



Season of Creation 2024

TO ACT AND HOPE WITH CREATION - YEAR B



COVER ART

This year's icon by Bob Mash represents the **Anglican Communion Forest**. This is a vision of local activities of forest protection, tree growing, and ecosystem restoration undertaken by provinces, dioceses and individual churches across the Anglican Communion to safeguard creation. Together we are united as a global family in this vision. The branches reflect the diversity of nature and the golden tints reflect the sacredness of God's creation.

To plant is to hope
To restore is to heal
To protect is to love

www.communionforest.org

"The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations" ~ **Revelations 22:2**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sermon writers

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Bishop Dalcy Dlamini, Diocese of Swaziland with Canon Thandekile Zulu
“Act in Solidarity with the Poor”

Bishop Rose Okeno , Diocese of Butere, Kenya “Act with the Spirit”

Bishop Eleanor Sanderson, Diocese of Hull, UK “Act with Wisdom”

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WEEK 1 ACT WITH CREATION

READINGS

Song of Songs 2: 8-13
Psalm 45
James 1: 17-27
Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

COLLECT

God of unchangeable power,
when you fashioned the world
the morning stars sang together
and the host of heaven
shouted for joy;
open our eyes to the wonders of
creation and teach us to use
all things for good, to the honour
of your glorious name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



WEEK 2 ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR

READINGS

Proverbs 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23
Psalm 125
James 2: 1-10(11-13), 14-17
Mark 7: 24-37

COLLECT

Gracious God, the air sings with
songs of glory, water flashes silver
with creation, and the forests
bloom with leaves for healing
nations. May your light and love fill
our hearts and souls and minds,
that we may share your abundant
grace with the world.
Amen



WEEK 3 ACT WITH THE SPIRIT

READINGS

Proverbs 1: 20-33
Psalm 19
James 3: 1-12
Mark 8: 27-38

COLLECT

Creating God, your name is written
on every leaf, every bird, every
river, every stone, every living
being. We praise and worship
you for the magnificence of your
creation. Make us attentive to the
wounds of the earth and willing to
work for the healing of the whole
creation, through Jesus Christ, our
Savior and Lord.
Amen



WEEK 4 **ACT WITH WISDOM**

READINGS

Proverbs 31: 10-31
Psalm 1
James 3:13 – 4:3, 7-8a
Mark 9: 30-37

COLLECT

Gracious God,
you reveal your goodness
in the beauty and diversity of
creation; in the circle dance of
earth and air and water; and above
all in the gift of Jesus Christ,
who emptied himself to serve your
world. And so we offer thanks and
praise to you, one God in three
persons: the Author and Source of
all, Christ the Incarnate Word,
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now
and for ever.

Amen



WEEK 5 **ACT IN PARTNERSHIP**

READINGS

Esther 7: 1-6, 9-10; Ch 9: 20-22
Psalm 124
James 5: 13-20
Mark 9: 38-50

COLLECT

Great Spirit God,
we give you thanks for another
day on this earth. We give you
thanks for this day to enjoy the
compassionate goodness of you,
our Creator. We acknowledge
with one mind our respect and
gratefulness to all the sacred cycle
of life. Bind us together in the
circle of compassion to embrace
all living creatures and one
another. **Amen**



WEEK 6 **FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY**

READINGS

Job 1:1, 2:1-10
Psalm 26: 1-12
Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12
Mark 10:2-16

COLLECT

Lord of the lost ones
You come to our broken world and
call us your own. May our tables
be graced by your presence as
guest and our possessions freed
to serve the poor; through Jesus
Christ our Lord

Amen

TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

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

Creation is groaning in the pains of childbirth

Romans 8:22

This biblical image pictures the Earth as a mother, groaning as in childbirth. Along with our Sister, Mother Earth, creatures of all kinds, including humans, cry out because of the consequences of our destructive actions causing climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and human suffering as well as Creation's suffering.

And yet, there is hope and the expectation for a better future. To hope in a biblical context does not mean to stand still and quiet, but rather groaning, crying, and actively striving for new life amidst the struggles. Just as in childbirth, we go through a period of intense pain, but new life is coming forth.

