

PLANTING

SEEDS OF HOPE



40

**Devotions on
Creation**



DEVOTIONS TO HONOUR THE MEMORY OF

Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya

"A GREAT TREE HAS FALLEN"

FOREWORD

Bishop Ellinah may have come from a small country and one of the smaller dioceses in Southern Africa, but she was a giant in our Province and in the Anglican Communion. The first woman bishop in Africa, she modelled a new way of leadership.

When I found that I had too much on my plate and needed to hand over as chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, I asked her to take the role, knowing of her passion for the Environment, her commitment to excellence and that she would take the role seriously.

She experienced caring for Mother Earth as a deep spiritual calling. Let us now take up the challenge that she set to us, to make Mother Africa Green again.

The Most Reverend Dr Thabo Makgoba
Archbishop of Cape Town

"Creator God, we thank and praise you for giving us the opportunity to be co-creators with you and to ensure the sustainability of "Mother Earth" our meeting place with God.

God as a community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit teach us as the Anglican Community to work together for mutual respect with one another and your creation. We repent for our negligence leading the earth to be in peril from loss of habitats and species. Help us to be caretakers of your gifts, protecting the land from abuse, and ready to share with all in need.

Amen

Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya

"To be of the Earth is to know
the restlessness of being a seed,
the darkness of being planted,
the struggle towards the light,
the pain of growing into the light,
the joy of bursting and bearing fruit,
the love of being food for others,
the scattering of your seeds,
the decay of the seasons,
the mystery of death
and the miracle of birth

John Soos

“FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS”

A great tree has fallen. Our hearts are broken at the loss of our beloved Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya

She was truly great in the kingdom of God. The first woman Bishop in Africa, she was a true pioneer. She modelled a new way of leadership, a leadership of heart and hands that inspired and motivated those around her. She did not tell people what to do, she showed us the way. With her high levels of competency and spirituality she opened the doors for acceptance of women bishops in other countries across Africa. Named as one of the BBCs 100 women of the year in 2016, she said of her ministry “I am going to try to represent the mother attribute of God”

She inspired us to love God and love Mother Earth. She was one of the pioneer Eco Bishops of the Anglican Communion and her Diocese became a leader in environmental sustainability. Always hands on, she planted trees, collecting litter and promoting reforestation, and biodiversity conservation.

The Diocese of Eswatini won an award for three years as Environmentally Active Faith Based Organization, from the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs. In her Master’s Thesis she connected the Eucharist with Creation and shared this insight at Anglicans Ablaze: “Eating and drinking the bread and wine enables us to touch the clouds, the sun the earth, everything in the cosmos. Christ is food – not bread alone – being food he is life. Hungry people are all over the world – they do not have life in abundance because they do not have food”

She shared memories of carrying water long distances as a young girl and told me once that she felt that is why she became a bishop at this time, to be able to share the reality of the impact of climate change with her own stories. Like Esther, she came into her position ‘for such a time as this’.

The great tree has fallen, but the seeds you have sown across the Green Anglicans movement of Southern Africa, Central Africa and Kenya, and the Anglican Communion across the whole world

have been planted. You have taught us, you have inspired us, you have shown us the way. Now it is our task to let those seeds grow – so that your memory may be blessed.

**Hamba Kahle Bishop Ellinah.
Canon Rachel Mash,
Environmental Coordinator
Anglican Church of Southern Africa.**

Receive these offerings as seeds of hope, plant them, may they grow.

Title	Reading	Contributor
ASH WEDNESDAY	A Lament	Anglican Church of Melanesia
It was very good	Genesis 1: 1-2	Bishop Geoff Davies
Enough for our need, not our greed	Genesis 1: 11-13	Rev David Otieno
Made in God's image	Genesis 1: 27	Cedric Williams
God's representatives on Earth	Genesis 1:28	Ven. Lasarus Ngube
Let us be change makers	Genesis 2:15	Ramusi Makwetsa
The curse is broken	Genesis 3: 17-18	Ven. Pule Lekoko
A covenant with all of Creation	Genesis 9:9-10	Rev Andrew Manning
We are out of balance	Genesis 45:14-18	Rev Dr Bradley Hauff
The Lord dwells in the land	Numbers 35: 33-34	Venerable Thomas Mhuriro
Listen to the song of the sparrow	Job 12: 7-8	Barbara Oosthuizen
God takes pride in the whole of creation	Job 38-39	Dr Elizabeth Perry

Creation is God's liturgy	Psalm 8:3-4, 6-7	Rev Seipati Ngcobo
The heavens declare the glory of God	Psalm 19: 1-5	Lauren Sanby
The Earth is the Lord's	Psalm 1: 24	Canon Molly Tshebeletso
Compassion on all of Creation	Psalm 145: 9	Rev Dr Dave Bookless
Finding partners in Ministry	Proverbs 27:17	Deacon Tlagu Molokoane
The rebirth of Creation	Isaiah 35:6-7	Rev Canon Andrew Sumani
You have defiled my land	Jeremiah 2:7	Mncedisi Masuku
Instead of stewards, we are destroyers	Jeremiah 2:13	Rev Mpho Mohale
A future and a hope	Jeremiah 29:11	Canon Pat Millar
Hunger and thirst for justice	Matthew 5:3-7	Bishop Marinez Bassotto
Do not worry	Matthew 6:26	Fredah Moatshe
Consider the lilies	Matthew 6: 28-30	Rev Raynard Shovell
Four feasts	Matthew 14: 19-21	Archbishop Mark Macdonald
Who do you say that I am?	Matthew 16: 13-16	Bishop Kito Pikaahu
Lit up with God's glory	Matthew 17:2	Rev Dr Margaret Bullit-Jonas
What kind of tenants are we?	Matthew 21:33-46	Rev Nathan Empsell
The haves and the have nots	Matthew 25:6-10	Bishop Carlos Matsinhe
The Kingdom of God is near	Mark 1: 14-17	Dr Paulo Ueti
Meeting with God in the garden	Mark 6:46	John-Paul Roberts
Who is my neighbour?	Mark 12: 31	Mandisa Gumada

Watch! The Lord of our common home is returning	Mark 13: 35-37	Bishop Francisco de Assis da Silva
Preach the Good News to all creation	Mark 15;16	Bino Makhalanyane
For God so loved the cosmos	John 3:16-17	Samukelisile Khanyile.
Let there be no waste	John 6:10-13	Tumelo Hoohlo
Be still and know that I am God	Romans 1: 20	Fiona Maskell
Creation is standing on tippytoes	Romans 8:19	Rev Dennis Nthenge
The Web of Life	Colossians 1:16-17	Mpho Mkoane
Salvation is for the whole of creation	Colossians 1: 19-20	Rev Dr Margot Hodson
Eden restored	Rev 22:2	Rev Dr Rachel Mash

The 'seeds' in this devotional booklet have been contributed by Green Anglicans, who attended an online eco-theology course, by members of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, the Anglican Indigenous Network, The Lusophone Network, Together 4 Creation and contributions from the Sustainable Preaching Network (www.sustainable-preaching.org)



AN ASH WEDNESDAY LAMENT

O God of creation.

You have created land for us to make our gardens and for trees, animals and all living creatures on the earth.

Forgive us for our destruction of the land by logging and poisonous chemicals. We turn to you in sorrow and repentance.

Help us O Lord to care for the land that you have given us.

God of the universe, the ocean and of love. You have given us the ocean for fish, shells, reefs, whales, waves, corals, and for ships and boats. We have destroyed the ocean and everything in it, and not cared for it.

We turn to you in sorrow and repentance.

Help us to care for the ocean, and to recognise that it is your blessing for us.

God of the forest, in which all living things survive and engage their life and move peacefully.

You have given us wisdom, knowledge and understanding to use our resources well in a manageable manner.

We have been careless, short-sighted, and selfish and failed to share with other people throughout the world.

Help us to see the needs of others as you have seen us living in your beautiful forest.

God of the universe, the God who created the atmosphere. By your power of creation, you made the sky so beautiful, the sun to give us light during the day and the moon and the stars to give light during the night. You have given us clouds to bring rain and give life to your creatures.

Lord, we turn to you with a penitent heart for all the destruction we have caused to the atmosphere.

Merciful God, God of love and everything in this world. You have created the rain, winds, storms, cyclones, earthquakes, volcanoes and floods to renew your creation. Help us to understand their existence in your world.

Father forgive us for the human activities which have overpowered the weather and caused destruction of our environment.

God you are our creator, the source of all wisdom and power. You have created humans and animals and you have appointed us humans to be responsible for them. Forgive us who destroy your creatures. We turn to you in sorrow and repentance.

Help us Lord to love and to care for them as you care for us.

Written by members of the four Religious Orders in the Anglican Church of Melanesia. Melanesian Brotherhood, Society of St Francis, Community of the Sisters of the Church, Community of the Sisters of Melanesia.





IT WAS VERY GOOD

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Genesis 1: 1-2, and 1: 31

What are the opening words of the Bible? In the beginning God.... It all begins with God. The source of all life starts with God. In the beginning God created..... God is the foundation. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God brought into being this incredible universe, the vastness of which we can't even begin to comprehend.

What is described as a day in Genesis 1 in God's terms could be a few billion years. The universe is 14 billion years old and our planet 4.5 billion. Life on planet Earth came about with "the Spirit of God hovering over the waters"

Our planet has evolved into this incredible state of beauty and abundance we are privileged to experience. Just stop and think of the wonder of life around us, the beauty of the mountains, the oceans, the birds and animals, that spectacular sunrise, all of which has enabled us to flourish.

