

Sustainable September 2010



Worship Resources

Introduction

Ancient stories about great floods occur in many cultures across the world. They may well reflect memories of a worldwide rise in sea level which occurred about 8,000 years ago following the end of the last Ice Age. Western Australian Noongar traditions speak of Rottnest as once being part of the mainland, and geologists have identified that it became an island probably within the span of two generations about that time. It has been suggested that the story of Noah carries memories of a catastrophic flooding of the Black Sea which geologists believe to have occurred when the land-bridge between Europe and Asia collapsed suddenly allowing the rising waters of the Mediterranean Sea to pour in. Archaeologists have found evidence of population movements arising from this and other major climatic changes.

The book of Genesis seems to bear echoes of other global climate changes which occurred in the first half of the second millennium BCE resulting in a colder wetter Europe and drought and desertification in vast areas of the Middle East and North Africa. The story of Abram moving from Ur into a nomadic existence may well reflect such changes. The story of Joseph certainly does. As then, so too now, the spectres of starvation, devastation and social disruption rise traumatically with climate change.

“The important question for us to consider is ‘What does the Christian faith have to say about Climate Change?’ and to answer this question we need to recognise that there are three major contexts for considering the faith: the cosmological, the political and the individual. All these aspects are essential: a concept of Creation, the well-being of all humanity, and fulfilment for the individual. Each of these is an essential part of the whole. Without dealing with these three aspects of the faith we will never be able to come to grips with or make a contribution concerning climate change.”

(Rev Neville Watson)

The following worship resources reflect these aspects and their implications. The resources are intended to be a catalyst for worship leaders enabling congregations discerning God’s wisdom within the current concern about the reality of climate change affecting our whole planet. Relevant readings have been suggested but leaders may wish to add or substitute others. Psalms could be arranged responsively. Some hymns have been suggested for each week in number order only (from the *Together in Song (TiS)* hymnbook) to be mixed or added to leaving choices within worship up to the worship leader. A star * indicates the hymn is particularly apt for children. If data projection facilities are available, appropriate photos of the universe, our planet and creation could be used e.g. in conjunction with the hymns or prayers of thanksgiving .

Suggested Hymns

Week One — Climate Change: A Challenge to Creation

- Hymn 156 – Morning has broken
- Hymn 176 – The sounds in God's world *
- Hymn 416 – Great God, your Spirit, like the wind
- Hymn 418 – She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters
- Hymn 671 – Made in God's likeness

Week Two — Climate Change: A Challenge to the Heart

- Hymn 175 – Did you ever see a kookaburra laugh? *
- Hymn 179 – Praise with joy the world's Creator
- Hymn 181 – Come, O God of all the earth
- Hymn 651 – Take, take off your shoes*
- Hymn 690 – Beauty for brokenness

Week Three — Climate Change: A Challenge to You and Me

- Hymn 135 – All things bright and beautiful *
- Hymn 152 – Joyful, joyful we adore you
- Hymn 153 – God is love, let heav'n adore him
- Hymn 417 – Loving Spirit, loving spirit
- Hymn 474 – Here in this place new light is streaming

Week Four — Climate Change: A Challenge for the Christian Community

- Hymn 188 – Where wide sky rolls down
- Hymn 473 – Community of Christ
- Hymn 611 – God of grace and God of glory
- Hymn 674 – Inspired by love and anger
- Hymn 668 – Touch the earth lightly

Some Other Songs

- A selection of 'creation songs' written by Norman Habel can be found at <http://www.seasonofcreation.com>.
- Louie Armstrong's version of "What a wonderful world" (look for video clips on internet)
- The words of Catherine Faber's song 'The Word of God' can be found at http://judithpordon.tripod.com/poetry/catherine_faber_the_word_of_god.html

The song ends with these lines:

*Deep in flower and in flesh, in star and soil and seed,
The truth has left its living word for anyone to read.
So turn and look where best you think the story is unfurled.
Humans wrote the Bible; God wrote the world.*

The music for this song can be found at <http://www.echoschildren.org/Songs/WordofGodtune.html>

- Type in the words *Blake beautiful earth* on the internet and you will find an amazing video using the mens' group BLAKE's song 'Beautiful Earth' as backing to some wonderful and disturbing photos. This song, which is on their CD 'Together' released in March 2010, was originally written and recorded especially for WWF-UK's Earth Hour - For more details about the song and Earth Hour go to http://earthhour.wwf.org.uk/about_earth_hour/who_signups/celebrities/blake/
- Typing in *songs climate change* reveals one internet site called "top 8 songs about climate change" which starts off with Julian Lennon singing his song 'Saltwater'. Then try scrolling down to number 8 for a hip hop recording made by Aussie kids called 'Protect the World'.
- And <http://www.climatecafe.org/blog/2009/10/beds-are-burning-climate-change-song/> will take you to a video clip put together by artists around the world lending their voice to 'Beds Are Burning', a project in support of the tcktcktck campaign. It is introduced by Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations and is the song used in the Climate Countdown event in Central Park in 2009.
- A wealth of other suggestions can be found on the internet including at
<http://www.cws.org.nz/take-action/climate-change>
<http://www.ecocongregation.org/>
<http://www.gwipl.org/documents/climateliturgyf.pdf>
<http://www.cws.org.nz/files/> (Christian World Service Climate Change Liturgy 2009).

Indeed the internet has been the source of some of the poems and prayers and the authors are acknowledged with appreciation for their gifting. Thanks also go to Rev Neville Watson for use of his sermon materials from a recent service at Wembley Downs Uniting Church.

Rev Marion Millin

Climate Change: A challenge to creation



Order of Service: Week One

Table preparation

Have space on a central table ready to receive the five symbols.

Call to Worship

Whoever we are and wherever we come from, we share the reality that this planet earth is our home.

So we come in this month set aside as Sustainable September to remind ourselves of the truth that the ways in which we live within this earth home affect for good or ill the home itself and all that dwells within it. Open to the moment, therefore, and open to one another we come before the mystery of life.

Earth *A bowl of earth is carried forward and placed*
O God, Creator of the earth and the entire universe, fill us with reverence!
you drew us from the earth and to earth we shall return in the circle of life which is endless.
**You who are the ground of our being,
help us to live in harmony with all that lives.**

Air *A blown up balloon or appropriate symbol is carried forward and placed*
O Spirit of the air, breath of our nostrils and wind in the trees, ever-creating, stirring, moving.
Move us, shake us, sweep through us with energy, exhilaration and delight.

