coin we see depicted God's generosity and careful provision for all creation. The other side of the coin is human greed which leads to hoarding and thus exploitation of one another.

Exodus 16: 2-15

We read that in the desert the Hebrew people grumbled against Moses and Aaron. "Did you bring us out of Egypt only to have us starve to death in the desert?" This is just one of many grumbings that will happen on the way to the Promised land. They also grumble about there being no water, about Moses marrying a foreigner, about the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

In response, God gives them manna and quail.

Psalm 105: 1-6, 37-45

The psalmist gives thanks to God for God's saving acts in history. The verses set for today rehearse the wider story of the reading from Exodus: from the departure from Egypt to receiving manna and quail ("food from heaven", v.40), to the Promised Land. Finally, the psalm ties in obeying God's laws with the gift of the Promised Land.^{viii}

Philippians 1: 21-30

Paul, writing from prison, reflects on the dilemma of life and death. Life means suffering, but also affords the opportunity to continue the work of the gospel. Death means being with Christ. Either way, Christ is at the centre.

One might contrast Paul's acceptance of suffering with the "murmuring" of the Hebrews in Exodus.

Matthew 20: 1-16

This is the familiar parable of the workers in the vineyard, who are all given the same wage, no matter how long they laboured. We might note that in v. 11 those who had borne the heat of the

day and laboured longest, like the Hebrew people in Exodus, "murmured" or "grumbled" against the landowner.

The usual interpretation of the parable in Matthew is that God is like the vineyard owner and treats everyone – first and last – just the same. But a Biblical scholar named Obery Hendricks offers another interpretation^x. He notes, first of all, what the story tells us about working conditions in first century Israel. People work from dawn to dusk for a denarius. A twelve-hour working day is long in anyone's book. And to be paid a denarius was indeed the usual daily wage, but it was not a living wage. A denarius was just about enough to keep you coming back for another day of work so you (perhaps) can survive to work another day.

Furthermore, there is a big pool of day labourers in the story, who hang around waiting for employment. At each point of the day, workers are available. Even at five in the afternoon, some are still in the day labour market. This indicates a sizeable number of unemployed people who are reduced to scrambling for any little bit of work they can get.

For Hendricks, the landowner is not God, but more like the owner of an extensive wine farm in the Western Cape. By offering the very minimum denarius, the landowner is exploiting labour.

He apparently has an exceptionally large vineyard. (Notice how he keeps coming for more workers.) How could the landowner have attained all that property? One way would be to take land in settlement of the debts owed to him by poorer people

Then, to top it off, when the landowner comes to employ the last lot of workers, he asks them why they haven't worked. "Why are you standing around idle?" he asks, all but calling them lazy. He presumes that they are unemployed because of some choice, as if he didn't know that they were unemployed in the first place because they had been forced off their land.

In paying the last the same as the first, the vineyard owner insults those who were first hired. When the first "grumble," he singles out their leader -- the text says he spoke to "one of them." The landowner



denies doing wrong, and then fires the leader. "Take what belongs to you and go." The landowner adopts an all-too-typical strategy: Fire the union organizer.

Some will argue that the use of the word "Friend: in verse 13 – "Friend I am not being unfair to you" mitigates against Hendricks interpretation. The Greek word that is translated as "friend" is *etairos*. Matthew uses *etairos* in only three places – here, in 22:12 where it refers to the guest at a wedding banquet who refuses to wear the wedding garment, and in 26:50 where it refers to Judas, the arch-traitor. None would be considered a positive example. If Hendricks is right that the use of "friend" is sarcastic, that would support his argument that the land-owner is haughty and dismissive.

The parable challenges the usual hierarchies we assume. "The last will be first and the first last." If as Hendricks suggests, the landowner is a greedy, penny pinching employer, the parable is clearly a criticism of economic exploitation of the poor by the rich.