At the end of Genesis chapter 1 we read "God saw everything he had made, and indeed it was very good". Everything was good, not just humans. And God charged us to look after, care for and protect God's magnificent creation.

But we have been seriously disobedient to God. We have selfishly exploited and abused God's creation, to such an extent

that we are now seriously threatening the future of life on our only home. We are bringing about biodiversity loss, causing the extinction of thousands of creatures and plants. Through our ongoing burning of fossil fuels - coal, oil and gas - we are warming the atmosphere bringing about weather extremes of droughts and floods, increased heat and cold and unpredictable weather patterns.

We have to change our ways. That means recognising we are part of nature. We are not separate. We must live in harmony with nature and all of life. We must care for all life, recognising that life is sacred. Bishop Ellinah knew this. She has left us an example of how we should live, inspiring us to love God and love Mother Earth.

REFLECTION:

Reflect on how your current lifestyle is damaging God's Earth.
What changes can you commit to, starting this Lent?

PRAYER

We praise you Our Lord and God, for the variety of your creation
and for the sanctity you have bestowed on all life through
creation.

May we know the sanctity of life and foster the conservation
and preservation of the variety of God-given life.

May we never – knowingly or otherwise – be responsible
for the extinction of a plant or animal.

God, may new life fill us all, through the gift of your Holy Spirit,
to know your wonder, your love and the abundant life you give.

Amen

Bishop Geoff Davies
Patron of SAFCEI



ENOUGH FOR OUR NEED, NOT FOR OUR GREED

¹¹Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

Genesis 1 :11-13

In Genesis 1 we read the story of Creation. God first separated the waters, creating heaven and earth, then dry land appeared. Upon the earth, vegetables sprouted, yielding seed, and fruit trees sprang forth. The waters swarmed with living creatures, and the earth brought forth a wonderful variety of wild creatures as well as livestock and poultry, each according to their kinds.

Then God created humankind. Note that God created everything that we would need for our sustenance, water to drink, food to eat, lush gardens with fruit trees to nourish our health and also provide a serene environment for our recreation and rest. God is pre-existent and sovereign. He created human beings in His own image and likeness, to be His co-creators and partners in safe-guarding and developing creation. He provided everything necessary for our wellbeing and for abundant life. Then humans became disobedient – the original sin - and began to abuse what was freely given.

We see this in our present circumstances; we have cut down trees indiscriminately, contaminated the land, rivers, lakes with toxic waste, garbage, single use plastic waste. We have decimated

the elephants, rhinos, tigers and all other animals through poaching for trophies. We have dumped waste in our rivers, lakes and land bringing diseases like cancer. Because we are destroying the eco-systems, pandemics are flourishing. Because we have damaged Creation, it can no longer sustain us, and people are growing hungry.

Instead of realising our mistakes and making amends, we have created wars, nation against nation. Our icebergs are melting because of global warming and acid rain is destroying our crops, endangering our livelihoods.

It is time we realised our folly and fall down on our knees in repentance, seeking forgiveness. Let us change from our ways and heal the Earth. In the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

REFLECTION:

What pollution are you creating through your life-style? What could you change?

PRAYER

We join with the Earth and with each other.
To bring new life to the land
To restore the waters
To refresh the air

We join with the Earth and with each other
To create human community
To promote justice and peace
To remember our children

We join with the Earth and with each other
(UN Environmental Sabbath Prayer)

Rev. David Otieno
All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa



MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1: 27

Let us consider the context of this passage in the Book of Genesis. Humans were the final creation of God. We were the only creation created in God's image and we were given a special role by divine command. The care of creation is based on the biblical understanding of God as Creator and humanity as the *imago Dei* – the created beings that bear the image of God, living as God's representatives within creation to serve creation.

Therefore, the way that we look at Creation and the way we treat it should be the same way God would – with love.

Augustine of Hippo taught that true freedom is not choice or lack of constraint but being what you are meant to be. Humans were created in the image of God. True freedom, then, is not found in moving away from that image but only in living it out. That means if God is creator then we should be co-creators.

There is no place for an anthropocentric image in God as he is the creator of all life. Humans are thus not the centre of creation but a cog in the wheel with a command to care for creation.

REFLECTION:

As I look around my community – where are the places that I could be a co-creator with God?

PRAYER

Creator God, you built the whole world and everything in it.
When you created man and woman you knew it was very good.

When you created me, you made me in your own image.
Be with me today so that everyone I come into contact with
sees my attitude, actions, and character in such a way that
reflects glory on you who created me.

Amen

(Dailyprayerguide.net)

Cedric Williams
Diocese of Saldanha Bay



GOD'S REPRESENTATIVES ON EARTH

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground"

Genesis 1: 28

The verse 'Rule over creation and subdue the earth' should not be seen as a commandment but rather as a gift. God calls us to enjoy and delight in creation. It is not in any way an opportunity to fear and destroy what God has entrusted to our care. Our enjoyment is to be defined by care and love for the creation, for through such acts God is glorified.

God Himself is the ultimate ruler and governor of the whole creation. He exercises His authority with loving care. God teaches by demonstration in a practical way. When he delegated his authority to us, he expected us to rule according to his plan and nature. That is: responsibly, lovingly and with a lot of care. This divine authority has translated us into God's representatives and viceroys on earth. It is expected of us by our Creator to take care of the environment entrusted to us and to ensure preservation of the creation. As the Lord preserves our lives, so are we to preserve the creation. As the Lord takes care of us and protects us daily, so are we to make it a point that we care and do everything possible to protect the creation.

This scripture, therefore, is both laying a call on us and sensitising us to be careful in dealing with God's creation. As we exercise oversight of any kind over the creation, we are to employ

the very character of our God, who is not a careless but a loving Creator.

REFLECTION:

How has this verse and the idea of 'dominion' been distorted and caused damage to God's creation?

PRAYER:

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.
(Season of Creation Forest Sunday)

Ven. Lasarus Ngube
Diocese of Namibia



LET US BE CHANGE MAKERS

The LORD God took Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 2: 15

Let us be change makers in our community as God wants us to be. As Adam and Eve were entrusted by God to take care of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15), we are entrusted to take care of the environment that we live in. This was the first commandment given to human beings – to work the land and to look after it.

As people living in one community, we have different perceptions about the environment and the type of setting that we live in. However, we must never forget that everything was created by God and everything belongs to him. Since we are inhabiting this wonderful planet, we should not forget that it is God who made it possible. We have sinned against God and the environment. Therefore, this is the time to repent from our sins against the environment.

When we know that we will be receiving a visitor, we clean up everything in our homes and yards. But we do not care about the appearance of our community. Change starts with us, we may be few, but we can end up doing something quite big enough for the world to see and learn from. We are God's children, all of us because we represent him. May we continue being responsible inhabitants of this planet. Let us be the change we want to see in the world!

REFLECTION:

If an important visitor was visiting your street, what changes would you want to see? How can you mobilise your neighbours to make a difference in your street?

PRAYER

Creator God, make us instruments of your peace,
May our ears hear your word,
May our eyes see all the marvellous things you have done,
May our minds bear the wisdom on how to protect and
safeguard our environment.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen!

Ramusi Makwetsa
Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist



THE CURSE IS BROKEN

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

Genesis 3: 17 - 18

When God handed over the judgement to our first parents, creation was also affected, for God said: "cursed is the ground because of you" (Gen. 3:17-18). We experience that painful toil and see those thorns and thistles affecting food security in our time. Invasive plants spring up and providing food for your family is often difficult – droughts hit farmers and food prices soar.

But God had already outlined God's plan of redemption. In verse 15 we read "I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring." God had a plan to restore creation!

The Anglican Catechism teaches that sin distorts our relationship with God, with our neighbour and with the rest of creation, and the Messiah is sent to restore these broken relationships (APB1989:426).

The calling of Abraham set the plan in motion. God did not just do it for the human family, but to undo the curse of Eden. Abraham's seed was to be a blessing to the whole creation, to the cursed ground as well. Jesus' death is the ultimate price paid for the redemption of creation, and through Jesus' resurrection, the broken relationships have been restored.

We are called to participate in this restoration of broken

relationships. The revelation of the children of God as eagerly expected by creation is for that Abrahamic blessing of Gen.12:3 to become a reality, that Jesus did not pay the price in vain. (Romans 8:18-23)

REFLECTION:

When you look around you – where do you see the reality that the 'ground is cursed', and where do you see its restoration?

PRAYER/SONG

Joy to the world, the Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found
Far as, far as the curse is found
(Isaac Watts "Joy to the World v 1,3)

Venerable Pule Lekoko
Diocese of Matlosane.



A COVENANT WITH THE WHOLE OF CREATION

Behold, I now establish My covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth—every living thing that came out of the ark.

Genesis 9: 9 - 10

The Story of Noah and the Ark presents the pattern that God set in motion from the beginning of time. It is not only a creation story but a re-creation story and a salvation story. Humanity is to be the ark builder for the salvation of all creation. God has a plan to save the world from its destructive evil patterns and requires the participation of humanity to do it. God provides and gives detailed instructions for how to build this ark of obedience to God's will for our lives. God requires humankind to care for and nurture all life! We are to build an ark, of faith and belief in Jesus Christ so that God can bring salvation to all creation.

The symbol of that covenant is the rainbow, the light of the world showing God's true colours representing Christ, the full spectrum of light. The covenant is not only with human beings, but also with every living creature. Just as the dove brought an olive leaf, the Spirit brings peace (Genesis 8:11), and life is renewed. This is the pattern of life: God cleanses us through our obedience and restores the whole world through the faithful.