Fire *A candle is carried forward and lit*
O God of the fire, cleansing, refining, tempering to enduring strength; fire of wisdom and courage,
**free us to dance and to struggle,
and make us strong and resilient in shaping a just world into being,.**

Water *A jug of water is carried forward and some water is poured into the earth bowl*
O Spirit of the water, source and sustenance of life, waters of the womb, of tears, and vast oceans;
**bathe and refresh us, nourish and sustain us, weep and work in us,
birth with us a renewal of life.**

Planet *A globe or a picture of our planet hanging in space is carried forward and placed*
O God of the Universe, who brings all life into being,
create in us a deeper sense of community with all who share life on this planet earth.
May we truly know others as our sisters and brothers;
may we seek for all a just share in the resources needed to sustain life;



Worship Resources

may we value and respect all forms of living being
and delight in the beauty and variety which are your gifts.

(Adapted from the Christian World Service Climate Change Liturgy 2009)

Song 1: Hymn of praise

Sharing good news/joys

Introducing theme

What is meant by climate change? How does it affect us? How do we affect it?

If possible play the song 'Beautiful Earth' using video clip (see introduction) or from their CD 'Together' – an alternative would be to play Louie Armstrong's 'What a wonderful World' with relevant photos

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Ask people to name what they particularly thank God for this day. *(The following prayer was put together from the responses of each person at a Wembley Downs Uniting Church church camp)*

Creator God, we give you thanks for
time away in the bush - with our church family - beautiful people of all ages - from little ones to the old
- delighting in lovely surroundings - with the animals, birds and bugs.

Companioning God, we give you thanks for
adventures by the river - fellowship with old friends - having visitors with us - sitting by the water
enjoying yummy food - peaceful relaxation - and active old age.

Energizing God, we give you thanks for
fire and sparks and sticks - sitting toasting marshmallows by the fire - seeing the wonder of moonscape
- enjoying activity outdoors in the sun - and being able to get old hot coals to relight in the cold fresh morning air.

God of many names, we give thanks that
you loved the world so much you sent Jesus to be our friend - and your Spirit to guide us in rough places. Help us to celebrate your love for all people in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Readings (alternate to Lectionary)

Genesis 2:4b- 8, 15 -17

Psalms 19:1-10

1 Corinthians 12:12 – 27

John 1:1 - 5

Kids input (see Children's Ministry Resources)

Song 2 (perhaps young person focus)

Sermon/Reflection (Adults input)

Feedback /Discussion

Prayer of Confession

Holy God

We have sinned

**in how we have thought and spoken about your world,
in the way we have knowingly ignored your creation
and in the way we have not been good stewards.**

We have maintained our ignorance:

**and we have not bothered to change our behaviour:
we have sinned though our own deliberate fault.**

We are truly sorry.

We change our hearts and turn to you.

Forgive us,

And renew in us with passion for your good creation. Amen

Offering

Song 3

Sharing Concerns

Prayers of Intercession (followed by adaptation of the Lord's Prayer)

Creator God

We hold our world before you

The elements of earth, air, fire and water

We pray

For those in our world who suffer because of famine

For those who breathe polluted air

For those who face catastrophic fires

And for those who face floods or drought

God of Grace

You hear our prayer

We hold your church before you

The ecumenical movement

We pray

For those who work for peace and justice

For those who work with other faiths

For those who work to influence change

God of Grace

You hear our prayer

We hold Australia before you

We pray

For our leaders and government



For oppositions and upper houses

And for ourselves as electors

God of Grace

You hear our prayer

We hold this community before you

We pray

For *(name the particular concerns of your church community and the wider community)*

God of Grace

You hear our prayer

Amen

(Rosemary Hudson Miller)

Adaptation of the Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit,

Life-Giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-Maker,

source of all that is and that shall be,

Father and Mother of us all,

loving God, in whom is heaven.

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth!

With the bread that we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power

that is love, now and forever. Amen.

(By Jim Cotter)

Sending out

Gracious God, you have given us much this day:

the wheat and grapes which found our feast, the wit and will to transform them into bread and wine,
and the precious presence of your Son who transfigures and redeems all that we have broken and lost.
Send us out now to care for this fragile earth, our island home.

Grant us the wit and the will to transform the toxic, irreverent ways we live,

May we be aware of the life-giving presence of your Son, Jesus Christ,

who goes before us and calls us into this world you love.

To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever, Amen.

(From St Thomas Episcopal Church, Medina, Washington.)

Reflections: Week One

These reflections are here to help you with your service preparation. You may like to substitute these alternate readings for the set lectionary readings.

Readings

Genesis 2:4b-8, 15-17

Psalms 19:1-10

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

John 1:1-5

Genesis 2:4b-8, 15-17 is part of the second (but probably older) creation story found at the beginning of Genesis. Both proclaim a loving God who created the Earth as an interdependent world of climate, creatures and humans in relationship not only with God but also with each other and with the earth itself.

The Hebrew words translated as ‘man = *adam*’ and ‘ground = *adamah*’ come from the root word ‘*dam*’ meaning ‘blood’ or ‘red’. Naming the red one formed out of “the dust of the ground” (Gen.2:7) as Adam identifies his origins and connectedness with the earth for in the ancient world a person’s name was not simply an identifier but was descriptive of their character.

Another nuance occurs in verse 15 where it says that God “took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work/ till it and take care/ keep it.” In the original Hebrew, these two verbs are technical terms designating specific types of responsibility. The word translated as ‘to work/ till’ in fact means ‘to serve’, used elsewhere in the Bible to describe the relationship between humanity and God; and the verb translated as ‘take care of/ keep’ has a legal sense of ‘guardianship’.

“We do not own the world, nor yet have freeholder rights but those of caretakers. God has temporarily placed it in our care as trustees for the benefit of future generations. We humans are tenants and stewards, responsible to our Maker for our stewardship. We have to recognise that its resources are finite and hand it on to the next generation in life-sustaining order. Have we been good stewards of creation? Let’s admit it - on our watch we have lived more and more comfortable lives without realizing that our use of carbon fuels was creating global warming....The native Americans and other Aboriginal peoples had the wisdom to understand that the Earth does not belong to us, rather we depend on the Earth. But do we realise it?”

(From Eco-congregation internet site ‘Walking More Lightly’.)

