



Season of Creation 3



The life and example of Wangari Maathai

Wangari Muta Maathai was a Kenyan environmental and political activist. In the 1970s, Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement, an environmental non-governmental organization focused on the planting of trees, environmental conservation, and women's rights.

In 2004, she became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for "her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace". Maathai was an elected member of Parliament and served as assistant minister for Environment and Natural Resources in the government of President Mwai Kibaki between January 2003 and November 2005. She passed away in 2011.

"It is the little things citizens do that will make a difference. My little thing is planting a tree" *Wangari Maathai*

The Green Belt movement has planted over 51 million trees in Kenya.

This Season of Creation manual is dedicated to her memory. May her inspiration live on in us.

FOREWORD

Dear People of God

The Fifth mark of mission of the Anglican Church is this "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth." God created the Earth first, before people, and before the Church. So creation is our first calling.

I am delighted to commend this Season of creation manual for use in our churches.

Bishop Steve Moreo: Liaison Bishop for the Environment, Anglican Church of Southern Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anglican Church of Southern Africa Environmental Network Steering Committee: Bishop Steve Moreo, Rev Rachel Mash, Rev Andrew Warmback, Rev Tim Gray, Shaun Cozett, Kate Davies, Bishop Geoff Davies

Cover Image: Bob Mash

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Liturgical resources: Churches together in Britain and Ireland

Web of Creation

CAFOD

Operation Noah

South West Churches

seasonofcreation.com

This publication would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the WWF Nedbank Green Trust (a partnership between Nedbank and WWF), and SAFCEI.

O God,
to those who have hunger, give bread,
and to us who have bread,
give the hunger for justice.

World Council of Churches



Green Anglicans
Anglican Church of
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Environmental Network

Funded by:



INTRODUCTION

Season of Creation 3 has five themes: *Climate change, Eco-justice, Water, Creation and Redemption, and Biodiversity*. The materials can be used at any time of the year, but the suggestion is that they are used during September with the service on Biodiversity being celebrated on St Francis day, 4th of October. This is the Season of Spring and the 1-7th of September is Arbor week in South Africa.

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Climate change

"Sleeper, awake"

Isaiah 24:1-6 The Earth will dry up

Psalms 98: 1-9 God comes with justice and salvation

Romans 8:18-27 Present Suffering and Future Glory

Matthew 8:23-27 Jesus Calms the Storm

SERMON NOTES

THE SUFFERING OF CREATION

- 4 *The earth will dry up completely.
The world will dry up and waste away.
The most important people on earth will fade away.*
- 5 *The earth is polluted by its people.
They haven't obeyed the laws of the Lord.
They haven't done what he told them to do.
They've broken the covenant that will last forever.*
- 6 *So the Lord will send a curse on the earth.
Its people will pay for what they've done.
They will be burned up.*

Isaiah 24 gives a bleak picture of the desolation of earth. The human race has not obeyed the laws of God, to be good stewards of the earth.

We have broken the Covenant and so the earth is cursed. The earth will be burned up. The earth will be completely devastated. The earth will dry up completely. The prophet appears to be foretelling the worst case scenarios of climate change. It appears that the prophet may not be far from the mark....

State of the Science: Beyond the Worst Case Climate Change Scenario

More than 800 of the world's top climate scientists from more than 70 countries spent five years preparing the latest report on climate change (IPCC)

What are the scientists telling us?

The world is warming and we are causing it by pumping carbon pollution into the atmosphere.

As the world gets hotter, the atmosphere holds more water vapour. With each additional 1° Centigrade of temperature rise, the atmosphere can hold 7% more water vapour. So although we cannot say that climate change caused Hurricane Haiyan in November 2013 or Hurricane Sandy in October 2012, or those extreme floods in your village, scientists tell us that climate change definitely created the conditions where a storm turns into a devastating typhoon or winter rains into a flood.

Floods across the world that used to be a once in a lifetime event are now coming with devastating regularity, displacing people and sweeping away precious top soil.

At the same time, on land, water evaporates more quickly from the soil, making droughts longer and more intense. In many areas this creates conditions which lead to fires.

So what do the experts tell us will be the result of climate change?

- Climate change is impacting global food supply and security. This is going to get worse. Basic food crops such as wheat and maize are at risk. This will lead to global shortage and steep price increases.
- Potential shortages of food and water pose a threat to human security. This will amplify already existing conflicts and may force people to become refugees.
- Climate change will affect the most vulnerable communities in particular those who depend on agriculture for survival. It will also impact communities with scarce water supplies.
- It is imperative that we cut carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions now, to slow global warming. We also need to put in place plans such as sea walls to resist extreme high tides, more resilient food crops and water conserving irrigation systems to help vulnerable communities build their resilience to cope with the impacts of climate change.

But the good news is that this is the decade for actions and solutions. We are the generation that is going to take action and reverse climate change. We can become more energy efficient and the technology for us to shift from fossil fuels to renewables energy exists and is becoming more affordable. What is lacking is action, and that is what God is calling us to do.

International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability
<http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/report/>

The prophet paints a bleak vision indeed of the results of our consumerism and greed. We have degraded 60% of the eco-systems on which we as humans depend for survival: our waterways, our forests, and our topsoil. We have contributed to climate change which affects vulnerable communities the most. Food prices are rising due to floods and increased drought.

(The United Nations Millennium Eco-System Assessment)

SALVATION AND REDEMPTION

Romans 8 reflects the current suffering of earth and its inhabitants, due to environmental degradation and climate change. The Romans passage recognizes the suffering of Creation together with the human race as part of the web of creation. *Creation is groaning*, (v.22) *and in bondage to decay* (v.21). Yet this passage contains an exciting vision of the future redemption that awaits us as the children of God. The chapter speaks of the suffering in which Christians find themselves together with the rest of creation, but even in the midst of this, Paul bears witness to God's presence and the certainty of our salvation in that suffering. In the famous passage at the end of Romans 8 we are reminded that "*nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (v.39). In the midst of this, there is reference not just to human suffering, but also to the suffering of creation. Creation is suffering from '*bondage to decay*' (v.21) and is '*groaning in labour pains*' (v.22).

However it also bears witness to God's presence and the certainty of our salvation in that suffering. So we look at the bleak prophecy of Isaiah, but despair is tempered by hope. Just as a woman screams out in pain during labour, she knows that this will come to an end and the baby will be born, the pain is bearable because of this hope. So in the context of climate change, what is our hope for salvation?

Archbishop Emeritus Rowan Williams on hope:

"When I am asked whether I am optimistic or pessimistic about the future, I always say neither: I'm hopeful. An optimist says it's all going to turn out all right. A pessimist says it's all going to turn out wrong. A hopeful person says it's possible we can make it better. That's a place I'm very happy to talk from, because I believe with all my heart that it's possible we can make things better. The slogan I've often quoted in this respect is from Martin Luther, the great reformer who said that if he knew the world was going to end tomorrow, he would plant a tree – meaning, never mind what's going to happen tomorrow: decide what's a good thing to do today, and the future unfolds out of that."

<http://www.resurgence.org/magazine/article3985-my-green-life.html>

The Fall: Rom 8:20 *"the created world was bound to fail"*

When we talk about "The Fall" in Genesis 3 we tend to focus on the separation that occurred between humans and God. But actually three things took place during the Fall:

- Separation of humans from God: whereas Adam and Eve walked with God, now they are in fear of him and hide themselves away, ashamed.
- Breakdown of relationships between human beings. Whereas before they walked naked, freely, now they hide their bodies from each other in shame. Within one generation murder enters this dysfunctional family.
- Breakdown of relationship between humans and the land. Adam and Eve had been given the mandate to be keepers of the earth and to till the earth in a fertile garden paradise. Now they are told *"I am putting a curse on the ground because of what you did. All the days of your life you will have to work hard to get food from the ground. You will eat the plants of the field, even though the ground produces thorns and thistles. You will have to work hard and sweat a lot to produce the food you eat."* Gen 3: 17-19

We have tended to think of redemption and salvation as being only for human beings, but this passage reminds us that God's vision is far greater. The image is one of hope - N.T. Wright pictures the creation *'on tiptoe with excitement, waiting for God's children to be revealed as who they really are.'* The vision in Romans 8 is not only of our victory and redemption (v.23), but that of the whole creation - which will "obtain the freedom of the glory of the Children of God". So if the Fall involves those three areas, then Salvation also involves restoration of these three relationships:

- Reconciliation between humans and God: we are promised a renewal of our relationship with the Creator God. We are made in the image of the Creator, and our lives and souls can be renewed.
- Reconciliation between humans: between male and female, between different cultures, between rich and poor and between different generations. As a community of people who strive for justice for all, we need to address the suffering not only of this generation but of the generations to come.
- Restoration of humans and the Earth. Salvation involves the whole of creation: people, animals, insects, rivers, oceans and forests can be redeemed and renewed. We can become a living creation community.