God has called you to build an ark of faith and ride on the deep waters of life under the covenant of salvation, for all creation. Amen.

REFLECTION:

What does it mean to you that God's covenant is with the whole of creation? How should we then treat animals, birds, insects?

PRAYER

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

We confess that the way we live today is changing the climate,
the seas and the balance of life, dispossessing the poor and
future generations.

Build our lives into an ark for all creation,
and, as you promised Noah never to repeat the Flood,
so make us heralds of a rainbow covenant:
choosing life for all that is at risk – for creation, for neighbours
near and far, our children and ourselves.

Amen.

(Operation Noah launch service)

Rev Andrew Manning
Environmental Coordinator, Diocese of Natal



WE ARE OUT OF BALANCE

Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him. ¹⁶When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.'

Genesis 45: 14 - 18

Joseph and his brothers experienced brokenness in their relationship. The result is that the brothers and everyone in the land are experiencing famine, and the future looks bleak. When the brothers are reconciled, the result is their restoration, and the famine is eventually ended.

The Indigenous worldview is about the balancing of all that is in the Cosmos. Human beings, animals, marine life, insects, plants, and things that are not seen by the Western mind as living; rocks, earth, mountains, sky and stars, all live in relationship to the other. If all participants in creation are living together in a state of right relationship, balance occurs, and it is holy.

When the relationship is troubled or broken, balance is disrupted, and negative consequences result. When creation is abused or traumatized, it has a ripple effect on everything, including the relationships between people, and vice versa when human relationships are troubled or broken.

To put it simply, we are all in this together – all of Creation. We are all linked, we are all in one piece. The Western mind

and Christianity have traditionally dismissed this viewpoint as heretical, because it contrasts with the Western dualism between body and soul, between Creation and living and non-living.

Indigenous people see all as one and the same. From this perspective it can be clearly seen that environmental care is an integral part of the cosmic balance, and things such as climate change indicate an imbalance that Indigenous people would see as affecting everyone and everything in numerous ways – geological, physical, emotional and spiritual. The Earth is disturbed when humans do not get along, and healthy when they do. Climate change is an indicator of this sort of thing, a dysfunction resulting from mistreatment of the Earth.

The reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers was orchestrated by God, the Mysterious Holy One omnipresent in everyone and everything. When their relationship was in balance, the earth was healed, and the famine ended.

REFLECTION:

When humans are not reconciled to each other and to God, what impact does that have on the rest of Creation?

PRAYER:

Creator God

Your eternal power is seen in the whole web of life

Your voice is heard in the beauty of Creation

Rooted in your love may we worship you with all your creatures

And work to protect our common home

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

(Season of Creation 2019)

**Reverend Dr. Bradley Hauff, Indigenous Missioner for The Episcopal Church,
Oglala Sioux Tribe of South Dakota**

Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org



THE LORD DWELLS IN THE LAND

“You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”

Numbers 35: 33 - 34

As a little boy, I spent my days looking after the family's small herd of cattle. Those were very difficult years when no family was allowed to own more than seven head of cattle. Failure to do so often resulted in either confiscation or hefty fines. Wanton cutting of trees or burning of grass was prohibited.

Forests were really wild then, consisting of innumerable varieties of trees and flowers. With other boys of my age, we never went hungry as we tended our cattle both in winter and summer. Wild fruits were in abundance. Wild animals and birds made our forests even more fascinating. Our elders were strict about the best ways to share these God-given resources.

The land was sacred. It belonged to God, (or MWARI in my Shona language). Numbers reminds us that the land must not be polluted. Spilling innocent blood on it displays an utter disrespect of what God has given freely for us to live on. It is unfortunate that today my rural area and many parts of the world, no longer have sacred spaces where the beauty of the virgin wild could capture our imaginations.

REFLECTION:

Consider the street around your Church. Is the land sacred or desecrated? What can the church do to make it a fitting place for God's presence?

PRAYER:

God of mercy and the provider of the land,
Make us faithful stewards of this most sacred and valuable
resource that is the foundation of our lives.
Teach us to know that any abuse of the land is actually an act of
self-destruction.

Give us the wisdom to deal with our land in ways that could
promote sustainable development.
Show us the way to guard against the wanton destruction and
pollution of this free and life-supporting resource. Amen.

Ven Rev Thomas Mhuriro
Diocese of Kimberly and Kuruman



LISTEN TO THE SONG OF THE SPARROWS

But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you.

Job 12: 7 - 8

Never before has our attention been so focused on the environment. During these tough times of the COVID virus, which has enforced regulations requiring us to stay home, or be outside, we have perhaps for the first time in a long time, become aware how much we have taken our surroundings for granted. Because we can't step onto a beach, we take photos of the mountain across the sea - now that we can only look, the loss felt is great. How much greater will that loss be when species of animals, flora and fauna are wiped out, when our seas are so heavily polluted, or our water contaminated.

We have a chance to make right what is wrong with our treatment of this one earth upon which we all live. The animals, the birds and the fish have always treated earth with respect – the instincts instilled in them by our Creator God should be lessons to us. Our instinct as humans needs to be one of reverence for the thrush singing her song, the salmon swimming upstream, the beaver building a wonderful eco-system, the geese migrating and the plant life which pushes through even after a devastating fire.

Let us tread ever so lightly, listen to the song of the sparrows, the screech of the hadeda, ensure we conserve water, encourage growth of indigenous plant life – without these our lives would be so much less colourful.

May we continue to cherish what we have every day: and not only when we lose it.

REFLECTION:

How did your relationship with creation change during lockdown? What can you continue to do going forward?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father
You created the earth and the seas, filled it with animal life, flora
and fauna in glorious abundance.
Awaken our hearts to their beauty and to the part every living
thing plays in the eco-system of our earth.
May we always appreciate,
protect and preserve our environment –
For ourselves and future generations.

Amen

Barbara Oosthuizen
Diocese of Saldanha Bay



GOD TAKES PRIDE IN THE WHOLE OF CREATION

'Where were you when I laid out the earth's foundation (38:4)
while the morning stars sang together, and all the angels
shouted for joy? (38:7)

Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the
recesses of the deep? (38:16)

Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? (38:18)

Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? (38:33)

Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you
observe the calving of the deer? (39:1)

Does the eagle soar at your command? (39:26)

Job 38 - 39

In the final chapters of the book of Job, God proclaims the glories of creation in a series of questions. God's intimate knowledge and tender care are clear. In these verses we see the earth from God's perspective. We hear God's passionate joy – and sense God's pride - in the whole created order.

Jesus too shows deep connection with the earth. In the gospel narratives, he is often found outdoors, fully at home in the natural world and relating to it. "Look at the birds of the air... consider how the wildflowers grow," he says. "The Kingdom of heaven," he says, "is like yeast ... like a grain of mustard ... like a man scattering seed ...like a fishnet that was cast into the sea". Jesus speaks of foxes and birds, of trees and grain, of red skies and the wind that "blows where it will". And in his heartfelt lament for Jerusalem, he likens himself to a mother hen: "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers

her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37-39)

Lent commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness before the start of his public ministry... time spent in nature. Perhaps in those days he would look at the morning stars and remember creation's birth and the angels shouting for joy. Perhaps he would watch the mountain goats and the soaring eagles. Perhaps he would recite the verses from Job and remember that "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11)

REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Rather than using words, today find something from the natural world and spend time contemplating it in silence. How does it speak to you of God? Be still, breathe, knowing that this thing, and you, and everything else in all creation, belongs to God... is seen... and known... and loved.

**Dr Elizabeth Perry, Anglican Alliance
UK**



CREATION IS GOD'S LITURGY

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established.
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

Psalm 8: 3 - 4, 6 - 7

In liturgical worship, all elements of worship are meant to be a doorway through which we get to see a glimpse of God in what we would otherwise consider ordinary. The music, praise, prayers, scriptures, and aesthetics are harmoniously woven together as elements drawing people into a Divine recognition of God living among us. Liturgy is the work of the people and yet it has the ability to set everything up to orchestrate an experience of the reality of humanity's encounter with God.

Creation is in so many ways God's liturgy. It is a means by which God points us to God as anything but ordinary. God as creator of all, and humanity as a part of that magnificent creation. Upon meditating on the splendorous work of God's fingers, the Psalmist is awestruck to the point of reflecting on self and God's care for humanity, as if to say: "if moon and stars are so wonderfully made, how much more am I?"

To be a part of God's handiwork, "God's liturgy", is to see ourselves in the backdrop of everything that God has wondrously

created and having the privilege of awareness and recognition that only God could create something so beautiful through which we can see the Divine. The recognition of this divine beauty has the ability to lead us to true worship, where our worship of God exceeds humanity's controlled liturgical experiences, and extends to God's liturgy, uncontrolled by human hands but cared for by human hands.

We have been given dominion to care, to love, and to appreciate. In the harmonious design of creation, God has this special place for us as caretakers. If we take on this responsibility, perhaps our lives will be reflective of daily worship, where the love and care we exercise in all creation will be intrinsic parts of our worship to God.

REFLECTION:

Take the opportunity to go outside on a clear night to look at the stars or the full moon at the end of the February. Stand in the dark and quiet, look at the greatness of the night sky and reflect on the wonder of the Creator, and the works of God's hands.

PRAYER:

Awesome God, creator of all,
The works of your hands proclaim your glory and magnificence.
Thank you for making us a part of your
creation and giving us the responsibility to become stewards of
your handiwork.

Help us to exercise love and care in looking after your creation,
that all might be able to recognise
your care and majesty in all, through the one in whom all things
were made, Jesus Christ the living Word.

Amen.