Creation is standing on tiptoe waiting for the children of God to be revealed

Romans 8:19

Creation is standing on tiptoe waiting for us to act! Creation is not given to humanity to use and abuse, rather, humanity is created as part of Creation. More than a common home, Creation is also a cosmic family that calls us to act responsibly as part of the web of life.. This is how the children of God have an intrinsic vocation and an important role to play in the manifestation of the kingdom of justice (cf. Romans 8:19).

First fruits of hope

Romans 8:23-25

We act for a better future because we are people of hope, we know Christ has overcome the death caused by our sins. We know that we have caused a lot of damage to Creation, and to the world we are living in because of our negligence, because of ignorance, but as well, in many cases, because of our unrelenting wish to satisfy unrealistic selfish dreams (cf. Romans 8:22).

Hope is not merely optimism. It is not a utopian illusion. It is not waiting for a magical miracle. Hope is trust that our action makes sense, even if the results of this action are not immediately seen (cf. Romans 8:24).

We know how much bold action to restrain the climate and ecological crises is urgent, and we also know that ecological conversion is a slow process as humans are stubborn to change their minds, their hearts, and their ways of living.

Together with Creation, let us hope and take action.

www.seasonofcreation.org

SEASON OF CREATION 2024 PRAYER

Triune God, Creator of all,

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

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

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

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

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

Amen.

WOMEN BISHOPS

This year we have invited six women bishops to prepare the sermon notes during the Season of Creation. They come from **Kenya, Brazil, Lesotho, Eswatini and the UK.**

The role of women in environmental leadership is very important. Women are often more impacted by climate change than men. In many countries women are having to walk further and further distances to fetch water and firewood, reducing their opportunities for education and paid work. Women are more likely to be smallholder farmers who are dependant on rain fall rather than irrigation. And women are more likely to die in climate related disasters - carrying children and the elderly they are less able to flee.

And yet women are also earth keepers and protectors – biodiversity is a source of food and healing. They will also fight for the health of their children in the face of environmental degradation.

And so this year we honour the role of women environmental leaders with these voices of women bishops.

THE FIVE MOVEMENTS OF THE LITURGY

How to use this manual

The Liturgical materials in this manual are arranged within the five liturgical movements, namely God gathers us, Service of the Word, Responding to the Word, Service of the Table and Commissioning. Although the material is organised according to themes, it can be used on other Sundays or adapted as required.



God Gathers Us:

The congregation is welcomed and the theme of the service is introduced. The penitence/confession can take place here as part of the preparation or it may follow the sermon.



The Proclamation of God's word:

The word of God is read and preached. The affirmation of our Faith can be an important part of the Proclamation.

The Peace may be shared according to custom



Responding to God's word: Prayers of the People are included here. Creative responses such as drama, liturgical dance or short video clips can be used. The penitence may follow the word.



Celebrating at the Table: Natural elements can be used, either a whole loaf or small rolls. This could be baked by a family. Local wine can be used.



Sending out: Post Communion prayers, prayers of commitment on the theme of the day and a blessing.

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

FIRST EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to God

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God of all of Creation
It is right to give God thanks and praise

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

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

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

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

Holy, holy...

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

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

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

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

So we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

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

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

As we look in our world, in our lives, and in our hearts, for his second coming, keep us close to this vision that we have seen. Through the giving in the bread and wine, reconcile us to our world. Send upon us, and upon all your creation, the life-giving Spirit who first moved upon the waters of the deep. Stir in us the creative and redeem

the destructive. Unite us with you through the body and blood of your Son, your Word made flesh.

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

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

The Lord's Prayer etc

Final blessing

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

Savour its richness and diversity and live as those who praise God for its bounty; and the blessing of the Creator God, the Eternal Father, the Risen Son and the Promised Holy Spirit bless you that you might be a blessing to others today and always.

Amen

SECOND EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up unto the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

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

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

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

And now we give you thanks because you have given the earth into our care, and call

us to praise you day by day for the marvels of your creation.

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

Holy, holy, holy...

God of all creation, send your Spirit upon the goodness of the earth, and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that in them we may recognize and receive the fullness of the Risen Christ: bread broken and wine poured, Body given, and Blood shed.