Cosmic redemption in Romans 8:18-25 D Keith Innes
<http://www.ringmerchurch.org.uk/keith2/CRRO8.html>

Matt 8:23-27 Jesus calms the storm.

Not only does climate change lead to drought, it also leads to floods and extreme weather events. Weather- and climate-related disasters have caused nearly 2 million deaths globally in the last 40 years and have led to \$2.4 trillion in economic losses. Extreme disasters include floods, droughts, extreme temperatures, storms, wildfires, and landslides.

"Everywhere (around the globe), there is a lot of development going on and population growth in hazard-prone areas, especially coastal areas that are very much affected by sea level rise and in addition to that, storm surges, tropical cyclones, and extra-tropical storms."

World Meteorological Organization http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/drr/transfer/2014.06.12-WMO1123_Atlas_120614.pdf

These extreme weather events can no longer just be called "acts of God." They should really be described as 'acts of human-induced climate change.' There is still a tendency for some people to wave these climate realities away as 'part of the natural cycle'. But we can no longer ignore the fact that it is our addiction to fossil fuel and consumption that leads to carbon pollution, which is now warming the planet. In our gospel reading a great storm arises. The disciples are afraid and wake up Jesus, crying "Lord save us, we are perishing."

Jesus asks them: *"why are you afraid, you of little faith?"* and he calms the winds and the seas.

We are reminded of the covenant of Noah that God will never destroy the earth again. So we must be people of faith and hope. Our task is to work to speed up the change, so that the most vulnerable will not be hurt. As Christians we are not *optimists*, for we must address the realities of the problem, nor are we *pessimists*, rather we are people of hope not despair, because we know that God has promised not to destroy the world.

So what is the voice of the Lord saying today, in the midst of these catastrophic weather events and the climate crisis? At a time when our little boat of Planet Earth is more threatened than it has ever been – by a storm of our own making—it appears that someone is asleep on the deck below.



SLEEPER, AWAKE!

We are sleeping in the boat and the storm is growing. There are two responses that we cannot make:

- Defeatism "I can't do anything - the problem is too big". There are so many actions that can be taken, small ones in your own life and family, larger ones at work or by influencing politicians.
- Apathy: "I don't care". We hold the lives and future of the most vulnerable in this age and in the age to come, in our hands. What will we feel like when our grandchildren look at us and say "you knew about climate change and you did what? Nothing???"

It is time for us to wake up, to realize the importance of our decisions and actions. Some of these may be big – for instance the World Council of Churches has just decided to take all of its investments out of fossil fuels. There is a big movement towards

such divestment, we can no longer reap profits from fossil fuels if they are causing so much harm.

Some of these actions may be small - It may be time for you as a family to make small but significant changes in your home, changing light bulbs, investing in a solar geyser, starting a compost heap, beginning to recycle. You will influence other people by the decisions and actions you take.

God may be calling you to dedicate time, passion and energy to become part of the environmental cause, to challenge fracking or waste management practices at your place of work.

What is God calling us to do in this congregation?? Just as Jesus was roused from sleep to calm the storm it is time for us to wake up to face the storm which is coming.

Rev Dr Leah Schade. <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/the-third-sunday-in-the-season-of-creation-in-year-c>

The story of the humming bird

Wangari Maathai

One day a terrible fire broke out in a forest - a huge woodland was suddenly engulfed by a raging wild fire. Frightened, all the animals fled their homes and ran out of the forest. As they came to the edge of a stream they stopped to watch the fire and they were feeling very discouraged and powerless. They were all bemoaning the destruction of their homes. Every one of them thought there was nothing they could do about the fire, except for one little hummingbird.

This particular hummingbird decided it would do something. It swooped into the stream and picked up a few drops of water and went into the forest and put them on the fire. Then it went back to the stream and did it again, and it kept going back, again and again and again. All the other animals watched in disbelief; some tried to discourage the hummingbird with comments like, "Don't bother, it is too much, you are too little, your wings will burn, your beak is too tiny, it's only a drop, you can't put out this fire."

And as the animals stood around disparaging the little bird's efforts, the bird noticed how hopeless and forlorn they looked. Then one of the animals shouted out and challenged the hummingbird in a mocking voice, "What do you think you are doing?" And the hummingbird, without wasting time or losing a beat, looked back and said, "I am doing what I can."



A beautiful short clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGMW6YWjMxw>

TREE PLANTING:

"The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" Rev 22:2

A wise Rabbi was walking along a road when he saw a man planting a tree. The Rabbi asked: "How many years will it take before this tree will bear fruit?" The man answered: "Seventy years". Then the Rabbi asked: "You feel you are so strong and healthy that you expect to live so long to be able to eat its fruits?" The man answered: "I've found a world rich of fruits because my forefathers planted trees for me. I will do the same for my children".

A ceremony to perform when planting trees. This is an act you can take to counter some of your carbon pollution.

Leader: We have come together as partners in the joyful and sacred work of creation – the planting of trees. In the Bible, the tree is a metaphor for the righteous who trust in God and delight in God's teachings.

Reader 1: There is an order to this, God's universe, that is beyond our comprehension, intricate, delicate, embracing, exquisite – an organic whole more complex than any object made by human hands.

All: Only when we stand inside that order can we connect with it, belong to it.

Reader 2: The world of nature was given to us to join with, not to conquer. We enter the world as its caretakers, not as its owners. It is our privilege to be entrusted with its care, with its safekeeping.

All: And only when we keep it safely are we kept in safety, for we are part of the web, a link in the connectedness of all its seamless parts.

Reader 3: People can sense God's presence in nature. Where can it be found? Here, where nature reminds us of the Garden. Here, where we remember that we are part of God's creation, not outside of it. Here, where we gather to plant anew.

All: Treasure God's creation, do not destroy it.

Reader 4: Do not permit oil to spill into the rivers and oceans, do not destroy the forests, do not poison the ground water. And do not wound your neighbors, for they, too, are part of the web of life.

All: Today we have gathered to plant a tree.

Reader 5: Each tree absorbs a bit of our pollution, and then transforms it into oxygen, a source of life. Each tree is truly a "tree of life."

All: We plant in order to mend, to heal, to fix. We plant for the repair of God's order, of God's universe, our home.

Reader 6: And each planting is a reminder of our responsibility. We did not make this world; we are its guardians. It is ours to enjoy, to explore, and, most of all, to protect. We protect it by planting and by remembering and by connecting, from generation to generation.

All: We plant in order to remember, in order to remind, in order to protect and connect with God's Creation, our home. It is our prayer, in the words of Jeremiah and the psalmists, that this tree shall continue to flourish. May it be for us a tree of life.

Adapted from COEJL

O Father,
your power is greater than all powers.
O Son,
under your leadership we cannot fear anything.
O Spirit,
under your protection there is nothing we cannot overcome.

Kikuyu prayer, Kenya

COLLECT

**Lord of all existence
through your word you bring peace and calm
to fearful hearts and minds:
surprise our complacency through the wonder of your creation
and bring us to new faith and trust in you
through Jesus Christ who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God now and forever. Amen**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky,
cries of our fellow creatures deserted and dying.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit in creation, groans of longing
for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin, songs of celebration echoing
around us.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen*

<http://www.webofcreation.org/SeasonofCreation/animal.html>

Creator God, you have generously blessed us with an abundance of gifts in this, your world. Help us to share in that generosity by living in a way that ensures that your gifts will continue to be available for future generations.

Creator God, the sun, the wind and the waves are your gifts for the flourishing of the whole community of life on earth. Help us to use them creatively to produce sustainable energy for all.