The broader story of the Exodus is also a challenge to economic exploitation. In Egypt the Hebrew people are enslaved and when they pose a threat because of their increase in numbers, their Egyptian overlords make conditions even more tough for them to perform their work. After their escape from slavery and in the wilderness wanderings the Hebrew people have to learn a new way of relating that includes principles of trust in God, generosity and that they need not hoard what God gives them. So long as each takes what they need, and no-one hoards there will be enough. If we had read a little further in Exodus 16, we would have heard how, as each person gathered manna in the wilderness, no matter how much or little they gathered, each had enough. However, some of the Hebrews, in contravention of God's instructions, hoarded the food they did not consume, and it became rotten

As many commentators note, the appearance of quail and manna are very natural phenomena in the middle east. Quail – little guinea fowl like birds – migrate from Africa to Europe and along the way settle down in great flocks each night to rest. What is called manna (which is just a word derived from the Hebrew *man hu*, which means "what is it?" is a

substance secreted each early morning by tamarisk trees. So in summary: God immediately responds to the hunger of the Hebrews. And God responds in perfectly natural ways. God's world is a hospitable home for all, provided we gather what we need and do not hoard.

Living the Word

It is easy to dismiss the Hebrews as ungrateful wretches. God has brought them out of slavery in Egypt. They are on their way to the Promised Land. What do they have to complain about? However, don't these ancient grumblings sound very modern? We too grumble about there not being enough water. We too grumble about foreigners in our midst. We too grumble about our leaders.

When we are comfortable it's very easy to dismiss the grumbling of others. God brought you into freedom, how can you grumble about food? Why are you burning tyres when you have an RDP house? Why are you going on strike when you have a job? But it's hard to take the long view, when one is cold or hungry or ill or fearful. Notice God's response to the hunger of the grumbling Hebrew people. God sends food – quail at night and manna each morning. God does not blame the Hebrews for losing the big picture. God's concern is for those who are hungry, for those whose immediate needs are being ignored by those in power.

Similarly, it is easy to dismiss the workers in the parable as ungrateful – as the landowner does. But although good work/ creativity is a characteristic of God, slave labour is not. The Sabbath rest is a fundamental principle.

The first lesson in the wilderness is this: Share. Be generous. The mentality of Egypt and the landowner is to grab power and consolidate it. The mentality of God is generosity. This is the example for all God's people. However, notice what happens when the "fair" treatment is imposed from the outside, as in the case of the wealthy landowner. Each worker gets the same daily wage. But this is because he imposes this "equality" on the workers. It is in freedom from oppression that we can learn to relate fairly to one another.

What the Hebrew people still have to learn and what



we still have to learn is that there is enough. But in order for there to be enough we have to share. And whatever we hoard goes bad. In this Season of Creation, it is easy to fall into despondency: the earth and its creatures are doomed. However, the promise from the story of the Exodus is that even in the wilderness, there is enough, if only we will take

just what we need and no more.

Canon Janet Trisk
(Adapted from Word and Worship)

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK THREE

CALL TO WORSHIP

God of all creation,
your spirit dances throughout the earth.
You give drink to the trees, shade for the birds,
bread for the hungry.
You bring life and make all things holy.
Flood our hearts with your grace,
so we may sow seeds of love, justice and beauty,
and reflect your kingdom here on earth.
We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,

Amen

CALL TO REPENTANCE

From the rising sun to the smallest of creatures, all of the earth is good. Yet, we see how our fragile world is being robbed by the hand of greed. In many countries, water is no longer safe to drink. The rainforests are slashed down and their inhabitants violently expelled, in the interests of money and power. Farming has become an extractive industry that destroys the rich living soil. Animals are raised in conditions of pain and suffering to satisfy our desire for cheap meat.

"Sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, is crying out pleading that we take another course. We are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness."³

We recognise our part in harming the earth and our neighbours, and we ask for the Lord's forgiveness. In the silence of our hearts, let us reflect on how to change our lives and care for God's wonderful gift of creation.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Oh God of creatures small and great
We are full of worries and cares
Yet you called us to follow you
To the hidden and distant places
So that we might care for others

You shower us with love and abundance
Yet daily we fret it will be all lost
We count, store up and hoard things
And we fail to share your generosity
We want to be genuinely grateful

As we fail to see how love has redeemed us
We keep that love for ourselves as if
You don't have an endless supply for all

Help us to follow you here and now
Help us to care for the most vulnerable
Give us that love that casts out fear
Set us on the blessing road of your servants.