Psalms 19:1-10 — This hymn of praise celebrates the workings of the universe as a reflection of God’s laws and purposes.

John 1:1-5 — Just as the Hebrew Scriptures started with the beginning of creation so too did the writer of John’s gospel though in a very different style and reflecting a major shift in thinking about God. In the 1960’s Paul Tillich’s book ‘*Shaking the Foundations*’ followed a similar vein in shifting theological understanding from God viewed as a being (on a throne in the heavens) to the ground of our being – God as the breath of life, the life-force of the universe, and our ultimate concern. In doing so Tillich brought us back in touch with the apostle Paul’s naming of God as the reality “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Eugene Petersen’s translation of John 1:1-5 in ‘*The Message*’ reflects this sense of God as the evolutionary thrust inviting us to fullness of life. This passage also implies that Jesus is the “universe come to consciousness”.

*The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word.
 The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one.
 Everything was created through him; nothing - not one thing!- came into being without him.
 What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by.
 The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.*

Sallie McFague in her book 'A New Climate for Theology' sees the world as "the body of God" – a fascinating idea that makes climate change a major issue for the Christian faith. We live in God as a fish lives in water. Paul Tillich sees religion not as a separate aspect of life, but as the dimension of depth in all of life. Religion all too often becomes one aspect of life among others. It is seen as something 'for those so inclined.' Nothing could be further from the truth. Religion is about life at its depth. John 10:10 remains for me the central text of scripture. "My concern," says Jesus "is that you might have life, and have it in all its fullness". God so loved the world! The Christian faith is not about individual salvation. It is about the salvation of the world. It is about individual salvation only in so far as we are part of the world. We desperately need to recognise the cosmological aspect of the Christian faith – God as the restless energy of creative love inviting humanity to a fuller life of peace and unity, the cosmological God at the heart of life, God as the Spirit, the Breath of Life."

(Rev Neville Watson)

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 — The apostle Paul explains his understanding of the Christian community as the 'body of Christ' based on shared values of respect and loving relationship with each other and with God. Perhaps it also forms a starting point for thinking about McFague's sense of the world being the 'body of God'.

"God has not created a single person whose uniqueness is not eternally needed. Without your unique self the new humanity will be incomplete. This is a staggering truth if you can grasp it. The creation will be forever incomplete without your unique self. This is the Good News – you can become who you really are. I think each of us had best find out what we want to do and start doing it because nothing else is going to help anybody. "

(Rev Gordon Cosby – Church of the Saviour, Washington)

Sustainable September poses the questions of how do we see ourselves in relation to God's creation and Christ consciousness within it? Have we taken the Earth's ecosystems for granted without acknowledging God's presence? Do we behave as if the Earth belongs to God? How does this challenge the principles of ownership which have developed in western economics?

*To see the world in a grain of sand
 And a heaven in a wild flower
 To hold infinity in the palm of your hand
 And eternity in an hour.*

William Blake
 18th-19thC English poet

*The same stream of life
 that runs through the world
 runs through my veins
 night and day in rhythmic measure.
 It is the same life that shoots in joy
 through the dust of the earth
 into numberless waves of flowers.*

Rabindranath Tagore
 19th-20thC Bengali musician and playwright

Climate Change: A challenge to the heart



Order of Service: Week Two

Table preparation

Have a candle and the large globe or picture of planet earth hanging in space on a central table with several pairs of shoes and sandals on the floor in front

Call to Worship

Leader: Welcome to this sacred space (*The candle is lit*)

The flame of the life of God

All: burns in the sacred ground of this our world.

The life of Christ, God-with-us,

proclaims our humanness a sacred place.

So let us join in singing

Hymn 651 — 'Take, take off your shoes' in recognition of the Holy Mystery is in this place as we draw closer to God's earthly presence

Sharing good news/joys

Introducing theme

In a time when journeys were on foot, what motivated Abram's family to wander for hundreds of kilometres across the Middle East? Was it in response to climate change around 2,000BCE (see introduction)? What motivated Jesus to move around Palestine? Was it a spiritual drought? Both Abram and Jesus felt called by God even though the journeys were difficult and dangerous ones. For Jesus the important thing was sharing the generous outpouring of God's love for all. Early Christians were called followers of the Jesus Way. What might that mean for us today? How best can we walk together with each other and with Gods' world?

Song 2

Prayer of thanksgiving and confession

Loving, Creating God,

all of nature calls you blessed, and so do we.

You are the Spirit of Life, the Breath of life, in whom we live and move and have our being,

revealed to us in the life that abounds around and within us.

With our eyes let us see the dazzling worth of nature,

With our ears let us hear the music of the eons



And with our mouths let us proclaim the fullness of life embodied in Jesus of Nazareth.

We acknowledge Jesus as the pivot point of life,

and that how we react to him determines whether we live or die.

May we see the resurrection of life in him,

resurrection that shows us that the status quo can, must and will change.

Amidst death and decay, we are witnesses to the coming of spring.

We are convinced that another world is indeed possible.

Help us to devote our lives to that vision, with joy, integrity and courage.

Remind us, we pray, that it is not so much how we understand the resurrection in the light of history, but how we understand history in the light of the resurrection,

We acknowledge at this time that we have not exercised the responsibility that rests upon us.

We acknowledge that so often our best efforts are tinged with greed –

the desire for more and different things

and how at times our greed is nothing less than theft

from those who have no power against us - people, animals and nature's store.

May we continue to open our eyes to the enormity of our deeds,

And our hearts to the suffering and despoiling which those deeds have caused.

We seek forgiveness from you; and from the children, women and men

whose hurt have come from us;

We seek forgiveness from every animal, plant and rock,

the skies above and the good earth itself, which nourishes and sustains us all.

May we find the grace to live for the world's healing rather than our own.

May we think clearly, engage in right action, and adopt a gentle life style –

the very things we see in Jesus of Nazareth

and in whose name we gather Amen.

(Compiled by Neville Watson)

Readings

Genesis 12:4a-13

Psalms 148

Philippians 4:4-9

John 3:16-19

Active Response (kids input – see also attached resources)

At an appropriate time the children/congregation could draw around their feet on coloured paper, then cut out and write on them some of the attributes we need for the journey into the future before pasting all as footsteps going in one direction on a long piece of cloth/paper marked as a path.

Song 3

Sermon/Reflection

Feedback/Discussion

Prayer of intercession

The Summer desiccated dust powders my toes.

a dying thirst sucks life from the land.