Through scientists, engineers and scholars new knowledge comes to light; may new developments in the production of sustainable energy protect our fragile planet and promote the well-being of all peoples and all creatures on their journey to wholeness.

Creator God, You have blessed humankind with understanding, imagination and memory. Show us how to learn from past mistakes and plan for the future creatively and responsibly.

Create in us a new heart and a new vision, O God, that the gifts of Your Spirit may work in us and renew the face of the earth. May we be one with you so that our work is yours and your work is ours. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives with you and with the Holy Spirit forever.

Amen.

Churches together in Britain and Ireland 2012 http://www.ctbi.org.uk/pdf_view.php?id=797

SENDING AND BLESSING

*Transform our lives
May God who established the dance of creation,
who marveled at the lilies of the field,
who transforms chaos to order,
lead us to transform our lives and the
Church to reflect God's glory in Creation*

(CTBI eco-congregation programme)



Eco-justice

“Walk lightly on this Earth”

Lev 25:8-24 Jubilee, the land is the Lord's

Psalms 85 The Lord's favour, blessing on the land

James 5:1-8 Warning to rich oppressors

Luke 4:16-21 Good news to the poor, the year of the Lord's favour.

For James there is no religion other than a practical faith. He stresses that religion is to be lived out, it is not just in the head. Faith that is only in the mind and heart, which is only confessed with the mouth is therefore no faith – it is dead.

The early Christian churches in the Greek world had to deal with major problems of solidarity and integration. The church had deliberately chosen to allow people from all walks of life, classes and culture into their ranks. This inevitably led to the emergence of conflict and the possibility of rupture. There were differences of culture, language, class and gender.

One of the things that James identified as a threat to the wholeness of the life of the church was the practice of valuing people based on their outward appearance.

James uses the example of a behavior common in the congregational meeting (**2:2-3**) where a rich

man is given the best seat. The person dressed in expensive clothes is considered more important than the person in old ragged clothing.

In our world today, we favour the people with money, the beautiful people, and the people with power. Our value system as people of faith has become impacted by the values of the world. The Biblical values are the opposite, God does not favour the 'haves', or the powerful, rather there is a pattern in scripture that show that God has a bias towards the poor. Rather than favouring the wealthy and the influential, he favours the hungry, the widow, the orphan (1:27)

This is what Mary sings about in the Magnificat: Luke 1:46-55.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away."

So if we are to follow God, we should show 'partiality' to the poor. We should discriminate on behalf of the vulnerable and the needy. Who are the "rich" and "poor" to whom James referred? According to the description in (2:2-3) people can be classified as rich or poor depending on their clothing and outward appearance. The rich are those who wear "golden rings on their fingers and smart clothes." The poor man is described as wearing old clothes. It's about people's economic capacity, and their social class is based on this value.

According to James, to judge a person on the basis of their consumer goods goes directly against God's commandment and makes this action a sin (2:9). James calls for behavior change!

The command is clear – *stop discriminating in favour of the rich and powerful, start discriminating in favour of the poor and vulnerable!*

What does this passage say to us in the context of the Season of Creation?

1. Wealth is not a virtue

In our current society, you are valued according to your possessions. Have you 'made it' in society, are you a success? Then this will be visible in the car you drive, the cellphone you use, the house you live in. The wealthy are successful, the poor have failed.

On a daily basis we are bombarded by adverts – buy more, possess more, and consume more. Every day we are commanded to break the tenth commandment – "thou shalt covet thy neighbour's BMW, ipad, dish washer, latest model Samsung cellphone."

Scripture reminds us that this is contrary to the will of God: *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*
1 Sam 16:7

Ubuntu teaches us that "umntu ngumntu ngabantu" a person is a person through other people. Your value is based on the quality of your relationships not the items you own. Consumerism on the other hand says "a person is a person of value through what they possess."

2. God is biased towards the poor

God is the God of justice, He is the God of the poor. The poor, vulnerable and marginalised are the ones that are mostly the victims of injustice. Consider **James 5:3-5**

³ *Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire.*

You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter."

Ron Sider says: "God hates and punishes both neglect and oppression of the poor. And the rich, if we accept the repeated warnings of scripture are frequently guilty of one or both." There are many such warnings throughout the Old Testament for example: Proverbs 22: 7-9

⁷ *The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is slave to the lender.*

⁸ *Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity,
and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.*

⁹ *The generous will themselves be blessed,
for they share their food with the poor.*

This divine reversal does not mean that God loves one human being more than another, rather we are taught that because society is so biased against the poor, the Church is called to be biased towards the vulnerable to balance this out. The late Bishop of Liverpool David Sheppard in his book, *Bias to the Poor* (1983), argues that such a bias is a willingness to "listen to the poor, exist with them, try to stand in their shoes". In a global society, therefore, we must judge our actions based on their impact on the most vulnerable of this generation and the generations to come.

Oxfam International has released a new report called, "Working for the Few," that contains some startling statistics on what it calls the "growing tide of inequality."

The report states:

- Almost half of the world's wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population.
- The bottom half of the world's population owns the same as the richest 85 people in the world.
- Seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years.
- South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world, the top 10% in South Africa earn 110 times more than the bottom 10%.

We live in a consumer society where the multinational companies control everything and the system of globalisation remains firmly implanted in the world. This system is driven by the dollar and the euro which perpetuates and continues to promote injustice, hunger, poverty and desecration of the planet due to the indiscriminate destruction of God's natural resources and of the communities that live on God's land. The greed of some results in the suffering of many.

As we consider the environmental challenges facing the world today, it is the poor and vulnerable who are most impacted. Where there is loss of topsoil, subsistence farmers lose their livelihood and leave the land to live in informal settlements. Where there is overfishing by large international fleets, the local fisherman loses his quota and his livelihood. Where the mining industries make their profits, the workers are underpaid, and their children breathe polluted air and play in water contaminated by acid mine drainage.

And the greatest calamity of all is that climate change will impact those with the smallest carbon footprint of all. Whereas the per capita carbon emissions of the USA are 17.5 tonnes of CO₂, in South Africa they are 9.2 whereas a person in Malawi produces only 0.1 tonnes per year.

<http://cotap.org/per-capita-carbon-co2-emissions-by-country>

And yet the impact on the poor is extreme. Southern Africa is heating at twice the global average and this will lead to droughts, destroying farms and raising food prices. On the other hand climate change will lead to more severe weather events, with floods causing misery for the most vulnerable in informal settlements.

"It is inconceivable that someone is called 'Christian' and does not make a preferential option for the poor as Christ did."

Archbishop Oscar Romero, martyr from El Salvador.

3. Recognize the power of the consumer society

Our economic system is based on the production of more and more consumer goods. The economy's ultimate purpose is to produce more consumer goods. In our grandparents' day washing machines, toasters, stoves and cars were built to last. After the Second World War, industrialists in the USA realized they were not selling enough goods. So the idea of built-in obsolescence was born. The economy does not exist in order to provide good health care, housing, education, or justice, it exists to produce more consumer goods. We are products of this consumer society. We are bombarded by adverts whose primary goal is to make us unhappy with what we have got. We are encouraged to break the Ten Commandments by coveting our neighbour's shoes, car, new cell phone or smooth skin.

Small items like plastic bags and coffee cups are designed to be thrown away, and bigger items such as washing machines or computers are also not built to last. Technology is moving so fast that in order to use new versions of software you 'have' to upgrade. And then we are hit with fashion- the blackberry is becoming dated so we need to buy the latest version Iphone. Fashion is not about designing a comfortable shoe, it is about getting

customers to buy new goods because the shape of the heel is outdated or the skirt is the wrong colour for this season.

The aim of an advert is to make us unhappy with what we have or who we are. Adverts tell us that we are not trendy, we are too fat, or too wrinkly, and that we are 'unlovable'. All this can be made right if we just go shopping. We will be content only if we buy what the neighbours have. Retail therapy will bring us happiness. Money can bring us love.

The values of the consumer society are in direct opposition with the values of the gospel. Jesus tells us that we cannot serve God and money (Matt 6:24). A retail analyst stated the following: *"Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption. We need things consumed, burned up, replaced and discarded at an ever-accelerating rate."* (Victor Lebow)

This consumer society is not only stealing our souls, it is destroying our health and our communities and threatens the sustainability of this planet.