Rev Seipati Ngcobo
Diocese of Natal



THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD

The heavens proclaim the glory of God
and the firmament shows forth the work of His hands.
Day unto day takes up the story
and night unto night makes known the message.

No speech, no word, no voice is heard
yet their span goes forth through all the earth,
their words to the utmost bounds of the world.

Psalm 19: 1 - 5

They say an image is worth a thousand words. I feel like the vast wonder of nature can say far more than that in its simple beauty and intricate design.

Recently, I was walking along the pipe track next to Table Mountain in Cape Town. As you make your way along the path, it winds in and out of valleys and as you go into a dip, it can feel like the mountain is towering above you. Gazing up at the heights, I was struck by how huge and magnificent the mountain was, and then, how much greater God is.

The mountain appears so great in comparison to my littleness, and yet, it in turn is only a small bump on this planet. I wonder, did God create the stars and all the empty space between them just so that we could begin to grasp the infinity of His love and goodness?

Nature needs no eloquent words or clever arguments to proclaim the glory of God. Creation can say so much in its silence, but we are often unaware of it as we go about our busy lives.

When last did you gaze at the night sky, or stop to smell the flowers? Yes, literally smell the flowers.

From the intricate design of a tiny flower to the quiet stillness of a remote mountain, creation makes known the message of an intelligent, creative, loving God... We have only to listen.

REFLECTION:

Find out what time sunrise and sunset will be , and make a point of being outside, and look at the beauty – spend some time in hearing the voice of God.

PRAYER:

Loving Father, we praise You for the beautiful garden of creation that You have made for us.

Please help us to make time to sit in the stillness of nature and to see and hear how it proclaims Your glory. And help us to preserve its beauty for generations to come.

We ask this in Your most Holy Name

Amen

Lauren Sanby

Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Town.

(The Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and DRC youth have formed an organisation called #Together4creation)



THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

The Earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Psalm 24: 1 - 2

This verse teaches us firstly that God is the Creator of the Universe. God is not just a powerful distant figure in the world—he is the creator of the world. He brought it into existence with all of its interconnected processes, animate and inanimate, which means that even the smallest pebble is the work of his design:

Secondly, we learn that every living thing is part of God's Creation - the weather, plants, and animals are all part of the environment God created on the Earth. The Bible says that they are as much a part of God's creation as humankind itself.

Sometimes we think that we can treat the world as we wish, but we forget that it does not belong to us – it is in trust to us from God. The future of all of God's creatures depends upon the wonderful interconnections of the web of life. When we destroy one part of God's creation, the web of life begins to unravel.

REFLECTION:

Consider your city or village, the land, the rivers, the mountains.

How does it change your attitude to know that it belongs to
God?

PRAYER

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. **Amen**

(Bishop Eric Pike)

Lay Canon Molly Tshebeletso
Diocese of Pretoria



COMPASSION ON ALL OF CREATION

The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all of His Creation.

Psalm 149: 9

God's goodness and compassion extend to the whole of creation, not just to people. This is very important theologically and ethically. It has implications for how we understand God's loving and redeeming purposes for animals, birds, plants and ecosystems. It also has implications for how we, as those called to reflect God's image, treat our fellow creatures. We are to exercise the same love and compassion as God does towards all creatures.

The word compassion, translated in other places as 'mercy' or 'tender love', is a powerful deeply-emotional term with its Hebrew roots in the term for 'womb'. God's feeling towards his creatures, and all his creation, is that of a mother towards her child, and we should seek to discern and discover the same protective, passionate intimacy in our relationship with our fellow creatures and our earthly home. We should seek to live without cruelty to fellow creatures that God is compassionate towards.

This has clear implications for our attitudes to meat or dairy products that are produced by intensive and cruel farming methods, and to animal testing or experimentation. More positively, we should support wildlife conservation, habitat restoration and wildlife-friendly gardening.

REFLECTION:

Consider the meat that you eat. Do you think it has been raised
in a way that shows God's compassion?

PRAYER:

"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."

(St Basil the Great, 4th Century)

Rev Dr Dave Bookless

Diocese of London

A Rocha International

Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org



FINDING PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

As iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 27: 17

The particular verse will help illustrate to my parish or community the importance of us building each other up, more especially as Christians in the work of the Lord. In Zulu there is a phrase, “Umntu ngumntu ngabantu,” which literally means that a person is a person through other people. Ubuntu has its roots in African philosophy, where the idea of community is one of the building blocks of society.

In order for us to care for creation, we need to start caring for each other and help guide each to work as one unit and sharpen each other to look after creation. It doesn't help if a selected few are providing and sacrificing to care for God's creation, but in the other side, a few people are not cooperative or simply destroying creation. That kind of attitude or reality will only set us back and in turn the beauty of God's creation will be destroyed, just as an iron that's not sharpened by another piece of iron will rust and eventually be of no use.

We realise that in order to grow the movement of caring for Creation we need everybody's skills and gifts, and we need to find partners also from outside of the church to work with.

REFLECTION:

Who are the people or organisations within the church, or in the community that you can partner with to grow the environmental ministry?

PRAYER

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

(from Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*)

Deacon Tlaga Molokoane
Diocese of the Free State, Bloemfontein



THE REBIRTH OF CREATION

Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

⁷The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

Isaiah 35: 6 - 7

The environmental challenges we face, from loss of biodiversity and climate change can seem overwhelming at times. In this passage the prophet Isaiah uses language that brings to mind themes of creation such as wilderness, wasteland and desert.

Isaiah offers hope that when God arrives, the waters shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams will flow in the desert. Parched ground shall become a pool (35: 6-7). This is the vision of the rebirth of creation. Not only creation is transformed, but our inability to protect it is transformed, our sense of hopelessness is removed because of God's presence. He transforms every inability into ability and every insufficiency into miraculous sufficiency.

God's salvation affects both humans and nature. With this transforming vision, God wants us to strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Inspired by God, we will not only be concerned with the wellbeing of other people, but also the needs of nature, then even sorrow and sighing shall flee away (35:10). We will move from despair to hope in action. We may lose hope in the face of many atrocities and happenings, in the face of environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution, and many other environmental issues, but one day God shall bring back all

lost glory. In fact, He is our hope.

This hope ought to be active and not passive. It should make us seek that transformation in the present, will change inability into ability, inaction into action. God makes the impossible become possible like water bursting out in the wilderness. God transforms every inability into ability and every insufficiency into miraculous sufficiency.

Pray that we shall seriously be concerned with environmental issues, for God loves us together with what He has created. We need to act now for this is our hope in God!

REFLECTION:

When you look at your community, what are the environmental challenges that cause you to despair? Imagine God's life-giving Spirit pouring new life and hope like gushing waters in the desert.

PRAYER:

Great Spirit, whose dry lands thirst,
Help us to find the way to refresh your lands.
Great Spirit, whose waters are choked with debris and pollution,
help us to find the way to cleanse your waters.
Great Spirit, whose beautiful earth grows ugly with misuse,
help us to find the way to restore beauty to your handiwork.
Great Spirit, whose creatures are being destroyed,
help us to find a way to replenish them.
Great Spirit, whose gifts to us are being lost in selfishness and
corruption,
help us to find the way to restore our humanity.
Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind,
whose breath gives life to the world, hear me;
I need your strength and wisdom. May I walk in Beauty.

(Big Thunder (Bedagi), late 19th century Algonquin)

**Rev. Canon Andrew Sumani,
Diocese of Lake Malawi
Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org**



YOU HAVE DEFILED MY LAND

I brought you into a fertile land
to eat its fruit and rich produce.
But you came and defiled my land
and made my inheritance detestable.

Jeremiah 2: 7

God states that he brought his people to a fertile land, but they have defiled the land. In Eswatini (Swaziland) we can see that unplanned settlement has encroached over the years leading to poor road planning and construction. More and more settlements are taking over fertile grazing land. Collectively, all of that has led to poor waste management, encouraged the growth of invasive species and a number of types of pollution including land, air, water and noise.

It is this kind of land degradation the prophet Jeremiah is talking about- the land is defiled and is being made detestable. It is no longer productive and habitable to a wide variety of biodiversity as it was decades ago. The once fertile lands that fed many families can no longer sustain us. What kind of inheritance are we leaving for the generations to come?

We are called to repentance and to turn away from our ways of treating the land. We are called to do away with littering, poor settlements, overgrazing and all forms of pollution and land degradation. It should break our heart when we see cows eating plastic bags.

The Land needs to be healed and renewed, to be made productive and habitable as it was before.

As a Church we are called to be stewards of what God created and said "it is good".

REFLECTION:

How do you think God feels when he sees a cow chewing a plastic bag?

PRAYER

Creator God, your Son Jesus Christ was in the beginning when everything was created, and all things were created through him and for him.

You have entrusted us to be good stewards of your creation but through our greed for power and wealth , we have treated the land with injustice.

We have polluted the air, land and water and cut down trees. Collectively, our actions have led to climate change; we repent from our actions.

We ask that you empower us with your Holy Spirit to be at the forefront on climate issues as the body of Christ. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, One God now and forever.

Amen.

Mncedisi Masuku
Diocese of Eswatini (Swaziland)



INSTEAD OF STEWARDS, WE HAVE BECOME DESTROYERS

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Jeremiah 2: 13

When God created human beings, he placed upon us authority over creation. Unto Adam, he gave the privilege to name the animals and plants. However, it turned out that this authority was misunderstood. God's authority was abused. Being made in the image and likeness of God, we were meant to care for the land. We were meant to be stewards of what God trusted us with – the land.