Amen.^x

PRAYER BEFORE THE EUCHARIST

In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love.

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.⁴

SENDING OUT

Lord, allow my ears to listen to the cry of the earth,
the voices of my sisters and brothers,
those who face the harsh reality of climate change.
Lord, send me.

Lord, allow my eyes to see the beauty of creation,
in flowers, creatures, forests, and cities alike.
Lord send me.

Lord, allow my voice to speak out for justice
and ensure people living in poverty are heard.
Lord, Send me.

Lord, allow my hands to care for the earth,
to toil, to reap, to celebrate.
Lord, Send me.

Lord, allow my feet to take the path less trod,
to walk the extra mile,
to carry your compassion out to the world.
Lord, Send me.

Through the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, may you go forth with joy to care for creation.**Amen.**^{xi}





WEEK FOUR

Water is Life

Exodus 17:1-7	God provides water in the desert
Psalm 78: 1-4, 12-16	God splits the rocks to provide water
Philippians 2:1-13	Humility and a simpler life-style will reduce your impact on the earth
Matthew 21: 23-32	Actions are called for, not just words

COLLECT

Lord of all the waters
Of oceans, rivers, aquifers and lakes, evaporation and rain
Grant us humility before the resources of the world
To respect their limits
And to acknowledge our dependence on them.
May the waters of the world remind us of the grace of life
and the depth of your love
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen



SERMON

Exodus 17: 1-7

The story of the people of Israel traveling through the desert of Sin reminds us of the absolute dependency of human beings on water. Many of the current conflict zones have as one of their roots the lack of water. For instance, the war in Syria was preceded by 7 years of drought which pushed farmers off the land into the cities, creating tensions in those communities. Cape Town managed to avert the day zero crisis of taps being turned off, but there were threats of the army being called in if day zero had been reached.

In this passage God tells Moses to strike the rock in a symbolic action. Later we hear that God becomes angry with him for the way in which he strikes the rock. In the Numbers passage Moses strikes the rock in his anger at the 'rebellious' people.

"Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. (Numbers 20:11-12)

This is a powerful reminder that we are to protect our sources of water, treat them with reverence and not abuse them. Much of Africa (as with the Middle East) is dependent on ground water sources such as aquifers. It is a sin and a crime against future generations if we abuse our water sources because of the urgent demands of people.

A more affluent lifestyle consumes vast quantities of treated water. Drinking quality water gushes into long showers, irrigated gardens and swimming pools, in contrast with the single taps or polluted water that people in poor communities use.

Psalm 78: 1-4, 12-16

The miracles that are referred to in this passage refer to the wonders of water, how God divided the sea so that the people of Israel could pass through. He split the rocks in the desert to give abundant water. This reminds us of the Exodus passage where the needs of both people and their livestock is met.

Hundreds of feet under the desert of the modern-day Negev lie vast aquifers. The water is brackish, though far less salty than seawater. Throughout the Negev desert there are examples of modern water technology, including huge greenhouses for tomatoes and peppers. The crops from the Negev are timed to provide tomatoes and peppers out of season. And for two weeks each year the majority of tomatoes in Europe come from the Negev desert. This is indeed a miracle. But it is not a renewable miracle. Like seams of coal, once the water is extracted, it is gone forever. There may only be enough to last another 100 years.

Here is a video of the River Zin in the desert coming to life – streams in the desert

<https://youtu.be/bMm8wWNo7cA>

Philippians 2: 1-13

Most of the world's environmental challenges have at the heart the sin of greed. This passage gives the principles for life that could save this planet – be humble as Christ was and look to the interests of others not your own.