4. Live simply so that others may simply live

This passage also teaches us about the call to a simpler lifestyle. The fancy car, the fancy electric goods are not necessary for our wellbeing and value. In fact the future of the world calls for a more simple lifestyle, for us to burn less fossil fuels, eat less meat, consume less goods. This will lead to a healthier body, healthier society and healthier planet. A world where children spend time with their families rather than with their cellphones, where children run and play.

James speaks into our ecological crisis – he helps us to see where we got off track and shows us back to a world where selfishness and greed are replaced by respect and self-sacrifice. A world where we recognize our inter-dependence – on land, water, people and animals.

"When people love each other, they are content with very little. When we have light and joy in our hearts, we don't need material wealth. The most loving communities are often the poorest. If our own life is luxurious and wasteful, we can't approach poor people. If we love people, we want to identify with them and share with them."

Jean Vanier, Founder of L'Arche

Adapted from a sermon by David Botha, Word and Worship (sermon outlines and liturgies)

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

There is no such thing as a cheap product. An advert only shows us the final bargain price of the item that will 'make us happier'. It does not show us the impact of the production of this item on other people, communities and the environment.

How much does your "free" cell-phone upgrade really cost?

It is certainly not free. A key component in a cell phone is a metal called coltan. Many children in the Democratic Republic of Congo have dropped out of school to work mining coltan which is also fuelling the war there. Most of our cell phones also have gold, copper, beryllium, lead, nickel, and zinc, which all have to be mined, putting both the planet and workers at risk. Chemicals leach into the groundwater creating devastating environmental and health impacts on humans and plants and animals.

http://dev.storyofstuff.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/annie_leonard_footnoted_script.pdf

And how much does that bargain t-shirt really cost?

The cotton may have been grown in Africa, in Burkina Faso. Cotton is a very thirsty crop. The cotton industry gets priority water supplies and farmers often suffer from drought. Cotton also needs a lot of pesticides which don't just kill insect pests; they harm workers and neighboring communities and helpful insect pollinators. Workers frequently suffer from nerve diseases and vision problems because of the toxic chemicals. The cotton is then bleached with chlorine, a chemical that can cause cancer. Once woven into fabric, the cotton is shipped to a factory or a sweatshop where people in China or Bangladesh work long days for low wages in unsafe conditions. Many factory workers are teenagers working 11 hour days for less than \$1 a day.

The story of stuff <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLBE5QAYXp8>

And that special offer on plastic goods?

Plastic is an extremely durable material, taking 500 years to biodegrade, yet it's designed to be used for an average of 5 minutes, and so it's thrown away. Few know where this mass of junk will end up ... in the oceans, killing and silently destroying everything, even us. Today there are six mega-vortexes, islands of floating plastic: five

between the continents and a sixth close to the Arctic, which is similar in size to Brazil (8.5 million square kilometers) and is 10 meters thick. They have a density of over 200,000 pieces of debris per square kilometer.

Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/21/floating-platform_n_5601123.html?ir=Green&ncid=tweetInkushpmg00000048



So what should our response be? Firstly we need to remember the three Rs: Reduce, Re-use and Recycle. Recycling is important for it reduces the pressure to produce new products. We should all recycle. But recycling is not enough. The waste coming out of our houses is just the tip of the iceberg. For every one bag of waste you recycle, 70 bags of rubbish were created in the production of those items.

More important is to reduce our consumption and to re-use items. In order to do this we need to cut ourselves off from the spiritual force of consumerism. Let's stop serving mammon and serve God and what God loves.

People created the consumer society. And we're people too. So let's create a society that looks more like the kingdom of heaven.... God created a world in which nothing was wasted.

THE GLASS CUPBOARD

Once upon a time there was a king who had a cupboard that was made entirely of glass. It was a very special cupboard. It looked empty, but you could always take out anything you wanted. There was only one thing you had to remember whenever you took something you had to put something else back in, although nobody knew why. But people did so, they took things out and then put something else in each time.

One day, some thieves broke into the palace and stole the cupboard.

'Now we can have anything we want,' they said. One of the thieves said, 'I want a large bag of gold,' and he opened the glass cupboard and he took a bag of gold out of it. The other two did the same and they too got exactly what they wanted.

The thieves forgot one thing. Not one of them put anything back in the cupboard.

They spent the whole night taking more and more bags of gold out of the cupboard. They continued the next day, faster and faster, till they grew faint. But they did not stop. Then the chief thief suggested that they get some sleep so that they could continue later that night to take out more bags of gold. So they settled down to sleep. But sleeping was difficult when there was so much fortune to be had. The second thief could not stop thinking about the gold, so he got up and returned to the cupboard to take out more gold. The third thief decided that he could be richer than the other two, so he too got up and returned to the cupboard. The Chief thief realised he was missing out so he too returned to the cupboard to take out more gold.



They went on and on-for weeks and months. At last, the chief of the thieves could bear it no longer. He picked up a hammer and smashed the glass cupboard into a million pieces!

When the king returned home, he ordered his servants to search for the cupboard. When they found it, and the thieves collapsed in exhaustion, they filled sixty great carts with the gold and took it back to the king. He said, 'if those thieves had only put something back into the cupboard, they would be content and the cupboard would not be broken.'

He ordered his servants to collect all the pieces of glass and melt them down and make them into a globe with all the countries of the world upon it, to remind himself, and others, that the earth is as fragile as that glass cupboard.

*Bob Commin: from five minutes stories
chosen by Fiona waters.*

"Looking at the world during these times of growing conflict and the challenges of a changing context, we are acutely aware of a sense of helplessness. Natural disasters as well as the risks in day-to-day survival.. are hitting the poorest children hardest. Street and slum children are the most vulnerable to environmental hazards, climate change and natural disasters."

"Some of us live in a relatively safe place and a comfortable context, but all of us are duty bound as Christians to pray for our sisters and brothers, who are living in exposed and threatening conditions on a daily basis. They need the assurance that they are not alone and will not be forgotten. They will need our continuing support in whatever ways possible."

"The friendship into which we are called with God and with one another is radical in that God ..is drawing those who choose to follow into an intimate bond with himself and so with each other. God's kingdom is global"

*Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby
(Ecumenical Easter letter)*

COLLECT

Lord, through your earthly presence

you proclaimed the year of the Lord's coming:

help us to be faithful to the restoration of liberty to land and people

so that your glory may shine forth in all the earth,

through Jesus Christ who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit

one God now and forever. Amen

May the oppressed people and those who oppress them, free each other
 May those who are handicapped, and those who think they are not, help each other
 May those who need someone to listen touch the hearts of those who are too busy
 May the homeless bring joy to those who open their doors reluctantly
 May the lonely heal those who think they are self sufficient
 May the poor melt the hearts of the rich
 May seekers for truth give life to those who are satisfied that they have found it
 May the dying who do not wish to die be comforted by those who find it hard to live
 May the unloved be allowed to unlock the hearts of those who cannot love
 May prisoners find true freedom and liberate others from fear
 May those who sleep on the streets share their gentleness with those who cannot understand them
 May the hungry tear the veil from the eyes of those who do not hunger after justice
 May those who live without hope cleanse the hearts of their brothers and sisters who are afraid to live
 May the weak confound the strong and save them
 May violence be overcome by compassion
 May violence be absorbed by men and women of peace
 May violence succumb to those who are totally vulnerable
 That we may be healed
 Amen

Vanier, Thérèse My life together: L'Arche Communities and the Challenge of Unity. Wilson, Hilary 2004.

WALK LIGHTLY

Walk lightly.
 Each leaf, each petal, each grain, each person, sings your praises, Creator God.
 Each creature on the earth, all the mountains and the great seas, show your glory,
 Spirit of Love

And yet, the hand of greed has patented and plundered your splendor,
 has taken and not shared your gift,
 has lived as owner of the earth, not guest.

And so the ice is cracked, the rivers dry,
 the valleys flooded and the snow caps melt.

God our Father,
 show us how to step gently,
 to live simply,
 to walk lightly
 with respect and love for all that you have made.
 Amen

Linda Jones, CAFOD



“Water is life, sanitation is dignity”

Gen 21:8-19: Hagar and Ishmael sent away into the desert

Psalm 104: 10-17: God waters the mountains and the living creatures.