What have we done, Lord?

Have you lost us or have we lost you?

Lord have mercy for our drought of love.

The Autumn sun dies in the warm evening light
scenting nostalgic incense from bark and dry leaves.

Where is our love for the living world?

We abused the earth as ours, forgetting we belong to it.

Christ have mercy, for our ignorance and inaction.

The Winter sprays from leaves in the wet wind,
the stirrings of life begin again.

**The joy of new shoots amongst exploitation and pollution,
new growth is precious in a dying world.**

Lord have mercy, help us find a way of renewing life.

The Spring floods flowers of beauty and hope,
your touch of love and life is still with us.

**Lord, send forth your spirit to renew the face of the earth,
call us to be fellow workers in this task,
we offer what little we can to restore the harmony of creation.
Amen, Amen, Amen.**

(Rev Tony Trethowan)

Offering

Offering Prayer

Generous God, you have blessed us with the resources to share the good news of your love for all creation. We dedicate these gifts and pray that they may bring healing, wholeness, and hope to the world, that future generations may also know your graciousness and love. Amen.

(From the National Council of Churches Earth Day Sunday 2002)

Song 4

Prayer of Compassion

O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things,
our brothers the animals 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 man
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 they live not for us alone but for themselves
and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life.

(By St. Basil the Great, 330-379)

Blessing

Bless to us, O God,
The earth beneath our feet.
Bless to us, O Christ,
The path whereon we go.
Bless to us, O Holy One,
The people whom we meet.
Amen

(Celtic blessing adapted)

Reflections: Week Two

These reflections are here to help you with your service preparation. You may like to substitute these alternate readings for the set lectionary readings.

Readings

Genesis 12:4a-13

Psalms 148

Philippians 4:4-9

John 3:16-19

Genesis 12:4-13 — The movement of Abram's family across the Middle East (firstly under his father Tehran's instigation from the city of Ur and then out of Haran into a nomadic lifestyle) may well have been in response to major climate change which occurred in Mesopotamia about 2,000BCE. In the midst of their journeying Abram and Sarai experienced reassurance from God about their survival and celebrated that sense of divine presence by building a stone altar in their new homeland. But the famine forces them on into Egypt to risk seeking refuge as aliens and engage with a strange language and culture. Abram knows their survival would be dependent on the attitudes and hospitality of complete strangers and he is willing to fudge things a bit to ensure that.

Archaeologist Arne Wossink researching in this Turkey/Syria/Iraq area expected to find evidence of conflict as a result of competition for scarce food and water resources. Instead he found the development of a new shared identity as crop farmers developed closer bonds with the nomadic cattle farmers and in so doing fostered a large trading network. Abram and Sarai's change in lifestyle also proved to be the start of a new identity for themselves.

In our contemporary world with so many refugees seeking survival, this story challenges us to think again about finding ways to live together more effectively. This may well mean lifestyle changes for us too as we make space in our hearts, and lands for those who are struggling with the effects of climate change.

Psalms 148 — This great hymn of praise was probably led (by a singer?) with the people responding.

Philippians 4:4-9 — In his letters to the new church communities, the apostle Paul encourages Christ followers to stay focussed on the Jesus Way even when it means going against cultural norms. For there are both human and divine implications involved. Paul is convinced that "the Lord is near" when you "let your gentleness /consideration/ kindness be known to everyone." (v.5), though this is no easy task when encountering unkindness, ridicule, or persecution. Maintaining such Christian integrity will see "God's peace which passes all understanding guarding our hearts and minds" (v.7).

"Each individual has a role to play, a gift to be exercised without which the human race is going to be poorer. This is a staggering concept if you can grasp it – the concept of fulfilling your potential. The Christian faith is about being, being who you are, not what others expect you to be, The Christian faith is not about pie in the sky when you die. It's about becoming who you really are, about living into the unique self that is you, having the time of your life being who you are – a gift to humanity, an affirmation of the evolutionary impulse within you. This is the good news: you can be! Life isn't just one damn thing after another! It is a journey towards fullness of life."

(Rev Neville Watson)

John 3:16-19 is probably one of the most well known yet most misunderstood passage in the New Testament possibly because the nuances of some Greek words get lost in translation.

- People tend to see the words “God so loved the world” (v.16) as meaning “God so loved me and you” but the actual word used is ‘cosmos’ – “God so loved the cosmos that he gave his son.
- The phrase “eternal life” (v.16) is often taken to mean ‘life after death’, but for Jesus it meant a new quality of life, experienced in the here and now, unaffected by death.
- In the phrase “only begotten Son”, the Greek word used is ‘monogenai’ meaning the ‘unique one’ which conveys the sense that Jesus is unlike anyone else in his radical openness to God’s purposes and love.
- In verse 19 the *King James Version* uses the phrase “And this is the condemnation” which gives the sense of a judge delivering sentence. However, the Greek word used is ‘krisis’ which should more accurately be translated to reflect its meaning of the crisis we are in – the light has come into the world, the light shines in the darkness but men and women prefer the darkness to the light.
- It is also important to recognise that the word ‘soter = saviour’ was quite commonly used for a revered leader but the phrase ‘Saviour of the World’ was only used of the Roman Emperor. So when John speaks of Jesus as “Saviour of the World” it carries the double meaning of Jesus not only having greater political importance than the leader of any empire but also having cosmological importance.

“Politics has been defined as ‘the art of living together’ – and anyone who says that the Christian faith is not concerned with politics, hasn’t understood what Jesus was on about. The Christian faith is political. The Kingdom of God, the central concern and teaching of Jesus, is about the world as God wants it to be, a new world order marked by relationships of justice, love, peace and inclusiveness. And the Christian faith is about how we should live together on the planet. This is, of course, why poverty is integral to the question of climate change. Poor people cannot afford to take care of the planet and the wholesale destruction of rain forest at the present time is evidence of this. A small spark of hope glowed a few months ago when Norway made a grant of \$1 billion to Indonesia in return for a moratorium on new forest clearing. We need to see life in terms of relationship. The words of Jesus make this crystal clear.....