It is a desire for status that pushes us to continuously buy the latest gadget, car or TV screen. If we all lived a simpler lifestyle, the planet would have enough for our need, there is not enough for our greed. If we were to put the interests of others first, we would consider the impact on the worker and the environment of the products we buy. There is no such thing as 'bargain' clothing. The clothing is cheap because of the exploitative wages paid to workers and the damage done to the environment. As well as a carbon footprint, items have a water footprint. It is estimated that a pair of jeans can require up to 20,000 litres of water in the production.

In particular today we are challenged to look at our water usage and wastage and see how we can treasure this miracle from God.

Matthew 21: 23-32

The challenge of our Gospel reading is for us to walk the walk and not just talk the talk! The first son said he would not go to the vineyard and work and yet he did so. The second one said he would



go and did not.

Are we willing to actually change our lifestyles? Many people make resolutions or pledges to change their lifestyles and yet when it comes down to it, they have made no change

Interpreting the word

'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness' (2:5-7).

Jesus, the son of God, chose the form of a slave, even to the point of suffering the form of execution often used against troublesome slaves: 'death on a cross' (2:8).

Jesus was not captured or sold as a slave; he chose this status. His approach was to consciously put aside his status of godhead, to become a slave, to put the needs of others first so much so that he was even willing to die for them.

As we reflect on how we can have the same mind of Christ, the first thing to note is that these verses do not only refer to our individual lives, because Paul also tells us that God 'gives him the name above every name(2:9) – Jesus chooses slavery and yet is the Lord and Master of the whole of heaven and earth : to whom every knee bows – both humans and all those who make up the great web of life.

So as we worship the Lord of Creation – together with the rest of creation – both humans and non-human beings, we must take on a Jesus mind set and Jesus life style that is a humble one, putting the needs of others first.

This will put us in conflict with many of the values and aspirations of the culture and society in which we live. Our society has exalted the needs of humans above the rest of creation. We have exalted the needs of a small percentage of those humans over the needs of the vast majority. We are using far more than our fair share of water.

There is a saying that "until you have carried water you do not understand its value". Across the

continent many people live in water poverty – defined as less than 20 litres of water per day. In solidarity with those who have not got access to water, let us voluntarily reduce our water consumption and protect this precious resource.

Preaching the Word

The Philippians passage draws together two key concepts: firstly Jesus is the Lord of All Creation. The whole web of life bends the knee to worship him. We are part of a great web of life, it is not only humans who worship the Lord. Water as part of Creation has a value and sacredness, and we are called to treasure and protect it.

Secondly, we are called to live a Jesus- life style, choosing to reduce our status and to consider the needs of others over our own.

We have no right to "Lord it over" creation for it is Jesus who is the Lord of all creation.

If Jesus was willing to give up his status as God in order to become a slave, then we are called to live lives of service to others and to take up the call to a simpler lifestyle. Are you willing to reduce your use of water, to simplify your lifestyle? To consciously use water as if each drop were precious?

Let us remember that water is a gift of God. Water is mentioned 722 times in the Bible and yet how often do we actually preach about it? As Christians we became part of the family of God through the waters of baptism and yet we do not treat it as our sacred element.

We all know that Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan. But do we know our Jordan River? We think that the water used in our church for baptism came from a tap, but from which river was it drawn to get there? Can we adopt and protect that river as our Jordan?

Living the Word

What would a simpler lifestyle look like in practice? We live in a water scarce country and the impact of climate change as well as population growth will lead to increasing water shortages in the years to come. What can we do? Here are a few examples:



Water: we can all have shorter showers and put a bucket in the shower to use in the toilet. Wash clothes less frequently and make sure the machine is full. Purchase water tanks for church and home, and make sure our gardens are water wise.

Food choices: our food choices all have different water footprints. To produce a hamburger requires the same amount of water as a 60-minute shower and the water needed to produce a mouthful of steak could run your dishwasher 22 times. One teaspoon of milk is equivalent to one flush of a dual-flush toilet and the average bathtub could be filled six times with one litre.

A family of four could save the equivalent of 17 bathtubs of water by swapping one meal of beef per

week with lentils. Cattle are fed mostly by grazing veld and rain-fed dry land, which means they have a greater green water footprint.