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

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

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

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

So we proclaim the mystery of faith

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again

As we remember the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we celebrate the goodness of the earth, our companionship in this world and the sharing of all skills and arts that enrich our lives. We share the cup of our humanity matured over the unnumbered centuries of the long struggle that has gone into making of this world; our living and dying, our fears and our hopes.

Together with those who have drawn sustenance from this soil, those with whom

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

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer etc

Final blessing

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

praise God in all creation:

follow Christ through whom all things are made:

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

and the blessing of the Creator God,

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

Amen

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

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ACT WITH CREATION

READINGS

Song of Songs 2: 8-13

Psalm 45

James 1: 17-27

Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

COLLECT

God of unchangeable power,
when you fashioned the world
the morning stars sang together
and the host of heaven shouted for joy;
open our eyes to the wonders of creation
and teach us to use all things for good,
to the honour of your glorious name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(NZ and Aotearoa Prayer Book)



INTRODUCTION

This year's theme for Season of Creation is Hope and Act with Creation. In this first set of sermon notes Bishop Olivia reflects on the beauty and love of creation as seen in the Song of Songs and the Psalm. As we fall in love with God's creation, so we deepen our love for the Creator God. As we hear the cry of the earth and of the poor may we be inspired to act for climate justice.

SERMON NOTES

Bishop Olivia Graham, Diocese of Reading, UK



Bishop Olivia at a Climate Protest

loves righteousness and hates wickedness, who will not stand for abuse of power and position. This king must have been chosen for more than his looks, his dress sense or his musical appreciation. He is to be the instrument of God's justice, the working out of God's love for the world, especially those who are victims of our human failings and cruelties.

JAMES 1: 17-27

The scene has been set: a beautiful world, created out of love; a God who cares about justice and equity, and now we come to the deep challenge of this passage from James.

There is a gap between knowledge and wisdom. It's one thing to know about God, and to see what God's love steers us towards (to be hearers of the word), but it's quite another to go and do something about it (to be doers of the word). Head knowledge is simply not enough. We must allow God's wisdom to inhabit and shape us, and then enable us, with God, to re-shape the world. This takes courage and perseverance. We can't do this by ourselves but only because of the generosity of God (v.17) in re-birthing us into a new understanding of truth and a new determination to live it out.

So, we must get rid of all that

SONG OF SONGS 2: 8-13

This most beautiful love song is one of the two books in the Bible which do not mention God. But here God is all around, because the song is all about love. It is unashamedly about the passionate love between two people, the desire they have for each other, the longing – and this is God's very nature. God is love and those who abide in love abide in God and God in them. 1 John 4:16b.

And this human love song is set within the natural world. It is full of the colours, scents, seasons, and fertility of the Creation. The sensuality and the joy with which the two lovers engage is mirrored in the land as it puts forth its song of Creation, in the flowers which bloom, the call of the doves, the fruits and blossoms of the trees... it is as if the whole Earth joins in this love

song. The humans are set within the landscape, a part of it.

All caught up in the greatest love of all – the love of the Creator for this beautiful blue-green marble floating in space, and all that it contains.

PSALM 45

The sensual theme continues in the psalm, and it is accompanied by the theme of blessing. The oil of gladness flows on this chosen king: his robes are heavily scented with rich spices and perfumes, the musicians play, the nobles are assembled, and the queen is adorned with finest gold. God is pleased with this king.

But in the middle verses, we suddenly hear of God's might and majesty, expressed not with a show of power and military prowess, but with a sceptre of equity. Here is God who

soils us and holds us back. We must free ourselves from greed and selfishness, from thinking only of ourselves and our own comfort, and open our arms and our hearts to the power of God's presence and truth; to God's love for the world; to God's care and concern for the most vulnerable. The world is full of temptations which draw us away from the task of building the Kingdom. But the call of the King is a call to action.

MARK 7: 1-8, 14, 15, 21-23

Jesus gets to the nub of it here. In the face of complaints about his followers' lack of hygiene (which to our modern ears sound perfectly sensible) and lack of observance of ritual, Jesus rounds on the religious leaders and blasts them. They have completely lost sight of what is important. They may be offended by this carelessness; (and indeed they may even get sick if they eat from dirty dishes), but the greater sickness by far is the sickness of the heart.