But human beings, through greed and selfish ambition, strayed from our responsibility for God's earth. We took for granted what God had trusted us with. Instead of stewardship, we became destroyers. We tore down forests for huge malls and entertainment areas. We took advantage of the sea and its beauty and it has become a bed of death for the animals of the sea. We replaced the majestic mountains with heaps of dumped litter. In this we have sinned against God by failing to follow his instruction to "work the land and take care of it "(Gen. 2: 15).

That disobedience came with consequences. Because of human disobedience, the plenty has become not enough. Nature's beauty is replaced by man-made artificial beauty. Human greed has led to us digging our own cisterns - cisterns that are not necessarily durable or sustainable. Forsaking God has led to the notion of "survival of the fittest" where the rich and powerful

survive while the poor suffer food insecurities, water shortages and infertile land.

The picture is bleak. The situation is dire. Yet there is still hope. There remains a light at the end of the tunnel. God calls on his remnant people to call on him and to get their hands dirty. God is calling us according to 2 Chron. 7:14, "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land"

We have an opportunity to turn from our actions and revere the land. It can't be business as usual. As stewards of God's land, we need also to be advocates for creation. We need to sound the trumpet and educate all we meet and steer them into reverence for creation. It is our call to care for the land.

REFLECTION:

How can you influence your circle of friends and contacts to treat creation differently? Can you use social media or other ways?

PRAYER:

God of the land, God of sea and sky, thank you for your creation and creativity in nature.

Turn our hearts to you that we may seek to serve you in taking care of creation.

Forgive our sins and the sins of our ancestors in destroying your beauty.

We turn to you humbly to remind us of what you have called us to do. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

**Rev Mpho Mohale,
Diocesan Environmental Coordinator
Diocese of Christ the King**



A FUTURE AND A HOPE

‘For I know the plans I have for you’, says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope’

Jeremiah 29: 11

The people of Israel were brought to the Promised Land so that they could be a light to others, but instead they conformed to the ways of the pagans and contaminated that offer from God. God loved them and cared for them and sent them various warnings, which they rejected or chose to ignore, so God allowed Babylon to take over - and they then became depressed, disconnected and lost hope as they were sent into captivity.

They hoped for a ‘quick fix’ if they tried to mend their ways and false prophets predicted a return to ‘normality’ after only two years in that situation, but God offered no such quick fix: they were to stay where they were, to live there, to make homes and families there and to learn patience. It was going to take a long time - 70 years - and that was not what they wanted to hear. As if that wasn’t bad enough, they were told to pray for their oppressors and to help them so that life would become better for everyone. They were told not to be tricked by the false prophets and fortune tellers - who were not speaking for the Lord. They were really in for the long haul. While God didn’t stop loving them, he did see a need for disciplining and so they were to learn and work their way out of their captivity.

That situation must surely resonate with us in our lives today. God didn’t offer the Israelites an easy way out - and He doesn’t offer us one either. We are paying for our poor stewardship and selfishness and are in for the long haul too. We may not find

work, we may not find healing, our relationships may not survive the difficulties, we may never recover financially. What some are calling 'a new normal' is uncomfortable, unsettling and alarming. "We cannot just believe our way out of a situation we behaved ourselves into"

But the situation is not hopeless - God loves us and He does have a plan:

He will allow us to struggle so that we will learn in practice.

He will bring us back to a spiritual intimacy with Him.

His plans may or may not match our own hopes and plans.

His plans may not seem positive at the time.

His plans may not happen to suit our timeframe
but they will happen in His time.

REFLECTION:

What are the lessons we need to learn about God's 'bigger plan' for the Earth after COVID?

PRAYER

You spoke the Word and all things came to be.

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.

Amen

(from the Eucharistic Prayer for the Season of Creation)

Canon Pat Millar
Scottish Episcopal Church,
Lay Canon of the Diocese of Eswatini.



HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be filled. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matthew 5: 3 - 7

Happy are the people who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will be satisfied. We can say that this promise is intended both for victims of injustice and for people who feel empathy and are in solidarity with these victims.

The practice of mercy, of placing your heart with the suffering people, represents the sum of the works of love. Mercy is the practice of justice within a world with unjust structures. Practicing mercy corresponds, for Jesus, to practicing God’s will.

Even in the face of Matthew’s apparent “spiritualization” of the Beatitudes, it is extremely important to stress that the Beatitudes are not the result of pious desires uprooted from reality, but are located in the here and now, and are the norm of the Gospel. Joy can exist within situations of suffering and pain but this joy takes place when justice is desired and practiced, and even the smallest signs of hope are seen. Being happy is not an inner religious life, but is the joy of the Christian person who lives their faith in the world in relation to other people.

Considering the fires and countless other environmental crimes that are happening in the Amazon and in the world, the greed of

those who have no commitment to the life of our Common Home has been revealed. We, as disciples of Christ must pay attention and become aware of situations of suffering and there, proclaim this Gospel that invites people to learn active hope. Amen.

REFLECTION:

Where is God calling you to hunger and thirst for justice?

PRAYER

Lord, you have given us a world
full of rich resources to feed us all
And to provide us with all that the
body and mind could need.
Yet, the poor are still with us,
deprived of food, of homes,
of education and dignity; deprived of
healing and of hope.

Forgive our inhumanity.
Forgive our selfishness and greed.
Forgive our church life and our home life.
Forgive us for leaving Christ unfed, unhoused,
without healing and without hope.
Forgive us as we bring ourselves and our
possessions back to you,
In Christ's name.
(Season of Creation 4)

**Bishop Marinez Rosa dos Santos Bassotto,
Diocese of the Amazonas
Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org**



DO NOT WORRY

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6: 26

This verse draws our attention away from the foolishness of our worry towards the faithfulness of God our gracious provider. During uncertain and trying times when many people lose their jobs and their livelihoods, we tend to worry about where our next meal will come from and how will we provide for our families. Worry is a useless and non-productive pastime one can engage in. Worry can make us stressed and sick. Instead of wasting our time worrying about what we cannot control, we are called to step outside and learn from the birds of the air.

Here we marvel on the creative genius of God. The aerodynamic engineering manifested in the design of birds. We can observe the speed and agility of the Hawk and the Eagle, the taking off and the landing of the Duck or perhaps watch the loons by the lake as they chase and catch fish under water. God has equipped them with marvellous navigation ability. Then we will know that God who created them is our Heavenly Father. He watches over them to see that they are fed. How much more will he take care of us His children? He will certainly see to it that we are fed. If we put our trust in God, our provider we will live with less stress.

May we choose life's course as Jesus did. Trust God to put a spread of food at our table. Jesus wants to provide for all our needs even now, two thousand years later. We must do the work and have faith that he will provide.

REFLECTION:

Bring to mind all your worries, sometimes it helps to write them on a piece of paper. Then bring them to God in prayer.

PRAYER

God our Father, Source of all life, thank you for providing for all our needs.

Thank you for feeding us with your Holy mysteries.

Please increase our faith and help us to look up to you for everything.

In Jesus' mighty name we pray.

Amen.

Fredah Moatshe

JAEl (Johannesburg Anglican Eco-spirituality Initiative)



CONSIDER THE LILIES

Why worry about clothes? Look how the wildflowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. ²⁹But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth[b] wasn't as well clothed as one of them. ³⁰God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith?

Matthew 6: 28 - 30

Jesus often used examples from nature to illustrate his points. He was part of an agrarian society, so his listeners were very familiar with the natural world around them. When he refers to the "birds of the air," and the "lilies of the field," Creation becomes his teaching partner in helping humans understand what it means to trust in the goodness of God.

In our modern context, of course, there are serious threats to those birds and lilies. Species extinction, destruction of natural lands, and agricultural monoculture threaten the very ecosystems that support Jesus' teaching partners. We would do well to heed Jesus' instructions to refrain from worrying about the pursuit of consumer goods, and instead turn our attention to those flowers and fauna so that we can preserve the species that still remain on this planet.

We must encourage our congregations to join with Eco-Campaigns as stewards of God's creation. Recognising the damage that plastic is doing to God's creatures, we can all reduce our plastic use, stopping buying bottled water, refusing the once off use plastic bags that the retailers sell to us. We can all refuse to take the plastic straws given to us in restaurants. We can all

find places to recycle our plastic and if one doesn't exist, we can plan to start one in our church.

REFLECTION:

Reflect on your use of plastic. What items can you replace or stop using for the love of God's creatures?

PRAYER

God of Life
We praise you for the beauty of Creation
Its richness and variety
Yet through greed and ignorance
We choke your world with plastic waste
And throw so much away
Make us more like Jesus
Treading gently on our common home
And breathe your Spirit on us
That we may care more deeply for your Earth
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

(A prayer for world environment day. Bishop of Dudley)

Rev Raynard Schovell
Environmental Chaplain
Diocese of Pretoria



FOUR FEASTS

“Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”

Matthew 14: 19 - 21

In this story we see four feasts that reveal the presence of God as the pulsing heart of every particle of Creation. Firstly, we see Jesus feeding more than five thousand people, with extra to spare. This is a miracle displaying God’s creativity as the five loaves and two fish become a feast for the multitude. This is a prophetic act which displays the miracle of the other three feasts.

The second feast, the simple loaves and fish of the small boy, reflects everyday feasts in which the mystery of life and presence of God is marvellously revealed – all the other feasts are echoed in this daily feast, this daily bread.

Thirdly we see the feast in the World to Come, the culmination of God’s presence in Creation and history, definitively and with salvation revealed and made present in the life, death, resurrection, and the second coming of Jesus.

Fourthly we see the Eucharist, in which all four feasts meet, in which all four are prophetically revealed, and God’s moral and spiritual presence in every moment, particle, and action of Creation and history.