One paraphrase for John 3:16-19 could be titled “Jesus is the cosmos come to consciousness” –

God loved the cosmos so dearly that the unique Jesus of Nazareth was given to us, so that everyone who believes in him should have a new quality of life, unaffected by death. God did not give Jesus to condemn the world but that he might be the Saviour of the World. Jesus is the pivot point of life and according to how we react to him so we live or die. And this is the crisis we are in: light is in the world and people prefer the darkness to the light. Destruction results from walking in the dark. Those seeking the truth welcome and walk in the light, and God is seen in what they do. ”

(Rev Neville Watson)

God's caring relationship with the whole of creation is the pulse which gives life its fullness.

In the end there is passion:

deep in the heart of God.

It will not let us go:

It travels with us past the moments of death.

It rises again and again in the eternity of love

a mystery, a wonder, God undefeated.

(Rev Dorothy McRae McMahon – 20th-21stC Uniting Church minister)

I, the fiery life of divine essence, am aflame beyond the beauty of the meadows,

I gleam in the waters, and I burn in the sun, moon, and stars....

I awaken everything to life.

(Hildegard of Bingen, 12thC German abbess)



Order of Service: Week Three

Table preparation

Put three candles in three large bowls of earth/sand, and have a container of small candles ready

Have leaf shapes cut out (with hole for string) to be given to people as they arrive (and a box of pens for those without one).

Call to Worship

- First candle is lit:* We come remembering that God's first creative words were "Let there be light".
- Second candle is lit:* We come giving thanks for how through Jesus "the life-light blazed out of the darkness and the darkness could not put it out."
- Third candle is lit:* We come acknowledging the Holy Spirit's presence with us enabling us to be "the light of the world."

Hymn 474 — Here in this place new light is streaming

Sharing good news/joys

Prayer of thanksgiving

O God Immanuel, our God-with-us,
we give thanks this day for your presence felt in so many ways
when talking with friends and finding ourselves heard and understood,
when eyes suddenly soften with tears because someone said a caring word,
when hearts gladden at the sight of a baby, a sunset, a bird call.
We become aware of you in communion around a table when loving friends meet and talk together.
We feel your presence when someone holds us in times of anguish, or helps us celebrate our joy.
We become aware of you in deepest stillness when our light burns low in the darkness.
Be with us now, this day, and all days to come. Amen

(Adapted from source unknown)

Introducing theme

Give time for people to write on their leaf one aspect of their living which does not reflect God's charge to us to care for creation.

Readings [alternate to Lectionary]

Genesis 41:46-48, 53-57

Psalms 139: 13-18

Romans 8:19-22

Matthew 5: 1-14

Kids Input

Song 2

Sermon/Reflection

Feedback/Discussion

Responsive Confession

Eternal and Sovereign God,

We recognise that we have been branded by the consumerist culture around us.

**We have unwittingly allowed its temporary values
to override what is permanent and truly important.**

We continue to damage your creation through our over-consumption and wastefulness.

**Forgive us, Lord, and help us to refuse to conform any longer
to the false aspirations of greed and pretence of our world.**

Transform our inmost sense of truth and justice and change the direction and tempo of our lives.

For your name's sake, Amen.

(Adapted from the A Rocha Environment Sunday pack 2005 at www.arocha.org.uk)

Offering

Prior to taking up the offering ask people to write on the other side of their leaf the action that they will take in the future which will change that aspect of their living from detrimental to caring for the planet. The leaves are collected in separate bowls and placed as part of the offering

Have a dead branch held fast in a large plant pot with soil or sand ready so that these leaf commitments can be tied to it ready for next week's worship.

Offering Prayer

All good gifts come from you, dear God, and you reveal glimpses of your grace through them. Thank you for inviting us to be partners with you in caring for your creation. We offer these gifts now, knowing that they come first from you, then from other members of your family of creation, then from us. Bless these symbols of our awareness that we depend upon you and your creation for all that we call "ours." Please accept these gifts and our desire to be your partners. In Your name, Amen.

(By Tanya Marcovna Barnett for National Council of Churches resources for Earth Day Sunday 2002)

Prayers of Intercession

Listening God,
my ears are alert to the talk and the tune,
but numbed by the constant electrical buzz
of all that keeps me comfortable and connected.
The sound of your voice I strain to hear;
it is muffled by all that makes my life-style possible.

Help us to hear your insistent calling;

Christ have mercy.

God of the journey,
I have grown so used to my car, boat and plane.
I want goods brought from the ends of the earth.
I build my cities over forest and bush,
while tropical islands sink in rising seas.
Yet even in my daily walk I find
evidence of the damage done in making my journeys possible.

Help us to tread the world in your gentle footprint;

Christ, have mercy.

Watching God,
I do not send you a text message
and you may not be on my face-space places.
Yet if I look with intention
I will see the peoples and places destroyed
and endangered by the rare earth mining
that makes my communicating world possible.

Help us to see the world with your eyes of love;

Christ, have mercy.

(Rev Lynette Eastoe)

Active Response

*As part of the Prayers of Intercession, congregation members could be invited to come forward and
light a small candle which is then placed in a large bowl of earth/sand, saying “I light a candle for...”.*

Song 4

Climate Change Prayer

May we learn the art of blessing once more:
to live beyond just promise but complete it in justice;
to speak into all longing but then work to fulfil it;
to have a deep desire for goodness
and be part of its unfolding;
to acknowledge what is of beauty
and let it transform the world.
But may the art of blessing be lived for our world.

May we learn the art of blessing once more,
and live lives that bless the land:
and live that we might steward
rather than dominate,
and live that we might share rather than take,
and live that we might celebrate rather than steal,
may we recognise beauty
and let its awe transform our living.

May the art of blessing be learned for our world.
May we learn the art of blessing once more,
and live so that our planet is blessed
in the taking of fair harvests,
and live so that our planet is blessed
in the seeking of rebalance
and live so that our planet is blessed
in rest and renewal
set to the rhythm you have ordained.
May the art of blessing be shown to our world.

(By Roddy Hamilton, Abbotsford Parish Church, Clydebank)

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve as the body of Christ in the world
and may God the creator go on creating in us,
Jesus the Christ sit at table in our midst
and the Spirit lead us in the dance of life. Amen

Reflections: Week Three

These reflections are here to help you with your service preparation. You may like to substitute these readings for the set lectionary readings.