Rev 22:1-7 The river of life

John 4:1.15 Jesus at the well

“Water is everywhere around us and in us, tangible as sweat, visible as the high seas, invisible as the envelope of earth’s life-protecting atmosphere, and essential as blood. Water provides the matrix of our conception and our embryonic pre-natal environment. Breaking waters bring us to birth and water is the final elemental comfort we may ask for in dying. In the environment water has become a non-renewable resource because of its present rate of consumption, pollution and exploitation. Should it surprise us then that water has a central place in the story of God’s purposes for creation?”

Allen Goddard

These passages teach of the blessing of water, and the curse of its scarcity.

ABUNDANT WATER

At the start of the story of salvation we read of the river that flows out of Eden, to become the watershed that cradles civilization (Gen 2:10-14).

At the very end in our reading from Revelations comes the invitation of the One who is called the Alpha and Omega, “Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Rev 22:1-7

Throughout the Bible history water symbolizes life and hope. Jesus offers the Samaritan woman an invitation to drink “living water” from “a spring... welling up to eternal life” (John 4:10-14).

In the Old Testament, rivers and streams often describe Yahweh’s presence, his care and support for the whole web of creation, not just animals

and humans but the very mountains and lands are blessed *"the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work"* (Ps 104:13)

Psalm 104:10-17

- ¹⁰ *He makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.*
- ¹¹ *They give water to all the beasts of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.*
- ¹² *The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.*
- ¹³ *He waters the mountains from his upper
chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.*
- ¹⁴ *He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth:*

The need for water is equated with spiritual thirst and the desire for the presence of the living God. This reminds us of Psalm 42:1: *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God."*

In the same way John's gospel associates water with Jesus, from his baptism at the beginning of his ministry to his braai by the Sea of Galilee at the end. Jesus turns water into wine, and washes his disciples' feet. John is the only writer who draws attention to the piercing of Jesus' side and the mixture of blood and water which flows at Golgotha (John 19:34-35). Thus is the prophecy of Zechariah fulfilled (19:37ff.).

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced."

WATER AT THE WELL

So also, in the life of Jesus water is associated with grace and with blessing. Jacob's love at first sight meeting with Rachel happens at a well (Gen.29). Centuries later, the same well is the setting of Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman which turns out to be an invitation to drink "living water" from "a spring...welling up to eternal life" (John 4:10-14). Jesus offers the Samaritan woman grace, salvation and healing in the form of water.

In the book of Revelation we read of the new heaven and the new earth:

Rev. 21:1

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared."

The New Jerusalem is a city that is a garden, and a wetland all at the same time. It is also a wetland biosphere, like the river Ezekiel was shown, which flowed out of Jerusalem to revitalize the Dead Sea until it was teeming with life (Ez. 47). In this final vision we see a picture of a garden-city teeming with life. Earth, sky, children, fruits, grains, and mountains, together with every creature, are finally beyond their groaning, free of the ancient curse, transformed and made new, and entering into the eternal promise of belonging and communion with the Creator. The city is a place of eternal relatedness in communion, between every creature under heaven and the Triune God of grace.

DROUGHT AND WATER SHORTAGE

"Women are the first victims of environmental degradation because they are the one who walk for hours looking for water, who fetch firewood, who provide food for their families"

Wangari Maathai

But this land of the Promise which flowed with milk and honey could also be a dry and waterless place. In some areas there were 'wadis', which are dry river beds, which are alternately flash-flooded or lay bone-dry. There was a single small river - the Jordan, in this rugged landscapes which was as parched as South Africa's arid western regions. This scarcity of water in the Bible lands explains why small springs, wells, and rivers great or small, play a key role in the unfolding story of God's purpose for creation.

In this setting we read of the unbelievably harsh treatment of Hagar and Ishmael. Because of Sarah's jealousy they are thrown out into the burning desert.

- ¹⁴ *Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.*

A woman and child alone in the desert with only a skin of water? She runs out of water and in her desperation cannot bear to see her son die painfully of thirst, so she leaves him under a tree to die. This painful scene is reminiscent of refugees in the horn of Africa, desperately leaving their children to die by the side of the road in order to save others. God rescues them by showing them a well of water and salvation—the making of a great nation and water are linked in one.

WORLDWIDE 900 MILLION PEOPLE DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO WATER

What are the reasons for the present crisis?

Many factors are responsible. To mention but a few: increased and unsustainable agricultural and industrial use of water, deforestation and land-degradation that seriously change the water cycle, over-consumption and waste, pollution and population growth. The crisis is also aggravated by the prevailing economic system. Public and community control of water supply has drastically diminished over recent decades and years. Increasingly water is treated as a commercial good, subject to market conditions. Many cases can be cited where privatisation of water resources and water supply systems has deprived the poor of access to water. Almost 900 million people do not have basic access to the life-saving 20 liters of daily clean water. The reasons are often not just water scarcity and the lack of financial resources. In many cases the needs and rights of marginalized communities are not given priority or they are even being contradicted. Poverty and power relations are reflected and reinforced in who has access to and control over water.

World council of churches: ecumenical water network.

ACCESS TO SANITATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African Constitution guarantees all people the rights to water, health, safety and a clean and safe environment; yet these rights are violated daily. It has recently been estimated that sixteen million people in South Africa do not have access to basic sanitation facilities (1 in 3 people). Using a toilet can be a dangerous activity for people living in informal settlements. Residents are robbed, beaten, raped and murdered while trying to relieve themselves. It is often women, children, the elderly, and the disabled, who suffer the brunt of this.

There are far too few communal toilets and taps, and residents must walk very long distances to relieve themselves or fetch water. In some cases,

more than one hundred people have to share one toilet stall. Polluted water and raw sewerage routinely flows between and through homes making these communities places of illness and death. Lack of access to clean and safe sanitation routinely emerges as the number one concern for those living in these communities. In addition to improving safety, increased access to basic sanitation will also dramatically improve health conditions in communities where preventable illnesses attributable to poor sanitation and hygiene standards – such as diarrhoea, gastroenteritis, worms and TB – are widespread.

"Water is life, sanitation is dignity" South African human rights commission.



WATER IS A BLESSING AND A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

In our water scarce land, water is both a blessing and a right. We must protect this precious commodity as well as protect people's rights to access clean life giving water. Lack of sanitation is a huge challenge for many communities in South Africa and beyond.

Allen Goddard, "A River Runs Through: Water in God's Purpose for Creation", CRUX, 43, no. 7 (Summer 2007), 14-20.

COLLECT

**Lord, through the waters of the earth you meet our daily needs
and through their existence open our eyes to the gift and life of your spirit:
help us to cherish our natural resources
as we would the wells of living water that you so generously offer.
through Jesus Christ who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever. Amen**

Let us pray for the whole Earth, the oceans, rivers and streams. May our lives be so balanced that greed makes way for need and the tendency to waste makes way for a commitment to save. Let those who contribute to the rising sea levels shed tears of repentance and learn to lead a simple life so that others can 'simply live'. We pray for all organisations involved in the preservation of water, and with it, your gift of life. Help, guide and sustain them in their endeavours.

Lord, we pray for all communities involved in the issues of water justice. Give us compassion to walk with those who lack the water of life. Help us to empty ourselves of prejudice and fill us with a vision of solidarity and fellowship so that we can work together in conserving the gift of water.

Lord, we pray for the universal church and its mission and vision. Inspire us to work towards water justice. Transform our lives so that we may be channels of justice - not just in what we preach, but in our daily practice. Let your churches be role models within our communities in conserving water and preserving life in all its fullness. Bring churches together to work in unity so that justice will prevail and water will be available for our generation and future generations

Water justice: CTBI 2013

With hearts welling up in praise for
God the fountain of all goodness,
let us adore the Lord.
God of the deep ocean and the
tiny stream,

we praise you and adore you for
the gift of water that sustains
all life.

At this time of worship we
remember with thanksgiving
the manifold manifestations
of your grace through the gift of
water.

Water Justice: CTBI 2013

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING AT THE END OF THE SERVICE

In the seas and in the rain, God bestowed on Earth the gift of water,
so that his creation could flourish into life.