God is not revealed in terms of human might, God is revealed in the forces of life, in the energy that sustains and propels all of Creation. As Jesus mystically presides in our gathering – receiving,

blessing, breaking, and sharing – we see life and we see our path of life in Creation. We must sanctify – and at the same time reveal the holiness that is present – Creation as the gift of God.

Jesus gives us a ceremony of life in four dimensions, but he also gives us a way of life which follows the pattern of his life, displaying and embodying the sacrificial love of God present in all of life. In a world that appears to have lost connection with Creation and with the God who is present in it, it is urgent that we plunge into the vibrating life of this mystery.

May we follow God's call to both live life and bless Creation, by holy action that protects and honours its God given integrity – living out this feast, imitating this feast in all the blessed acts of life.

REFLECTION:

How can we become more aware of the presence of God not just in the Eucharist but in our daily family meals?

PRAYER

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

Amen.

(Service of celebration of 20 years of women's ordination, ACSA)

**Archbishop Mark MacDonald,
National Indigenous Anglican Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada
Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org**



WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16: 13 - 16

For an indigenous person, especially for Maori, the right response to the Jesus’ question to the disciples, begins with my own understanding and knowledge of who I am, my cultural identity. The first thought is always; ‘who am I’ in relation to the world around me, my connection to the natural world, my bond to my ancestral land, my link to the environment.

Who am I in connection to my maunga (mountain)? Who am I in connection with my awa (river)? Who am I in connection with my moana (sea)? The next thought is ‘who am I’ in relation to my waka (canoe), my iwi (tribe), to my kainga (home), and to my whanau (immediate and extended family). That is my ngahere (forest), my roto (lake), my whenua tapu (sacred lands) because my ancestors lived there.

Jesus, in asking his disciples the question, what people were saying about him, was concerned that whatever people were murmuring about him, that it must be correct. Should they not at least have known the difference between Jesus and Elijah, Jesus and Jeremiah, and Jesus and John the Baptist?

Only Simon Peter had the courage to come out with the truth. He knew Jesus’ whakapapa (ancestry). He knew where Jesus came from. He was clear about Jesus’ mana (spiritual power

and integrity). He was certain about Jesus' tapu (authority and righteousness).

His confession of Jesus, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,' revealed Jesus' real identity. In his confession of the identity of Jesus, Simon Peter's own identity, in turn, is revealed to him. 'And I tell you, you are Peter (the rock).' Only when we confess Jesus as Messiah, the Son of the living God, only then is our true identity is revealed to us, our identity in Christ.

This is our Christ name, our Christ identity. It becomes our tuapapa (foundation) in Christ. It is our turangawaewae (our standing place/rock) in Christ.

REFLECTION:

Reflect on who you are, in relationship to Mother Earth, your community and your family. What is your identify in Christ?

PRAYER:

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your
infinite light.

(Pope Francis, Laudato Si)

Bishop Te Kitohi Pikaahu
Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia



LIT UP WITH GOD'S GLORY

"Jesus was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white"

Matthew 17: 2

In the solitude of that holy mountain, Jesus' prayer grows into an intense religious experience. To describe this change, the Bible uses the word "transfiguration." What Dante calls "the love that moves the sun and other stars" so completely embraces Jesus that who he really is, who he has always been, is briefly revealed. A dazzling brightness shines from his face, his body, even his clothes.

What just happened? The holy presence that secretly abides within every person and every part of the created world has suddenly, briefly become visible to the human eye. For Christians, there is something deeply personal in this energy: it is the dynamic, creative Presence of the Holy Spirit. When we sense its presence in ourselves or in the outside world, God seems to light up the edges of things or to shine out from within them.

We may not consider ourselves mystics, but anyone who has ever been overcome by the beauty of the world – anyone who, in contemplating the world, has ever experienced a wave of wonder and gratefulness and awe – anyone who has ever spent time looking into the eyes of a baby or studying the details of a leaf – anyone who has ever gazed for a while at a mountain range or watched the sparkling waters of a river as it rushes downstream knows what it's like to see the hidden radiance of Christ, whose living presence fills the whole Creation.

So when we see God's Creation being desecrated and destroyed

– God’s good Earth being poisoned by toxins and pollutants, and laid waste by corporate greed – when we learn from scientists that a mass extinction event is now underway,” - when we realize that, unless we change course fast, we will not leave our children and our children’s children a habitable world – then we are moved to take action.

I think this is one of the great gifts that people of faith can offer the world in this perilous time: the perception of Creation as a sacred, living whole, lit up with the glory of God. For let’s be clear: we were born into a society that does not see the Earth like that. Most of us were not taught to see the natural world as sacred and lit up with God’s glory.

REFLECTION:

Reflect on the places and times when you have felt closest to God, or the presence of the Holy Spirit. What has been the most beautiful experience you have ever had of Creation?

PRAYER

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)

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Missioner for Creation Care
Episcopal Diocese of Western Mass. & Southern New England Conference,
UCC, Creation Care Advisor, Episcopal Diocese of MA USA
Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org



WHAT KIND OF TENANTS ARE WE?

"There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ³⁵"The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. ³⁸"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Matthew 21: 33 - 46

The very setting for this Gospel reading reminds us of the centrality of the natural creation to God's kingdom: A vineyard at harvest time.

Most modern Bibles give this parable a heading like "The Wicked Tenants." It is the story of a group of renter-farmers who abuse the land and abuse their neighbours, even to the point of killing the landlord's son, believing they can keep all the profits for themselves. Yet ultimately, their abuse of the land and of others is counterproductive, leading to their own "miserable death."

Like the Pharisees, we must ask ourselves: Are we the new tenants who will produce the fruits of the kingdom? Or are we the wicked tenants, living a lifestyle beyond our limits that destroys everything it touches? Like the tenants, whenever we abuse creation – its land, its water, or its people – we abuse ourselves.

It is worth noting that this same chapter of Matthew began with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as observed on Palm Sunday. By entering the city through the east gate on a donkey with palms, Jesus deliberately contrast himself with the Roman governor Pilate, who entered through the west gate with what Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan describe as “a visual panoply of imperial power: cavalry on horses... banners... sun glinting on metal and gold.”

First Jesus established a visual contrast between his kingdom of love and the humility and the Empire’s, then he used parables to underscore the choice facing his disciples. It is still a choice we face us today: Love and humility towards our neighbours and creation? Or continued greed and destruction in the shadow of the powers and principalities?

REFLECTION:

Consider your parish and Diocese – are you working to heal the wounds of the planet or is the cry of the Earth going unheard?

PRAYER

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

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

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

(A Franciscan blessing)

Rev Nathan Empsell
Connecticut, USA

Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org



THE HAVES AND THE HAVE NOTS

“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’”⁷“Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’”⁹“‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’”¹⁰“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

Matthew 25: 6 - 10

In this story of the wise and foolish virgins in Saint Matthew, I personally sympathise with the foolish virgins. We don’t find that the ‘wise’ virgins are making any effort to alert and support the unwise. The prudent virgins come across as selfish and elitist, they hid their knowledge about the bride and groom’s arrival at the wedding. They joined the party where there were five empty seats, leaving five people crying outside in the dark, hungry and listening to the sounds of the feasting inside. The so-called wise virgins made the situation of those naïve girls much worse.

Putting this into the environmental and creation perspective, the rich, so called developed nations, their governments and elites in science and technology behave in the same way as the wise girls. They do not feel the effects of the rampant exploitation of the environment and our habitat. Their actions worsen the living conditions of the so called third world. Their refusal to share most recent technologies lead to the indebtedness of poorer counties.

What they do not know yet, although it is happening almost everywhere, is that the effects of climate change and Ecological

injustice do not warn where they are going to strike at any given moment. Pandemics like the current one at Covid-19 are increasingly showing how vulnerable we all are. We are all living on the same sick planet, and because of the sins of the few and the indifference of the many, we may be heading to the fatal end of this planet.

The restoration of the integrity of Creation must be seen and treated as integral to human and eternal salvation. Evangelization must have as a focus and priority the welfare of nature and the environment as well as the welfare of human life.

REFLECTION:

Have a discussion with friends or family. Why does Climate Change have more impact on the vulnerable nations?

PRAYER

Our Father, of great maternal affection,
the whole nature bears witness to you,
and we praise you for the gracious work of your hands.

Forgive us, faithful God,
for our folly and carelessness
with the Environment, your created order.

It empowers us greatly,
so that we work for
preservation of species
and the maintenance of life on Earth,
redeemed by your Son, Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray.

Amen.

(The Common Prayer Book of the Brazilian Anglican Episcopal Church)

Bishop Carlos Matsinhe
Diocese of Lebombos, Mozambique



THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" ¹⁶As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Mark 1: 14 - 17

The gospel of Mark makes us smile and gives us strength. The Jesus of our faith cares about humanity and all creation, because he is the parable of the Kingdom of God, which is near, you can almost touch it. His "way" attracted many people to him. The women probably were with him from the beginning and men were called to join and many accepted. They chose to join a completely different lifestyle and mindset. They had to work hard together as a community, continually and carefully fine-tuning how they presented the Kingdom of God as near and present.

During this pandemic we are living in, lots of lessons have been learned. We are invited to nourish our capacity for solidarity, to be connected despite the physical distancing, to care for others and for nature in order to have a present and a future, to advocate for public policies that resemble the features of the kingdom of God, that make the kingdom more visible and touchable. We are constantly invited to proclaim and make the Good news of the Kingdom of God a reality. To follow Jesus, we must challenge unjust structures and make the world inhabitable again for all of life.