Readings

Genesis 41:46-48, 53-57

Psalms 139: 13-18

Romans 8:19-22

Matthew 5: 1-14

Genesis 41:46-48, 53-57 — From ‘pit to palace’ could be the headline but this is no ordinary rags to riches story. We could learn a lot from Joseph! Not only was he able to listen intuitively and predict potential disaster from a pharaoh’s dream, he also had the wisdom to determine the best course of action to minimize its detrimental effects. However, implementing such a plan would have met much opposition and ridicule in a time of plenty. Presumably the motivation for Joseph persevering with the task was his concern for the future suffering of others rather than any self-interest or ego importance which such power could bring. With a reigning-in of surpluses and a sharing of resources, his leadership led to the well-being not only of Egyptian community but also of surrounding tribes including his own personal family.

This story contains much wisdom for our contemporary world especially when seen in the light of us needing to be involved in proactively sharing with those lacking in resources. In fulfilling God’s purposes we too are being called to provide leadership.

Psalms 139: 13-18 — It is with a sense of wonder that the psalmist writes of God’s knowing us. Each of us reflects a unique aspect of God’s glory and it is this we are called to become.

“God has not created a single person whose uniqueness is not eternally needed. Without your unique self the new humanity will be incomplete. This is a staggering truth if you can grasp it. The creation will be forever incomplete without your unique self. This is the Good News – you can become who you really are. I think each of us had best find out what we want to do and start doing it because nothing else is going to help anybody “.

(Rev Gordon Cosby)

Romans 8:19-22 — Jesus’ life and ministry show that his followers very much have a role to play in bringing to reality ‘shalom = peace’ which encompasses a sense of harmony, completeness, welfare and well-being at both individual and community levels. When a person expresses compassion, it is as if the divine and human heartbeats are ‘in sync’ together and the resulting action leads to healing and wholeness. The apostle Paul extends this need for ‘shalomic peace’ to all creation in a beautiful birthing image which holds hope for a new beginning. What signs are we currently witnessing of “creation groaning in labour pains” (v.22)? Paul reassures us that maintaining a sense of hope will enable us to be patient but is that all we are called to do or be?

Matthew 5:1-14 — The central concern and teaching of Jesus is the ‘*basileia* = kingdom/empire/reign’ of God, the world as God wants it to be. The parables and the Sermon on the Mount set out some of the criteria of how we should live together including who are the ‘*makarios* = blessed’ ones in the kingdom of God/Heaven. In

ancient Greek times, *makarios* referred to the gods – the blessed ones were beings who lived in some other world away from the problems and worries of ordinary people. Then it took on a second meaning – the blessed ones were humans, who, through death, had reached the other world of the gods. “Finally it came to refer to the elite, the upper crust of society, the wealthy people whose riches and power put them above the normal cares and problems and worries of the lesser folk, the peons, who constantly struggle and worry and labour in life.” (Brian Stoffregen).

Then when this word, *makarios* became used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it took on an added theological dimension. Having a good wife, abundant crops, riches, honour, good health etc were seen as signs of divine blessing for having lived rightly within God’s laws. Conversely if you were poor or disabled you were seen as suffering divine disfavour because you or your parents must have sinned against or offended God in some way. But in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus turns such perceptions upside down. In God’s kingdom the blessed ones are the very ones who are suffering, those who are the lowly ones, and those who show grace and mercy even when enduring oppression, poverty and misery. This would have been (and still should be) a confronting challenge to those who saw/see themselves as the elite, rich or powerful.

Translating the word ‘blessed’ as ‘happy’ is unhelpful especially for those who are grieving or depressed. It could be seen as a person needing to ‘buck up’ whereas Jesus uses it in the sense of divine reassurance for those undergoing a spiritual change as they experience the loving power of God in their lives, transforming their very being. They are being invited to trust in God despite adverse circumstances. And it is in being willing to be open to such transforming change that the ‘lowly’ and ‘elite’ alike become the salt of the earth, making the world a more palatable place. There is of course the irony experienced here in Western Australia of too much salt in our farming land literally arising as finely balanced ecosystems became destroyed. As verse 14 highlights spiritual change is not just about personal growth or need – there is a communal outcome to be considered in ‘good works’ which give glory to God.

“The Christian faith is about conversion, turning around, facing in a different direction,...the Christian faith is about change. Having more knowledge is not going to solve the problem - we know more than enough of the disaster ahead. The critical issue is the motivation to change. The problem is in our heads and hearts. We as individuals, and as a community, are the problem. Climate change is a spiritual problem. And what I am suggesting is that the problem rests in a limited and narrow theology which concentrates on the significance of the individual to the detriment of the cosmological and political aspects of our faith. We need a very different paradigm of faith – and without it our children’s children face a very grim future. Let me say it as clearly as I can. Within our self-centred beliefs and our unwillingness to change our way of life, lies the core of the problem. Our hope rests, not in technology, but in dramatically transforming humanity’s relationship to the world – new values, understandings and attitudes which will make possible new political and social changes. Nothing less than this will suffice!”

(Rev Neville Watson)

*I will dream of a time when we
value blue skies more than new automobiles,
count our wealth in joy rather than possessions,
and dwell in peace and balance with the Earth.
I am not without hope.*

(David Gaines – 20th C American environmental activist)

*What I know in my bones is that
I forgot to take time to remember what I know.
The world is holy. We are holy.
All life is holy.
Daily prayers are delivered
on the lips of breaking waves,
the whisperings of grasses,
the shimmering of leaves.*

(Terry Tempest Williams – 20-21st C American naturalist & conservationist)



Climate Change: A challenge to the Christian Community



Order of Service: Week Four

Table preparation

Place the branch held fast in a large plant pot with last week's leaf commitments tied to it beside the central table. This could be decorated in rainbow colours e.g. by having coloured streamers or pieces of cloths radiating from the centre table, held together by a rock on the table then fanning them out and anchoring each of the ends on the floor with a pot plant or trays of seedlings in small pots. (The latter could then be taken by congregation members at an appropriate time during the service as a symbol of their own commitment to ease our carbon footprints.)

Call to Worship

Voice 1: Spirit of Joy – come like the wind, swirling among us; fill us with enthusiasm, and energise us to do your work and your will. *Red streamer enters, waves, placed on communion table*

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Joy!

Voice 2: Spirit of Truth – come as the flame of Christ's light among us, shining in our hearts, our minds, our lives. *Orange streamer enters...*

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Truth!

Voice 3: Spirit of Life – come as the breath of life, pouring energy and power into our dry bones, rekindling those who are weary, that we may have life and know God. *Yellow streamer enters...*

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Life!