(sprinkle the congregation with water)

Through the waters of baptism, God beckons us to a new creation,
so that we may share in a life beyond life.

Today, by water also, including this water here,
may the Covenant that we have made be sealed,
and creation renewed and restored to God's eternal purposes.

Go forth now to care for God's world.

Go out into the world as heralds of a new rainbow covenant
and preach the good news to all creation.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you all now and forever, Amen

Operation Noah launch, Coventry Cathedral, 2004



Creation and redemption

"On Earth as it is in heaven"

Isaiah 65:17-25 : Never, never again

Psalm 46: The Earth may be moved, but we will not be afraid

Col 1:15-23: All things were created through Christ and for Christ

John 3:16-21: God so loved the world (cosmos)

AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

The Gospels focus on Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus. Paul, whose writings make up a third of the New Testament focuses more on Christ. He teaches us that Christ existed from all eternity, he was present at Creation.

Col 1:16 "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

All things were created through him and for him. In the book of Acts we read that God raised up Jesus (of Nazareth) and anointed him as Christ (of the cosmos). This is the reality of the resurrection, Jesus the man died and was raised up as Christ, the anointed over all creation. As we discover more

about this cosmos, its vastness and incredibly ancient history, we are re-reading these texts with new eyes and with hearts filled with awe. The word Christ means 'the anointed one' and that anointment by God includes us and the whole of creation.

The wonder of our faith is not just that we believe in God, it is that the material and spiritual coexist, the miracle of the Incarnation is that all things were created through Christ and for Christ. If we restore the idea that the Incarnation means that God loves the whole of creation, then we restore the sacred dimension to nature. Plants and animals and all of nature are windows into the endless creativity, fruitfulness and joy of God. We believe in the sweep of history, humanity and all of creation that Christ includes.

Adapted from interview with Richard Rohr

GOD SO LOVED THE EARTH

John 3:16: This is probably the best known verse of all, *"for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son"*, perhaps the first verse we memorized in Sunday School! Most of us grew up believing that this verse means that God loved the peoples of the world, men and women of all lands. But if we go back to the original Greek we realize that the verse says 'God so loved the cosmos'. This gives a bigger picture, God loves the entire universe that he created, from the tiniest molecule to the hugest galaxy. And the challenge for us is simple, in the words of Archbishop Emeritus Tutu, we need to 'love the world as much as God does'. Archbishop Tutu also says "It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God created the entire world just for human beings."

So if we read the verse with this understanding, the meaning becomes more wonderful:

"God so loved the cosmos, that he sent his only begotten son, (Christ – through whom and for whom all things were created), so that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life"

Creation is waiting in eager expectation..... to be part of this salvation (Rom 8:20-21)

ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

So if Jesus, the Christ, anointed over all things, was sent to save the whole of creation, what does that mean for us as human beings here and now?

Isaiah 65: 17-25

This passage in Isaiah describes this promised new life, when the Lord will create new heavens and a new Earth.

¹⁷ *"I will create new heavens and a new earth.*

The things that have happened before will not be remembered.

They will not even enter your minds.

We have tended to believe that salvation means that we are removed from this world of pain and suffering to a better world in heaven. In the words of Brian Maclaren, salvation becomes an *"an evacuation plan to the next world"*.

But God promises us a new heaven and a new Earth here on this planet.

What does Isaiah teach us? In this passage the exiles have returned to their land after years of captivity in Babylon. They had high hopes of a new society but the land is harsh, the rulers are cruel, the religious leaders are self-serving. Sadly, they discover that it is more painful to be oppressed by your own people than by foreigners. Great feasts are set for pagan idols while the poor go

hungry. There is no true worship of the God of their ancestors. The land has been cursed and it is now a place of death.

God promises restoration and renewal for this 'land of trouble.' What will this restoration look like? God, God's people, and God's land will be woven together in just relations that alter the social, economic and ecological picture. But this will not be simply a mending of what has been broken and damaged. The vision of the prophet (Isaiah 65.17-25) is a beautiful portrayal of complete re-creation, of a total make-over from the inside out.

God looked upon creation in the beginning and said "it is good", and now he calls out:

"Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy And her people to be a gladness" (18-19).

The Creator and sustainer of all life says *"I want to rejoice again over all creation as I did in the beginning. Come and co-create with me, I will show you how."* The prophet then goes on to present a vision of this New Earth, listing the challenges of this Earth.

At his inauguration President Nelson Mandela said this *"Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another"*.

And this is the pattern used in the description of this New Creation:

"No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days...." v.20

Never again will tiny babies die from preventable diseases and polluted water.

"No more shall there be in it an old man who does not fill out his days" v.20

Never again shall sickness and lack of community support take the elderly before their time.

"They will build houses and dwell in them, and plant vineyards and eat of their fruit" v.21



Never again will families be evicted from their land, and live in desolate squatter communities, or wander homeless on the streets. Sustainable farming will be part of the way of life, degraded eco-systems will be renewed.

"No more shall they build and another inhabit or plant and others eat" v.21

Never again shall people work for abusive wages while others live in luxury. Never again will land be managed by agro-industry that pushes people off the land and turns soil and seeds into a commodity.

"No more they shall bear children for calamity" v.23

Never again will people raise children with no hope for the future. There will be an end to infant malnutrition, foetal alcohol syndrome, to abuse of children and human trafficking.

Into this holistic vision of salvation, the prophet brings the overreaching vision of transformation of the entire web of life:

*" The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;
The lion shall eat straw like the ox.
... they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain. v.25*

Never again will one species destroy and eliminate another, the life-sustaining biodiversity of the entire ecosystem will be transformed. And humankind, the worst destroyer of all, will live in peace with all creation.

This is the vision of God's salvation, a new heaven and a new earth, for the here and now, not the life hereafter. A heaven on earth to be experienced by all people, creatures and the whole web of life together.

And so we return to the words of Colossians 1:16-18

*"By Jesus Christ all things were created
In heaven and on earth, visible and invisible
Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or
authorities*

*--all things were created through him and for
him.*

*And he is before all things, and in him all things
hold together.*

And he is the head of the body, the church".

So if the head of the Church is anointed to care for the whole web of Creation, then what are we as Christ's body doing to make this vision of a new heaven and earth a reality?

*Adapted from talk given by Ruth Padilla at Micah Network
Creation and Stewardship, Kenya 2009*



Creator God, how great you are!
You clothe yourself in light.
You stretch out the skies like a tent.
Winds are your messengers, flames are your servants
You water the earth until it gives us food.
How abundant are your works, O God,
In wisdom you have made them all.
The creatures teeming the earth,
The sea, vast and wide –
Innumerable things, small and great, live within it –
All these look to you for their food in due season.
When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
And you renew the face of the earth.

Psalm 104

COLLECT

Lord of all the universe

through your incarnation in Christ you identified with the created order

and proclaimed your love for the world:

assist us through your Son to respect and cherish the earth and all its creatures

through Jesus Christ who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God now and forever. Amen

WE HAVE FAITH

With a period of silence between each section

L: We have faith

All: in one God, one Source of all life,
one Ground of the whole earth, with all her creatures.

L: And thus we have faith

All: in the goodness of earth's life,
in the innate worth of all her dependents,
in human partnership in the life of nature.

L: And we have faith

All: that in Christ we have been shown the special role of the human
race to bear God's likeness in working and caring for the earth,
in seeking to understand her mysteries and powers,
in working with these powers
for the wellbeing of all children of the earth.

L: And we have faith

All: that God's Spirit will lead us to sensitive closeness with earth's
life, to that meek, unselfish and compassionate life-style
by which the earth is inherited in peace,
by which her life is transformed for all creatures
to share justly in her bounty. So be it. Amen.

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

Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky,
cries of our fellow creatures deserted and dying.

Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the
Spirit in creation, groans of longing for a new creation.

Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our
kin, songs of celebration echoing around us.

Christ, teach us to care. Amen

www.webofcreation.org/SeasonofCreation/animal.html

Leader: O God, who called all life into being

All: The earth, sea and sky are yours

Your presence is all around us

All: Every atom is full of your energy

Your spirit enlivens all who walk the earth

All: With her we yearn for justice to be done

For creation to be freed from bondage

All: For the hungry to be fed

For captives to be released

All: For your Kingdom of peace to come on earth.