Plastic. Much of the plastic litter that we produce ends up in streams and eventually in the sea. One of the ways to protect the precious gift of water is to become involved in clean ups and to put pressure on companies to stop using single use plastic items.

Water is a precious gift from God, let us protect it.

**Rev Dr Rachel Mash
(Adapted from Word and Worship)**

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Green Philippians: Three Sermons on Paul's Letter to the Philippians (Rev Trevor Jamison)

LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK FOUR

CALL TO WORSHIP

When the poor and needy seek water, I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. (Isaiah 41:17–18)

The poor of the world are thirsty for justice and for peace; their journey is unending till hate and oppression cease. The Lord of Heaven is thirsty for justice and for peace; His battle is unending till hate and oppression cease.^{xii}

CONFESSION

Jesus, who raised the dead to life
Help us to find ways to renew
what we have broken, damaged and destroyed:
Where we have taken too much water,
polluted the air, poured plastic into the sea,
cut down the forests and soured fertile soils.
Help all those who work to find solutions to

damage and decay; give hope to those who are today working for a greener future.

Amen ^{xiii}

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rejoice in the Lord, for he has refreshed the parched earth.

We praise you, O God.

Rejoice for the rain that falls by night, and soaks at once into the dry ground, causing half-dried-up roots to swell, and the deep cracks in the earth to close.

We praise you, O God.

Rejoice for the great drops that fall at midday; rejoice in the small streams, singing on their way from the hills down into the valleys, to make the rivers swell and fill the reservoirs and supply the cities and irrigation channels with water.

We praise you, O God.



For the ground, for rain, for seeds and tools, for strength in arms and backs, for the will to work and for creative minds.

We praise you, O God.

You who turn storms into gentle winds, and troubled seas into tranquil waters, You who make corn to grow and bananas to blossom, Wash our people with justice; teach us with righteousness; speak to us daily; strengthen us to serve you.

God of life, God of all those who walk miles for water, God of those whose only supply is contaminated, bringing death, not life. May water, clean and life-giving, be available to every living creature. May that vision move forward. May your will be done.

Amen. ^{xiv}

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Prayer over the gifts

God of living water, welling up to eternal life,
Send your Spirit upon these gifts
That they may bring sustenance and renewal
to all who receive them:

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. ^{xv}

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

He was always the guest. In the homes of Peter and Jairus, Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna, he was always the guest. At the meal tables of the wealthy where he pleaded the case of the poor, he

was always the guest. Upsetting polite company, befriending isolated people, welcoming the stranger, he was always the guest. But here, at this table, he is the host. Those who wish to serve him must first be served by him, those who want to follow him must first be fed by him, those who would wash his feet must first let him make them clean. For this is the table where God intends us to be nourished; this is the time when Christ can make us whole. So come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world. Jesus Christ, who has sat at our tables, now invites us to be guests at his. ^{xvi}

SENDING OUT

As you go into the wilderness of the land and of your heart –

May you experience the ever-flowing grace of God's presence!

May you be immersed so fully in God's love that you learn to let go and swim!

May you engage deeply and radically with the natural world, as steward, co-creator, and friend!

May you drink anew from the divine source, the stream of living water!

And may you be transformed, may the stagnant waters of your spirit begin to flow, and may all which is dead in you rise again!

God is here. The river awaits. ^{xvii}





WEEK FIVE

St Francis Day

Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, 12-20	The Ten Commandments
Psalm 19	Creation worships God
Philippians 3: 4b-14	Humility for the sake of the gospel
Matthew 21: 33-46	The Parable of the Tenants

COLLECT

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord,
 grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world;
 that, following the way of blessed Francis,
 we may for love of you delight in your whole creation
 with perfectness of joy;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you
 and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.



LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK FIVE

OPENING SENTENCE

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth tremble before him. Psalm 96:9

CALL TO WORSHIP

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
to you be praise, glory, honour and all blessing.

**Only to you, Most High, do they belong
and no one is worthy to call upon your name.**

May you be praised, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially Brother Sun, through whom you lighten
the day for us.