Let's pay more attention to what it means to "fish for people,"

inspiring others to join the 'Way' and be more proactive globally and locally to spread the good news: make the kingdom of God reality here and now. Amen.

REFLECTION:

What can you do to 'fish for people'? Who can you inspire to join the movement of people caring for Creation?

PRAYER

Oh God who has chosen to be with us as one of us
Your help and your tenderness heal our wounds
Your kindness and your generosity enrich our poverty
Your protection set us free from fear
Your strength dynamizes and encourages us when we feel weak
Your generous love satisfies our needs
Your richness fills us when we've got nothing
Comfort our sadness
Soften our sufferings
Heal our diseases
And quench our thirst in your waters of life

Dr Paulo Ueti
Anglican Alliance, Brazil
Adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org



AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

And after He said goodbye to them, He went to the mountain to pray.

Mark 6: 46

In this day and age, we see an increase in deforestation and an increase in public development. Protected lands get smaller and smaller, and one has to travel long distances to see an untouched part of the earth. If you think about your context what does the environment look like around you?

In my days of helping out on youth camps at my local parish one of the imperatives was to have a hike or nature walk sometime during the camp experience. This would be a time for the youngsters to encounter God in the beauty of God's creation. We would take a guitar and sing worship songs and have moments of reflection. Have you ever stumbled into a place within nature and sensed that God must be here?

In the reading this morning we see Jesus taking time out to pray on the mountain, and though many a time the focus of the reading is based on devotion and taking time to meet with God, we can not also ignore the location of where it takes place. Scripture is littered with references of people encountering God in nature whether on a mountain, in the wilderness or in a garden. In the encounter that Moses has with God through the burning bush, God tells Moses, "the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Exo 3:5)

We have to again start asking ourselves questions such as; Can we still encounter God in nature? Is there still such a place as "holy ground"? If holy ground is everywhere then how should we treat it? How do we view the land, ground, nature? If the ground is holy where God is, then it means to beg the question where

is God? We too need to recognize that God is in our midst and found in creation. God is not off in the sky above the clouds, but here in our midst. As the psalmist says, "Where can I flee from your Spirit?" (Psalm 139: 7-10). So, we should be encouraged to find God's presence on the mountain, along the coastlands, in the grasslands, in the forests, and along our riverbanks where God leads us besides still waters.

REFLECTION:

Remember a place in nature where you felt the presence of God, what did you feel, sense? How can you share such experiences with young people in your congregation and community?

PRAYER:

Lord God help us to recognize you in all of creation and to sense your presence in nature. Help us to recognize "sacred spaces" and honour you in the way we care for creation, for Creation worships you with us. We know that there are many times where you have met with your people in places that were least expected. Fill us with the compassion to leave an environment for those around us so that they too may say, "We have met with God in this place".

Amen

**John Paul Roberts
Green Anglicans
Diocese of Cape Town**



WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

"The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.
' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12: 31

In the Gospel according to St Mark 12:31 Jesus reminds us of the great commandment to "love our neighbours as ourselves". We often only think that our neighbours are the people we share a street with, however to me it means anyone we come across no matter where we find ourselves. 'Neighbours' include the animals, the plants and trees, rivers and oceans even the smallest of insects who are our neighbours and need our love.

How then do we share this love that Mark speaks about? First by knowing that "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1a) should be our everyday reminder me that we do not own the land but are just occupants called to live according to God's will. We should not only look after ourselves and our families, but also remember that the land, trees, animals and everything else that we see and feel around us are our neighbours.

We all know of the evident pollution in our neighbourhood which I believe is so unnecessary. We throw things around and walk past garbage as if that is ok, yet God calls us to love our neighbour(hood) as ourselves. In this text loving neighbours is deliberately put before loving ourselves. We can no longer say 'me first'. We can no longer think up numerous excuses why we can't pass the love to the next person and or thing.

Can we imagine a neighbourhood where we lived in harmony with all of creation? 2 Corinthians 13:11 says: "Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and

peace will be with you". This to me says if we would be able to love our neighbourhood and keep it safe and clean God will be pleased; pollution will be a thing of the past. Children will be safe to play in the park without fear of being injured by broken glass. Our elders will get to enjoy the beauty of nature, sitting in the shade under trees, with the birds chirping - finally we all would be taking care of each other.

I believe it is up to each and every one of us to keep our neighbourhood safe and clean, and certainly it is up to us to spread the love to the whole of creation beginning with our area. Let us unite to keep a clean and safe environment we all will enjoy.

REFLECTION:

Consider your community. Who are your neighbours both human and non-human and what is your responsibility towards them?

PRAYER

Help us heal the hurt that we have caused other living beings
and the injury we have inflicted upon Mother Earth.

May we be reconnected with your creation and understand our
place within its web.

May the life of St Francis be an example to us.

Open our hearts to see what St Francis saw when he addressed
the birds as his brothers and sisters.

You commanded us to love our neighbour.

We pray that we may learn to care for and love all life and treat
the community of God's creatures as our neighbour, loving it as
ourselves.

Give us the courage and wisdom to re-examine our lives so that
we establish compassionate relationships with all other beings,
bringing about an era of love, justice and peace for all. Amen

(SAFCEI – One web of life programme)

Mandisa Gumada
Youth Coordinator
Diocese of Natal



WATCH! THE LORD OF OUR COMMON HOME IS RETURNING

“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” Mark 13: 35-37

Mark 13: 35 - 37

Watch! In the intricacies of the Portuguese language, the word ‘watch’ has several meanings. It can mean taking care, being ready, being attentive, or even being sleepless. I intend to explore in this simple message the character of attention to the sad and worrying signs of our time.

In these times of pandemic, we have seen events that concern us and that have affected all aspects of our lives. There are those who take advantage of the pandemic to approve measures that intentionally expand aggression towards the environment, expand their businesses, and destroy our forests, our biomes and threaten the lives of indigenous peoples.

A beautiful perspective of the text in Mark is the idea of House. The owner of the house hands over the management of this house to his servants but does not tell when he will return. He left his home, left everyone’s responsibilities well defined and went on a trip. He will come back unexpectedly and expect that everyone is ready to present his or her completed tasks.

The Church is called to take care of the House, our ‘Common Home’. This puts it on a collision course with useless servants, against those who use the gifts of God’s wonderful Creation in

favour of their petty interests. We are called to have the courage and resilience of the prophets. We are called to read between the lines of an abusive, consumeristic and elitist process that point to the destruction of poor people and the beauty of our common Home.

Will we care for our Common Home?

REFLECTION:

The Lord of our Common home, the Earth , is returning – how will he find it upon his return?

PRAYER

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

(From Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* Care for our Common home)

Bishop Francisco de Assis da Silva
South Western Diocese, Brazil
(adapted from www.sustainable-preaching.org)



PREACH THE GOOD NEWS TO THE WHOLE OF CREATION

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Mark 15: 16

How do we preach the good news to all of Creation? Preaching to all creation does not mean opening the bible and quoting from it, but it calls rather for actions. We do not speak the same language as all of God's other creatures, but many living creatures feel happiness and pain which we can witness with human eyes. For example, when humans are happy, we become more productive, in the same way living soil will give you good harvests and healthy trees well give us good fruits and so on.

For this reason, preaching good news to all of creation requires more action than words. It is in John 13:35 where Jesus says: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Love cannot just be word driven but its action oriented hence the good news to all creation requires actions.

Good news for creation might be the act of growing trees, transforming neglected land into living soil, creating a new habitat where different species will come naturally to live in. When we stand up against greed which misplaces many creatures in the name of economy and development, we bring hope not just to humans but to all creatures in that area. It is the act of extracting alien and invasive plants which gives good news to all indigenous creatures as the original habitat is restored and new life is born, just as our creator planned it.

The preaching of good news to all creation is do-able and the actions it requires will differ from person to person for we all live

in different context and have different abilities. However, we can all take our part in demonstrating God's love to creation.

"Preach the good news at all times. If necessary, use words"
Saint Francis of Assisi

REFLECTION:

What might it mean to preach the good news to the whole of
Creation in your community?

PRAYER

Bless, Oh Lord, the fruit of the land.
Bless, Oh 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 liturgy, Egypt)

Bino Makhalanyane
Provincial Green Anglicans Youth Coordinator.



FOR GOD SO LOVED THE COSMOS

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 3: 16 - 17

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ. In the original Greek the word for world is Kosmos which means the whole of creation. How this changes our understanding of this verse when we read “God so loved the cosmos that he sent his only Son”: Christ did not die for humans alone but for the whole of Creation.

From the beginning God’s love has been revealed through creation and God’s love has been seen through all that he created. All that God ordered he loves. So, when the great commandment tells us to “love our neighbours as we love ourselves”, our neighbours are not limited to human beings only but also to all creation and living things: all waters, plants, nature and animals. And therefore, loving means we take care of what God has created and as stewards of nature we must be mindful of our contribution to the degradation of nature, global warming and the environment at large. We need to consciously take action to preserve what God beautifully created and heed the call to love what God made by ensuring that we do not continue to ruin what God intended to save through Jesus Christ.

God sent his Son into the world so that all may be saved through him. God’s plan for salvation included all that was created. In

remembering that Jesus Christ was a gift of love and salvation to us, let us love and safeguard what God made and entrusted to us.

REFLECTION:

How does it change your understanding of John 3:16, when you read God so loved the Cosmos that he sent his only Son?