South West Churches Carbon Fast



Biodiversity

“Our Sister, Mother Earth”

Psalm 148 The Psalm of all creation

Gen 1: 12-28 The story of creation

Rev 5:1-14 Living creatures

Matthew 10: 26-33 You are worth more than sparrows

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Francis was born in the 12th Century, the son of a wealthy merchant family in Italy. In his youth, he was known for his extravagant, materialistic lifestyle. In his early twenties as he witnessed poverty and disease he began to hear a call from God. In a time of prayer he heard a voice say: “Go, Francis and repair my house which is falling into ruin.” He gave up all he had and began to repair local churches in ruins. But he realized that God’s house actually meant God’s household – the whole of Mother Earth. He saw that God’s household (oikoumene) from which the root ‘eco’ comes which we use in words like ecology, economics) was not just buildings but included the poor and all the creatures of the Earth.

Francis gave up all he had and shared his home with the moon, sun, stars, water, fire, flowers, children, elders, birds, and even death. All those who shared this home he called brother and sister, and he saw them as all part of God’s family. When he came upon a cornfield or a spring of water, he would preach to them and encourage them to sing out in praise to God.



***Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor.
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars.
In the heavens You have made them bright, precious and fair.
Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth!
Who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs!
Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks to the Lord, and serve the Lord with great humility.
Amen.***

THE CHOIR OF ALL CREATION

"As South Africans we sing when we are happy and we also sing when we are sad to make ourselves feel better" (day of prayer and reflection for the passing of former president Nelson Mandela).

Music is in our souls, our Sunday services almost always involve worship, and this may be led by a choir, a band or an orchestra! In Biblical times too, the psalms were led by a choir. A group of singers from a family or clan would serve as mouthpieces for the whole community – expressing to God the community's joy, pain or fear.

Psalm 148 radically broadens the circle of who is included in this choir or family. In each line, singers reach out past the boundaries that divide them. Not only the politically important, the wealthy, kings, princes and rulers must sing, but young men and women those without power or influence join in also. Both young and old are included, both women and men. But the Psalm goes beyond human beings, other parts of creation are invite to join the song:

*"You heavens; you angels and hosts; you sun, moon, and shining stars;
you highest heavens and waters above the heavens; hey, you sea monsters and all deeps; you fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind; you mountains and hills; you fruit trees and all cedars over there; you wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds – all of you together, join in this ecstatic chorus of praise to our Creator" v 3-12*

This is the image of an amazing, diverse, praise chorus encompassing the whole web of life – a chorus, a family, that can and should praise God. For God created all parts of the cosmos with love. It is not only the human family that is called to

bear witness. A hymn of praise that only includes humans would be a choir without harmony.

Tanya Barnett www.webofcreation.org/worship/260-the-choir-of-al-creation-by-tanya-barnett



St. Basil the Great's 4th Century contrition laments this sad choir:

"O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers the animals [and all creatures] to whom thou gavest the earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of humans with ruthless cruelty so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that all creatures live not for us alone but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life."

How tragic would St Basil feel with the current rates of extinction?

Extinction

FACT SHEET

It is very hard to know exactly how many species are becoming extinct because we don't actually know how many there are! Surprisingly, scientists have a better understanding of how many stars there are in the galaxy than how many species there are on Earth. However, the rapid loss of species we are seeing today is estimated by experts to be between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate (without human intervention).

These experts calculate that between 0.01 and 0.1% of all species will become extinct each year.

If the low estimate of the number of species out there is true - i.e. that there are around 2 million different species on our planet - then that means between 200 and 2,000 extinctions occur every

year. But if the upper estimate of species numbers is true - that there are 100 million different species co-existing with us on our planet - then between 10,000 and 100,000 species are becoming extinct each year.

Every species loss diminishes the diversity of life on Earth with untold consequences for the web of life.

And the most fragile part of this web of life surely includes the poor of the earth: those people whose well-being is most immediately and directly connected to the well-being of creation. This is the heart-breaking news: we are, knowingly and unknowingly, silencing the song of Creation.

www.panda.org/about_our_earth/biodiversity/biodiversity/

With such loss of biodiversity, we miss out on hearing the unique expressions of what God is doing through creation.

Romans 1:20 "Ever since the creation of the world, God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made."

It is difficult to hear the choir of all creation in its fullness today. With so much environmental degradation, and our separation from the natural world, our stressed and hectic lives, we do not hear the song of God.

THE SECOND BOOK OF GOD

"God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars."
Martin Luther

Theologians have traditionally categorized the Bible and nature as "two books," which when read side by side combine to reveal the God of creation. The first book, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is called "special revelation." The Scriptures are special, in part, because if God had not chosen human writers who were inspired by the Spirit of truth to disclose this unique and specific knowledge, we would not be aware of it.

The second of God's two revelations is the book of nature, termed "general revelation." This is the record of our Creator that is revealed in the natural world around us. We call it a general revelation because it has been generally available to people throughout all the ages. It showcases the handiwork of God in the creation, and records His direct and indirect actions on the earth and in human history.

The apostle Paul wrote, "*Since the creation of the world [the Creator's] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead*" (Rom. 1:20).

The Hebrew author of Psalm 19 expressed a similar observation when he wrote, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*" (vv.1-4).

wonderofcreation.org/resources/gods-two-books-nature-and-the-bible

Do we take time to listen to God in trees, animals, flowers and stars? God is speaking, but are we listening?

A PRAYER OF ST AIDAN

Leave me alone with God as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore,
Make me an island, set apart,
alone with you, God, holy to you.

Then with the turning of the tide
prepare me to carry your presence to the busy world beyond,
the world that rushes in on me
till the waters come again and fold me back to you.

BLESSING OF ANIMALS - Saint Francis day

St Francis considered animals as brothers and sisters, part of the family of God. Today is a day for blessing of our pets, our companion animals and other domestic creatures. Portions of this material may be incorporated into the Sunday Eucharist.

Intercessions and Thanksgivings

Leader: We thank you, God, for the gift of life: for
the beauty and wonder of creation, and for
our own life which comes from you.

People: Glory to you for ever and ever.

Leader: We thank you for the richness of animal life:
for fish and birds, insects, reptiles, and
mammals.

People: Glory to you for ever and ever.

Leader: We thank you for the animals who give us
faithful companionship, joy when we are
happy and comfort when we are sad.

People: Glory to you for ever and ever.

Leader: We thank you for calling us to care for these
animals. May we learn love and respect for
all living things.

People: Glory to you for ever and ever.

The priest says the prayer of blessing.

Blessed are you, living, loving God.
All creation praises you,
yet you have given the earth into our hands.
You made animals as our companions,
that in caring for them
we might learn to love and care
for all your creatures,
and find in them a sign of your grace.
As we fulfil this calling
may we draw close to you,
the giver of all life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The animals are blessed

The service may continue at the Peace

From Canadian Book of Occasional Services

COLLECT

Lord of all life

**your care is known through the sparrow and the hairs of our head:
remind us of your goodness in creation and our place within it
that our voice may resound with every creature**

**in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea
proclaiming honour and glory to the Lamb,
through Jesus Christ who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God now and forever. Amen**

May none of God's wonderful works keep silence,
night or morning,
bright stars, high mountains, the depths of the seas,
sources of rushing rivers:
may all these break into song as we sing
to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
May all the angels in the heavens reply: Amen, amen
Power praise and honour, eternal glory to God the only
Giver of grace Amen, Amen, Amen

Third century hymn

*Christ, we come into your presence
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth, a planet pulsating with your presence,
a presence quivering in the forests,
a presence vibrating in the land,
a presence pulsating in the wilderness, a presence shimmering in the rivers.*

*We regret that we have become alienated from Earth, and treated this garden planet
as a beast to be tamed,
as a domain to be dominated,
and as a place to be ruled for our gain.*

*We remember and confess how we have violated and polluted the lands of our garden
We are sorry.*

*We have killed living soils with chemicals,
we have turned fertile fields into lifeless plains, we have cleared rich lands of wildlife.
We are sorry. We are sorry.*

seasonofcreation.com Forest Sunday

God, our Creator, whose glory fills
all things, help us to discern your
presence among us and our kin in
creation, especially in the soil, in the
fields, and on the land. Help us to
empathize with your creatures who are
suffering and to serve you as agents
for healing the land. In the name of
Christ, who reconciles and restores all
things in creation. Amen.

seasonofcreation.com Land Sunday

As the air sings with songs of glory,
as the water flashes with the silver of creation,
as the forests bloom with leaves for the healing of the nations,
so may God's light and love
fill our hearts and souls and minds

CTBI Eco-congregation Programme

LITURGICAL MATERIALS FOR THE SEASON

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR 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 him 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 for ever 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, spilt and buried, life sprang forth
again. In the breaking, there is an opening up; in
the spilling, 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 and
give us the broken oneness, the spilt unity, and the
buried resurrection by which we can restore your
creation and fulfil your will.