This is the tendency of human beings to put ourselves, our pleasures and satisfactions, our needs and wants, our desire for more and more stuff to satisfy our greed, pride and foolishness, right at the heart of our existence. It is this, above all else, which disconnects us from the world around us. Not only from our sisters and brothers across the world, but also from the rest of creation. We act as if everything

revolves around us, just as once we believed that the universe revolved around the Earth.

SERMON OUTLINE

- The readings speak vital truths to us, across the centuries, through many cultural frames, political and economic contexts
 - The world is created out of God's love and the whole creation is the manifestation of it
 - God is a God of justice and equity. Earthly power, status, favour always combines with great responsibility, especially for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.
 - We need to be alert to the sickness within us, our greed and self-centredness, our pride and desires. These disconnect us from each other and creation
 - We must allow God's wisdom to inhabit and shape us, and then enable us, with God, to re-shape the world and our relationship with it.
- Our world is more and more controlled by algorithms, social media, online transactions. We are in danger of losing our connection with each other, and of being manipulated by lies and false claims. But we can also use technology to increase our connection with, and knowledge of the lives of

our sisters and brothers, and the challenges they face.

- God calls us not only to hear his word, but to act on it.
 - We must pray, not with our own agenda, but with open hearts and minds. Pray for wisdom and humility
 - Then we discern how to act for good, for justice, for equity in relation to issues of creation care and climate justice.
- How can we make this Season of Creation a time to act?
 - What one thing can we do to help ensure God's desired future for the world he loves?
 - What small shift in our



"Climate stripes' scarves to show the warming temperatures

own behaviour can we make to become more connected with creation, to take better care of it?

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

"We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would

be good for the world...We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn

to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery, we will never entirely understand it. We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe. We must recover the sense of the majesty of creation,

and the ability to be worshipful in its presence. For I do not doubt that it is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it."

*(From 'A Native Hill' in Wendell Berry
The World Ending Fire, pp. 22-23)*



Bishop Olivia became the Diocese of Oxford's first female bishop when she was consecrated in November 2019. Since then, two of her biggest priorities have been the climate crisis and the challenges facing young people. She is one of three bishops who lead the national Church of England work on the environment, and she chairs the diocesan environment work. She attended the COP26 conference in Glasgow and continues to work closely with other faith leaders on environmental leadership.

LITURGY: ACT WITH CREATION

GOD GATHERS US

A SONG OF PRAISE FOR AFRICA

O give thanks to our God, who is good:
whose love endures forever.

Sun, moon, stars of the southern sky:
Sunrise and sunset, night and day:
Give to our God your thanks and praise,

All mountains and grasslands, highveld and karoo:
Give to our God your thanks and praise,

Baobab, fynbos, yellowwood and aloe,
Melons, mealies, naartjies and mango,
Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Southern Rights, sardines, dolphins, and sharks,
Elephant, lions, rhinos, and giraffes,
Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Ostrich, sheep, cattle
Scorpion and dung beetle:
Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Elders and children, women and men,
Diverse cultures of this rainbow land:
Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Martyrs and saints, prophets and priests
fishermen, farmers, nurses, and police
Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Typists and teachers, cleaners, and clerks,
learners, job-seekers, and all those who play,
Give to our God your thanks and praise.

All who work, all who care, who love and who pray,
Who laugh and learn, who rest and who play.
**Bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:
sing God's praise and exalt God forever.**

Rev Lynn Pedersen

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God,
Maker, Redeemer and Sustainer of Life
without beginning or end,
whose life-giving love was let loose
on the first Easter Sunday
and whose life-giving love
we share and proclaim here today.

We believe in God
who gave up the divine life
and submitted to the darkness
and terror of the grave
and who enters with us into every darkness
and terror we shall ever face.

We believe in God
who raised Christ from the death of the grave
to glorious new life and who raises our lives
from sin and despair to newness and hope again.

We believe in God
who met the grief-stricken Mary in the garden
and called her into hope by the uttering of her name
and who meets us in our grief
and gives us courage to hope again
by tenderly calling our name.