Voice 4: Spirit of Hope – come from the four winds, breathing upon all your people, that all creation may be renewed with hope. *Green streamer enters...*

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Hope!

Voice 5: Spirit of Love – come as our Comforter and Consoler, so that all who are broken and wounded are healed, so that all who grieve may be consoled by the power of your love and grace

Blue streamer enters...

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Love!

Voice 6: Spirit of Wisdom – come as the light of understanding, that diversity in all its forms may be respected and may be understood as something to cherish. *Purple streamer enters...*

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Wisdom!



Voice 7: Spirit of Peace – come as the winds of truth, that our hearts may be kindled by the passion for justice and peace. *Violet streamer enters...*

Thank you, God, for the Spirit of Peace!

(From 'Seasons of the Spirit' materials used at an ecumenical Pentecost worship at Wembley Downs 2006)

Hymn 188 – Where wide sky rolls down

Sharing good news/joys

Introducing theme

The rainbow has significance in various traditions including indigenous Australian Dreamtime. What is its significance for us today? Refer to the 'covenant tree' on which people's leaves from last week have been tied symbolizing our actions for the healing of creation as well as the growth of God's kingdom. Refer to websites such as 'Operation Noah' and the 'Eco congregation' movement in the UK, and the 'Tear Australia' and 'Caritas Be More Campaign' in Australia which provide practical opportunities to commit to offsetting the implications of climate change by making simple lifestyle changes and taking action for environmental and social justice.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, your amazing love extends through all time and space, to all parts of your creation, which you created and called good. You made a covenant with Noah and his family, putting a rainbow in the sky to symbolize your promise of love and blessing to every living creature, and to all successive generations.

You made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, blessing them and their descendants throughout the generations. You made a covenant with Moses and the Israelite people to all generations, giving them the ten commandments and challenging them to choose life.

And now in our time we give you thanks that in Jesus, you invite us to enter into a new covenant, in communion with all who seek to be faithful to you. As people of faith, we are called to commit ourselves to your love knowing that your covenant of faithfulness and love extends to the whole creation.

We pray for the healing of the earth, that present and future generations may enjoy the fruits of creation, and continue to glorify and praise you.

(Adapted from the National Council of Churches Earth Day Sunday 2002)

Readings [alternate to Lectionary]

Genesis 9:8-15

Psalms 104

Revelation 21:1-6

Matthew 13:31-32

Sermon/Reflection

Prayer of Confession

Song 3

Sharing concerns

Prayer of Intercession for creation and for the poor

1. **Creator God,**
We thank you for the beauty of your Creation,
and for giving us the privilege of caring for it.
We confess that we have not cared for the
earth
with the self-sacrificing and nurturing love
that you require of us.
We mourn the broken relationships in
creation.
We repent for our part in causing
the current environmental crisis
that has led to climate change.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer
2. **Faithful God, sustainer of all –**
we pray with hope,
because you are already at work through
Christ
to reconcile all of creation to Yourself
and to renew all things.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer
3. **Loving God,**
help us to turn our lives around
to be people of restoration.
Help us build just relationships
among human beings and with the rest of
creation.
Help us to live sustainable,
rejecting consumerism
and the exploitation of creation.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer
4. **God of justice,**
give us courage
and persistence to work for justice
for those most affected by environmental
degradation
and climate change.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer
5. **God of mercy,**
hear the cry of the poor
who are already suffering
and will continue to suffer
water and food shortages
and who will be displaced by climate change.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer
6. **God of all wisdom,**
give wisdom to the leaders of the world's
nations.
Let them work together for a global agreement
to tackle climate change.
Give them the determination to find a just
solution
that protects the people who are most
vulnerable in our world,
and protects creation.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer

***See over for final verse.*

7. Creator God,
give us your Spirit to work together
to restore your creation
and to hand on a safe environment and climate
to our children and theirs.
Let our care for creation
be our act of worship and obedience to you.
In your mercy
Hear our prayer
Your kingdom come,
and your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Amen.

(Rev Angela Webb)

Offering

Active Response

As part of the offering time, give out a seedling to each person asking that each person consider their part in God's covenant. The plant could also be wrapped in a coloured streamer OR instead of the seedling give out pieces of the coloured streamers.

Offering Prayer

Almighty God, Creator and Lifegiver,
we are part of your beautiful but fragile creation.
We have the responsibility to protect,
to nurture and to respect it.
We bring before you tokens of our commitment
and ask that you accept them as we have accepted your gifting
as a sign of our commitment to cut our carbon footprint
for the sake of the planet and all your people.
Give us the grace to honour the commitment we
make this day, and live more lightly on the earth. Amen

(Adapted from Eco-congregation's liturgy 'Walking More Lightly'.)

Song 4

Sending Out and Blessing

Go now to be the hands of the God of love –
let that thought transform your life, and your corner of the world.
You can make a difference. You can create a little bit of Heaven on Earth.

Go now in the love and peace of God,
as revealed in Christ and made real
through the indwelling fellowship of God's Holy Spirit. Amen

(From Jim Malcolm, Wembley Downs Uniting Church)

Reflections: Week Four

These reflections are here to help you with your service preparation. You may like to substitute these readings for the set lectionary readings.

Readings

Genesis 9:8-15

Psalm 104

Revelation 21:1-6

Matthew 13:31-32

Genesis 9:8-15 — Even in the face of great ridicule and questioning of sanity, Noah acted on God's instruction without realising that his endeavour was to preserve life on Earth. His prophetic actions in protecting life are a guide for our times. Being one of the few Judeo-Christian stories still known in our contemporary society, the ark and the rainbow remain powerful symbols of survival and renewal.

"In making a covenant with Noah and every living creature and with the Earth, God restates that co-dependence of Earth, animals, humans. Humans have to live in harmony with nature, and preserve the balance, the peace and justice - the 'shalom' that God intended - that's the covenant. That's the deal, and as with all deals both sides have to do their part.

God gave us one planet Earth that can sustain and renew itself if we recognise the limits; but today the world as a whole is living beyond its ecosystems' capacity to regenerate. (If the whole world had wanted to share UK lifestyles in 1961, the Earth would just have managed with its available resources – today we would need 3 planets to support them.) God gave us the laws of nature but man substituted the laws of economics and the market. God gave us the Sabbath as his gift of holy rest, but we ignore it. God made a covenant with all of creation but we failed to recognise the deal.