**He is beautiful and radiant with great splendour;
he signifies you, O Most High.**

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars:
clear and precious and lovely, they are formed in
heaven.

**Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Wind
and by air and clouds, clear skies and all
weathers, by which you give sustenance to
your creatures.**

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very
useful and humble and precious and pure.

**Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire, by whom
the night is illumined for us: he is beautiful and
cheerful, full of power and strength.**

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister, Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us
and produces diverse fruits
and coloured flowers and grass.

(Canticle of St Francis)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Inspired by the vision of St. Francis, we commit
ourselves to the Gospel as our way of life. Our
worldview is centred in Christ; we see Jesus Christ
as the beginning, the way, and the goal of all
creation. This world vision reveals to us a God who
is Creator and a life that is love. This demands of
us a life as brothers and sisters of all people and of
all creation.

We are on a pilgrimage, following the way of Christ,

trying to live a life of love. We have not yet arrived;
we are sinners, but we are called to be saints. As
sinners, weak human beings, we must undergo
a continuing conversion, returning always to the
Father as prodigal children.

Christ was poor and Christ was crucified; we seek
to share in His poorness and in His suffering. We
further commit ourselves to the service of the poor.
In making our way through life, we are guided more
by simplicity, humility and littleness rather than
by power, prestige and status. Like Christ, like
Francis, we seek to become instruments of peace,
peacemakers.^{xviii}

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The people are invited to offer their concerns, prayer
requests, and thanksgivings at the appropriate time
during the prayers.

We are the Body of Christ. We are the church. I ask
your prayers for God's people all over the world and
for us who are gathered here. Voice your prayers
for the church.

God, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

I ask your prayers for peace. Pray for the end of
fighting and war and violence. Pray that all people
may be well and at peace.

God, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

I ask your prayers for those who are sick and
suffering. Whose name do you hold up in prayer?
(The people may add their prayer request)

God, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

I ask your prayers for people who are poor, hungry,
homeless. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

God, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

I ask your prayers for all instances of oppression
and injustice and for the will to intervene.

God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

I ask your prayers for those who have died and for those who grieve.

God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

We close our prayers by naming our thanksgivings and blessings before God

Amen.^{xix}

PEACE

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.”

The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

It is right to give thanks to you, the true and living God. You are the source of life of all life.

We offer thanks for revealing yourself to us in the

beauty of your creation, Brother Son and Sister Moon, and all that sustains life.

We offer thanks for your body, the Church, and especially for the community called together by our Brother Francis and Sister Clare.

We offer thanks for revealing yourself in Jesus who showed us your sacrificial love but was given new life to bring us together as your children.

And so, we join with Francis, Clare, and all the Saints and angels in proclaiming your glory, as we say (sing),

Holy, holy, holy Lord..

SENDING OUT

A Franciscan Blessing.

“May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.”



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Lesotho

After

Mozambique

Angola

Before

Namibia

Eswatini

South Africa



Green Anglicans
 Anglican Church of
 Southern Africa
 Environmental Network
www.greenanglicans.org



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ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM WHEN #BLACKLIVES DON'T MATTER

The world responded with urgency and speed to the challenge of COVID-19, which affected all countries.

The world has been slow to respond to climate change, clinging to an increasingly precarious and unjust economic system. It is predominantly lives of people of colour that are being impacted by drought, flooding, storms and sea level rise. The delayed global response to climate injustice gives the impression that #blacklivesdontmatter. Without urgent action, black lives will continue to be the most impacted, being dispossessed from their lands and becoming climate refugees.

We saw how COVID-19 sweeps through crowded vulnerable communities unable to socially distance; how rural communities without effective sanitation cannot keep themselves safe. Pollution affects the poor and people of colour the most, toxic dump sites are placed next to poor communities; indigenous people are forced off their land, air pollution is worst in poor communities of colour.

We stand at a Kairos moment - in order to fight environmental injustice, we must also fight racial injustice.

In the words of Archbishop Tutu, "If you are neutral in times of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Mash, R.
Season of Creation Year A
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