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 as
your Word has 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.**

FINAL BLESSING

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

Authorised for use in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa by the Synod of Bishops.

BENEDICITE AFRICANA (The Song of Creation)

The Cosmic Order

O give thanks to our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

Rising sun of earth's days and nights: in your movement of the seasons

O give thanks to our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

All faces of the evening moon, starlit and vacant:

playful through seas and forests, and the tidal seasons of the month

O praise and exalt our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

The Earth and all its creatures

Tabled and peaked mountains, channelling rivers to the sea:

mysterious in cloud, in mist, in snow

Give thanks to our God who is good

O Love that endures forever

Tall Yellowwoods and mighty baobabs, Erica, Protea, daisy, and winter lily fields

Wildebeest and buffalo, soaring might of eagle: meerkat at your watch, hills of termites

Give thanks to our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

Heartbeat of lion, ear of elephant: whisper of bat and hiss of cobra

Sonar song of whale and rhythm of dolphin: fin slap of seal: and dash of shark

Wineland and maizeland: pear tree and date palm

O praise and exalt our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

The People of God

All faces of the day and night, in city, town and countryside

You in the sea side villages, you in the townships of want and promise

You in the clockwork suburbs

O pilgrims on all the paths of life

O give thanks to our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

All saints and martyrs of Africa

O praise and exalt our God who is good:

O Love that endures forever.

Bob Commin 2014

PENITENCE

Giver of life

in the midst of a plundered earth
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of Life

in the midst of poisoned water
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of life

in the midst of polluted air
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of Life,

in the midst of mountains of waste
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of life

in the midst of a world of war
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

webofcreation.org

PRAYER FOR THE LAND

Bless, O Lord, the fruit of the land.

Bless, O Lord the plants, the vegetation and
the herbs of the field

that they may grow and increase to fullness
and bear much fruit

and may the fruit of the land remind us
of the spiritual fruit we are to bear

Coptic Orthodox Liturgy, Egypt.

God's light and love

As the air sings with songs of glory,
as the water flashes with the silver of creation,
as the forests bloom with leaves for the
healing of the nations,
so may God's light and love
fill our hearths and souls and minds.

CTBI eco-congregation programme

THE TAKING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

The Taking of the Bread

Be gentle when you touch bread
Or let it lie uncared for-unwanted.
So often bread is taken for granted,
There is so much beauty in bread-
Beauty of sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil,
Winds and rains have caressed it.

Christ often blest it
Be gentle when you touch bread
Blessed be God for ever

At the taking of the Wine

Be loving when you drink wine
So freely received and joyfully shared
In the spirit of Him who cared,
Warm as a flowing river,
Shining and clear as the sun,
Deep as the soil
Of human toil,
The winds and the air caressed it,
Christ often blest it.

Be loving when you drink wine.
Blessed be God for ever

*(from the service of celebration of 20 years
of women's ordination)*

This we know: the earth does not belong to us.
The earth is the Lord's and so are all its people

This we know: we did not weave the web of life.

**The earth is the Lord's and so is all that
breathes on it.**

This we know: we are called to till and work the earth.
**The earth is the Lord's and so are all who work
the land.**

This we know: that we are called to take care of
creation.

**The earth is the Lord's yet we have polluted
and abused it.**

This we know; that whatever befalls the earth
Befalls the sons and daughters of the earth

This we know: that the earth is the Lord's

**And so we will serve Him in it
Amen**

Lord God our Father
Let our walk this day be
Full of beauty and brightness
Lord, hear us

That we may know
Your presence and your peace
Lord, hear us

That we may experience
Your grace and your glory
Lord, hear us

That we may be at one
With you and your creation
Lord, hear us

That we may be aware of you
In and through and above all things.
Lord, hear us

**God bless the path on which I go
God bless the earth beneath my sole
God bless the fellowship that make us whole
Amen**

*Bishop Eric Pike, Diocese of Port Elizabeth:
adapted from various sources inc Ray Simpson*

We search for you oh Lord in the wind that blows.
We search for you oh Lord in the rain that washes
the paths clean.
We look for you oh Lord in dark of the night.
We desire you oh Lord, fill our hearts with
your love.
We find you oh Lord, in all of these places.
Without your grace oh Lord we are empty.

Celtic prayer

CREED

Creed (Keld B. Hansen)

We believe in God, who creates all things, who embraces all things, who celebrates all things, who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.

We believe in God as the source of all life who baptizes this planet with living water.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one, the poor one, the malnourished one, the climate refugee, who loves and cares for this world and who suffers with it.

And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life, who came to reconcile and renew this world and everything in it. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, who moves with God and who moves among and with us today.

We believe in everlasting life in God.

And we believe in the hope that one day God will put an end to death and all destructive forces

South West eco churches carbon fast

BLESSINGS

God bless the sky that is above us
God bless the earth that is beneath us
God bless your image deep within us
and God Bless the day that lies before us.

Ray Simpson

PEACE SENTENCE

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the still air to you
Deep peace of the forgiving heart to you
Deep peace of the Son of Peace.

Celtic prayer

CANDLELIGHTING

(three candles are lit – a wreath celebrating Nature can be made)

I light a candle in the name of the Father who created us

I light a candle in the name of the Saviour who embraces us

I light a candle in the name of the Spirit who encircles us

All : One is the God from whom all people come

One the Earth on which we make our home

One is the air that all creatures breathe.

(adapted from Roy Simpson: Celtic prayer book, Prayer Rhythms Vol one)

Songs

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Tune: Immortal, invisible, God only wise

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."
Creation reminds us, O God, of your love.
By grace we are learning, as year leads to year,
We're called to be stewards, your caretakers here.

Your rainforests nurture the world that we share.
Your wetlands give animals shelter and care.
Your coral reefs cradle the life of the sea.
You've shown us, in love, what your good world
can be.

Too often, O God, we abuse your good earth.
We fail to remember its beauty and worth.
We take from creation much more than we need,
We threaten your world through indifference and
greed.

May we be good stewards of all that you give,
Protecting creation wherever we live.
May we be a church that renews and restores
And lovingly cares for this earth that is yours.

Southern Churches Eco-congregations

BEAUTY FOR BROKENNESS

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in your suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise

Graham Kendrick
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Songs of Fellowship 664
(youtube version on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqDOXfj9W0w>)



Green Anglicans
Anglican Church of
Southern Africa
Environmental Network

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ENVIRONMENT
INSTITUTE

'We want Climate Justice NOW!'

I greet you today not only as the Archbishop of Cape Town, and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, but also, in my capacity as Chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, on behalf of Anglicans everywhere. Jesus famously called his followers to 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' These memorable words reflect a far more ancient principle, shared by most religions and philosophies, and often known as the Golden Rule. It is the call to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves.

Today's world is a global village. Our choices, our actions, affect everyone. In the twenty-first century, all of us are neighbours. How each of us behaves – and how we behave as societies, and as nations – reveals whether we view others with love, or with contempt. So today we ask ourselves, and we ask our governments, these fundamental questions: How do we want to be treated? How can we reasonably expect to be treated by others?

Who wants their health, their livelihood, their security, their very existence to be threatened by climate change? None of us, I am sure. Then all of us must act together to ensure it does not happen.

*This is what we pray for, we call for, we strive for..
Climate justice.*

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

COP Rally, Durban

Mash, R
Season of Creation 3
Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Environmental Network
2014