After the flood, God signed a covenant with Noah and with all creatures. That idea forms the basis of Operation Noah's Climate Covenant which pledges action to cut our carbon emissions, switch to renewable supplies of electricity and spread the word. The website includes the 'Ark in a Box' – a package of resources, DVDs, resource sheets (resources which complement those of Eco-congregations) to help create the culture of justice for the poor at [http:// www.operationnoah.org/](http://www.operationnoah.org/)

(From Eco-congregation internet site 'Walking More Lightly'.)

Psalm 104 — This great hymn of praise may have had its origins in Ancient Egypt. It proclaims that God purposefully created the great creatures of the sea and the land, in all their diversity and peculiarity. (With God's purpose being painstakingly defended at the time of the flood as well as the subject of the unique covenant between God and "all the creatures", it should be a matter of great concern that climate change is likely to destroy thousands of species.)

Revelation 21:1-6 — This vision of a new heaven and new earth within the context of spiritual dimensions ending with the wisdom image of water as a gift from the spring of life. Climate change is at base a spiritual one but what of the practical dimensions facing us moving into a new world? What of the irony of our bottled water coming from a Fijian aquifer when many of its own population do not have access to fresh clean water?

Matthew 13:31-33 — Jesus had a vision of how things can be which he called the ‘*basileia* = kingdom/empire/ reign’ of God. Unfortunately the writer of Mathew’s gospel’s Jewish background led him to refrain from using the word ‘God’ substituting instead the phrase ‘kingdom of heaven’ which tends to confuse the sense of Jesus’ vision being very much on the earthly plane and about the here and now. His use of everyday images to help people see the reality of God’s realm confirms this and his story about the mustard seed and yeast reflect his confidence that this understanding would grow. The plant Jesus refers to is thought to be the black mustard which can reach 3 metres (not so significant when compared to our great gum trees growing from tiny seeds) but is most unlikely to attract nesting birds. Jesus could have chosen a genuine tree for the parable but there is a subversive edge to his choice. As Pliny the Elder points out in his *Natural History* in 78 AD “mustard is extremely beneficial for the health. It grows entirely wild, though it is improved by being transplanted: but on the other hand when it has once been sown it is scarcely possible to get the place free of it, as the seed when it falls germinates at once.”

Jesus’ wonderful sense of humour and hyperbole comes through to us as he shares his understanding of the astonishing extravagance associated with God’s unbounded spirit and grace. He was sure that, although the kingdom vision appeared small during his ministry, it would inevitably grow into something large and firmly rooted, within which some would find shelter whilst others would find it obnoxious and try to dig it out. Yeast of course cannot be extracted once its fermentation process begins. A small seed/bit of yeast, bearing the DNA of the life-giving spirit, can indeed produce amazing growth both in individuals and in the Kingdom of God taken as a whole, and such spiritual growth can be the catalyst for major changes.

With our contemporary world facing the need for a radical change of lifestyle from one of over consumption to one of simplicity and sustainability, where will the necessary spiritual growth come from? As Peter Preston wrote in a recent article in the Guardian newspaper “People are drifting into a lethal slumber on climate change. More of the same won’t do. The plain fact is that we surely need a prophet. We need to be taught to believe by a true believer in a world where belief is the fatal missing ingredient”.

“What then must we do to be saved? The old question has quite a contemporary ring about it! The scriptural answer was “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” and, providing that we take that beyond the narrow, dominant individualism of our day, it still comes pretty close to the answer to global warming. We need a new understanding of God, a new way of living together, as well as a new personal commitment. Only when we have absorbed the insights of Darwin and see ourselves as part of a changing universe will we have any idea of the immensity of the symphony of which we are a part. We desperately need to “rethink Christian belief in the light of insights and understanding not available to earlier generations.” Flat earth theistic theology really has had it!

What then is my conclusion? It is that we as a Church are called to be the Church, to be a prophetic people, both in living an alternative life style, and being a global community with a universal concern, working with the restless energy of creative love inviting us to fullness of life, loving the world into being. What we desperately need today are men and women of vision. We have to come to grips with the inability of people generally to face the issue, and we have to elect legislators who are wise enough to enact necessary regulation to assist us to do so, and legislators who see humankind as a whole, as a family inhabiting and dependent upon what Sallie McFague refers to as the “body of God”. Only when we look at the big picture will there be hope! At the moment, with the dominance of the individual, and the narrowness with which the Christian faith is viewed, hope is in very short supply. The only hope that I see is that of the resurrection of life as portrayed in Jesus of Nazareth.” (Rev Neville Watson)

In Christ we are challenged to become co-creators with God in a world-order based on peace and love and respect for all creation. Exactly how you/we/the Christian community will respond to that challenge is the key question for our planet's future.

Aspire not to have more, but to be more."

(Oscar Romero – 20th C South American archbishop)

*God does not ask anything else of you
other than for you to let yourself go
and let God be God in you.*

(Meister Eckhart – 14thC German theologian)

Other Resources

'Be More' Prayer

1. Creator God,
Thank you for this our dwelling place
and for today's challenge to be more.
Fill us with creative energy
so we step lightly upon the Earth,
finding just and wise ways to share our
resources.
2. Jesus, Compassionate Teacher,
Thank you for your loving presence
and the example of how to be more.
Fill us with compassion
so we walk with those who need our care
empowering and protecting, healing and
teaching.
3. Holy Spirit, Source of Unity
Thank you for your sustaining gifts
that enable us to be more.
Fill us with love for one another
so together we can create
a just and peaceful community.

(by Teresa Lynch for the Caritas 'Be More ' campaign)

God is weeping...

*The creation tapestry that she wove with such joy
is mutilated, torn into shreds
its beauty fragmented by force.*

God is weeping...

But look!

She is gathering up the pieces to weave something new.

She collects

our shreds of sorrow,

the rags of hard work, attempts at advocacy,

initiatives for peace, protests against injustice,

all the seemly little and weak words and deeds

offered sacrificially in hope, in faith, in love.

And look!

She is weaving them together

with golden threads of joy

into a new tapestry,

a creation richer, more beautiful than the old one!

God is weaving

patiently, persistently

with a smile that radiates like a rainbow

on her tear-streaked face.

And she invites us

not only to keep offering her

the shreds and rags

of our work and suffering

but even more –

to take our place beside her

at the loom of Jubilee,

and weave together with her

the Tapestry of a New Creation.

(Poem by Moira Rienstra – 20thC Scandinavian poet)