PRAYER

Loving God who created the heavens and the earth, who created humankind, all creatures and plants. We thank you for all the beauty of the earth and all that is in it. Help us to remember that just as you loved us, we ought to love and safeguard your world. May we be mindful of our harmful ways that degrade the world you have given and may we protect all that you have made. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

**Samukelisile Khanyile
College of the Transfiguration
Diocese of the Highveld**



LET THERE BE NO WASTE

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. ¹²When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. John 6:10-13

John 6: 10 - 13

Our parishes and our communities need to be aware that we must live out our faith as we see it in the words and actions of Jesus Christ. First of all, we can see that Jesus gave thanks for the food. This shows us that our needs are supplied on Earth because God cares for us and will perform all forms of miracles to nourish us. Everyone fed and was satisfied.

But then we see that Jesus commands the Disciples to collect up what is left over – let there be no waste – he says. We also must learn to never be wasteful with the resources of the Earth. Many people are hungry and yet we are still wasting food! The leftovers were collected and given later with dignity to those who had not eaten – they did not have to rummage through dirt to get the food. This story also touches us in our present context where we live with piles of plastic waste – we can live differently – reducing our use of plastic, recycling and making sure that we leave no waste.

REFLECTION:

Reflect on the way in which you conduct large events at church and in your family. What could be done differently to reduce waste?

PRAYER

Giver of Life, in the midst of poisoned water
we groan with creation:

Giver of Life, in the midst of polluted air we
groan with creation:

Giver of Life, in the midst of mountains of waste
we groan with creation:

Have mercy on us.

(Worshipping Ecumenically, WCC Publications)

Tumelo Hoohlo
Diocese of Lesotho



BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being.

Romans 1: 20a (MSG)

Perhaps it is this scripture that informs the phrase in the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Creator, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is - seen and unseen.

When we affirm our faith during the Eucharist prayer, I like to insert a pause ... so that we say, 'of all that is ... [pause] ... seen and unseen', so as to be aware that we affirm the Whole of Reality ... and that this means both what we cannot measure, see or touch, and also all that we can see or touch or measure.

The mechanical worldview - that so dominates our culture and times - has little respect for 'that which is unseen'. Some people even deny the existence of God outright because God cannot be seen or touched. It is to such as these that Paul speaks, then and now. But, blessedly for us, that is not our position, having the Grace of Faith, that we know and affirm the Reality of the one God, the Creator of all that is seen and unseen.

St Ignatius of Loyola encourages us to 'see God in all things', and to immerse ourselves in such experience. In this verse we can see clearly that we can learn about God through creation if we open our eyes!

REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Here is an invitation to a Prayer of Presence
to look at and be with what God has created:

Firstly, set aside 15 minutes to become present to your
surroundings. Walk or sit quietly, outside if possible
(in your imagination if it is not possible).

Open your eyes, your ears, feel your skin being touched, receive
the taste of the air, be aware of what is around you, what
presents itself to your consciousness - the blue sky, or clouds;
birdsong, an insect visiting you, a tree creature, shrubs, grasses
the supportive soil of Earth beneath your feet.

Become aware of the Beauty of the Lord around you
and be still in the Presence.

Review what you have seen, giving thanks to God for the gift of
your senses, for the gift of your fellow creatures.

Fiona Maskell

Johannesburg Anglican Eco-spirituality Initiative



CREATION IS STANDING ON TIPPYTOES

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

Romans 8: 19

The Jewish people generally believed that the whole created order would be transformed at the end times. The word creation in this verse means all living things, both animals and plants. The whole of creation is waiting for the children of God (believers in Christ) to be revealed (glorified). When will they be revealed?

Except for God, no one knows. According to some teaching of the Bible, it seems as if they will only be revealed at the end of the world, when Christ shall come again to reign with glory. But we must not ignore the fact that the first coming has already happened, that Jesus already came to transform our hearts. Certainly not, for to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

Therefore, since we have been born again, we ought to begin already to lead our lives as a people who have been transformed. We have been transformed so that we will in turn transform, not just other beings but the whole of creation. We have been blessed so that we will in turn bring blessing to the whole of Creation.

These children of God are the ones that the environment is counting on. In a home setup there are parents who have no worries about the security of their home and property as long as their children are present. Our Heavenly father created and told us to look after everything that He had made with his hands, in the same way as parents expect their children to protect and look

after the home when they are out. God expects his children to live up to His standards by protecting, nurturing and developing that which we were given to protect.

This is the vision of a renewed and transformed Creation that God calls us to work towards

“See, I will create

new heavens and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered,

nor will they come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever

in what I will create,

for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight

and its people a joy. (Isaiah 65: 17-18)

That is why the whole of creation is standing on tippytoes; waiting for that day, because on that day not only will believers be revealed, but the whole of creation itself will be renewed and glorified.

REFLECTION:

What actions can you commit yourself to that will renew creation in your street or neighbourhood?

PRAYER

Creator God

Your eternal power is seen in the whole web of life

Your voice is heard in the beauty of Creation

Rooted in your love may we worship you with all your creatures

And work to protect our common home

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

(Collect for the Season of Creation 2019)

Rev. Dennis Nthenge
All Saints Cathedral
Anglican Church of Kenya



THE WEB OF LIFE

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in all things hold together.”

Colossians 1: 16 - 17

If we take these verses step by step, we first of realise that all things were made by God. This is the same God who promised to care for us. But then I look at how we as people treat the things that God put into our care. The invisible air was created pure and gives us life giving oxygen. But now we have factories which emit dangerous gas into the air, causing air pollution and contributing to climate change. The visible earth, rivers, oceans and land – we can see with our own eyes the damage which humans are causing.

Secondly, we see that all things were created by Him and for Him. People treat the Earth as though we are the rulers, to do with as we wish, and it is losing the beauty that God created it for. Let’s remember all things were created for him and therefore they should be used how God intended. We cannot say we are true followers of Christ if we do not care for his creation.

God is before all things, and all things hold together in God. God must be at the heart of the web of life. If we obey God’s commandments on how to live, then all his creation will be restored and function well.

REFLECTION

Consider the great web of life on this planet. What would it mean if we were to act as if all things were made for God?

PRAYER

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*)

Mpho Mkoane
Diocese of Lesotho



SALVATION IS FOR THE WHOLE OF CREATION

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1: 19 - 20

The key environmental teaching theme of this passage is that salvation is for the whole of creation and not just for humans. The passage from Colossians explains this in cosmic terms and gives a backdrop to the harrowing Gospel passage describing the crucifixion of Jesus. In Col 1:20, Paul explains out the connection between creation and salvation and reveals the sheer scope of the cross of Christ.

The implication of this understanding of the cross is a discipleship response to God's creation. Christ died for the whole of creation and so, in response to Christ and his work on the cross, we should be active in caring for creation and calling individuals and governments to take action against the deepening of the environmental crisis. A redemptive understanding of the connection between cross and creation, means that creation care and eco-justice are Gospel issues.

It is easy to slip into despair over the environmental crisis, both on a global scale with issues such as climate change, and with local and regional difficulties, such as destruction of habitats and pollution. We can gain strength from God's promises in scripture. In Col 1:15-17, Paul explains the cosmic role of Christ in creation and that he holds creation together. In Psalm 46 we are

encouraged that God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble. Christ gives us strength (Col 1:11). He died to reconcile the world to himself and his Kingdom is a renewal of creation (Lk 23:43).

Our positive actions in creation care, however small, point towards Christ's kingdom – the coming renewal of creation.

REFLECTION

Think of one action that you could take this week that would reconcile one small part of creation and bring peace.

PRAYER

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)

**Revd Margot Hodson,
Director of Theology and Education for the John Ray Initiative
UK**



EDEN RESTORED

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Revelations 22: 1 - 2

The Bible begins with a vision of the garden of Eden, which later is cursed, and the humans thrown out. But Scripture ends with a vision of Eden restored, with life and hope flowing from the throne of God to bless the communities downstream.

When Cape Town was in the midst of a 3-year drought, during Lent, Churches focussed on the theme of water. One church had a discussion after the service on what their role could be in protecting and renewing living waters. Running through the suburb is the Elsie's Kraal river which was canalized many years ago. The concrete canal sends water rushing out to the sea, full of plastic and litter. And so, a vision was born - to renew the Elsie's Kraal and re-create a living eco-system with plants and life - a place for people to rest and be restored. A group of church and community members formed the "Renew the Elsie's Kraal" project, with regular clean ups, planting of indigenous vegetation and every year a tree planting takes place. During the COVID lockdowns, the Elsie's became a very popular place with runners, walkers and baby pushchairs. This decreased the crime and made it a much safer place for all.

Every year families adopt a tree and commit to watering it for a two-year period. At our last tree plant, we received the sad news

that one family's 15-year-old son had been murdered in a house invasion. We cannot plant the tree tomorrow, they said, because we will be busy with the funeral. But please keep us a tree – we will need a place to mourn. The leaves of the trees had become the healing of the nation.

Let us dream of communities where every church takes on the challenge of renewing and restoring. Let us dream of food gardens for the hungry, trees for shade and healing, and safe spaces for refreshment and hope created in the midst of despair. May the rivers of life flow from the throne of God, and Eden be restored.

REFLECTION:

During COVID, many of us have lost loved ones. Consider planting a tree or bush in memory of a loved one

PRAYER

We give thanks for the plant life of the Creator's world.

That which is below ground, the roots and vegetables.

That which puts just its head above the ground: the grasses,
medicines, plants and bushes.

All the many kinds of good fruit the Creator has given us.

And finally, the great trees of the forest that we know of as the
"Standing Ones."

Loving God. We give our thanks

(Based on a Mohawk thanksgiving Prayer, PWRDF)

Canon Rachel Mash
Environmental Coordinator
Anglican Church of Southern Africa





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