We believe in God
who sent Mary from the garden to be the witness
and apostle of the resurrection
and who commissions us, like Mary,
to be bearers of hope
and good news to our world.

We believe in God
Maker, Redeemer and Sustainer of Life,
without beginning or end,
whose life-giving love was let loose on the first
Easter Sunday and whose life-giving love we share
and proclaim here today

to all women and men,
 wherever and whoever they are,
 loved, blessed and called by God,
 without beginning or end.

(Praying like a Woman by Nicola Slee)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

SHARING THE PEACE

You are the calm of the sea,
 In that peace I stay.
 You are the deep waves of the shining ocean,
 With their eternal sound I sing.
 You are the song of the birds,
 In that tune is my joy.
 You are the smooth white strand of the shore, in you
 is no gloom.
 You are the breaking of the waves on the rock,
 Your praise is echoed in the swell.
 You are the Lord of my life,
 In you I live. **Amen!**

(Attributed to St Columba)

May the peace, beloved, of the ever-loving, risen
 Lord be upon you.

Peace be with you.

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

You could play the sound of birds rather than a
 hymn to show that we worship with creation. Google
 "birdsong" and download the sounds you love

SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

BLESSING

May God bless you with the grace to never sell
 yourself short.

May God bless you with the courage to risk
 something big for something good.

May God bless you with the wisdom to know that
 the world is now too dangerous for anything but the
 truth and too small for anything but love.

(William Sloane Coffin)





INTRODUCTION

“Act and hope” – we are surrounded by so many challenges, but where should we put our efforts?

Bishop Dalcy’s reflections this week help us to understand that we are called to work on behalf of those most impacted by climate change – not only our global neighbours, but also the generations to come

2

ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR

READINGS

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

Psalm 125

James 2: 1-10(11-13), 14-17

Mark 7: 24-37

COLLECT

Gracious God,
the air sings with songs of glory, water flashes silver with creation, and the forests bloom with leaves for healing nations.

May your light and love fill our hearts and souls and minds, that we may share your abundant grace with the world.

Amen.

(Daily Prayers for All Seasons)

SERMON NOTES

Bishop Dalcy Dlamini, Diocese of Swaziland, with Canon Thandekile Zulu

PROVERBS 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23

The lectionary has given us a set of three short passages in Proverbs 22, connected by a simple theme of the poor and those who have riches. The bible does really help us to understand why some people are trapped in poverty

Rich and poor have this in common; the Lord is the Maker of them all. v2

Our starting point as Christians is that we are all God's children. Whether we come together in worship or we meet on the street - all are equal in the sight of God. This challenges the false teaching that personal wealth and privilege are the result of blessing by God (prosperity gospel)

The borrower is slave to the lender v7

Although this verse is not included in the lectionary reading it is a very important reflection of the impact of debt. Our capitalist system basically creates interest for the rich, whereas the poor pay interest. Tragically we are seeing how with increased impacts from climate change, poorer nations are going deeper and deeper into debt as they borrow money to replace key infrastructure destroyed by floods and storms.

The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor. v9

Here the bible shows the Christian values of generosity and sacrificial giving. Bishop Zac Niringiye from Uganda reminds us that the Lord's prayer is a communal prayer – Give us today our daily bread. It is not me praying for bread for my family, but for the whole community. If there are hungry people in my community and I am not giving them bread, then I am failing to pray the Lord's Prayer.

Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case v22-23

This verse shows clearly that God is on the side of the poor - what is called the 'preferential option for the poor' and echoes the prophetic tradition. It also shows how economic and legal systems of society favour the wealthy.

These passages show us that it is important to understand the underlying issues of why a particular person is poor and what are the challenges they face. It is only then that you might score the goal of helping them to get out of poverty. On the journey of life, the probability of meeting a poor person is 8:10.

Policies such as the government's land policies or the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to climate action may have been beautifully crafted in terms of helping the poor. However, those policies and NDCs do not see reality through the lenses of the poor. Through manipulating these very policies, the rich are able to accumulate more wealth whilst the poor become poorer.

Even when opportunity strikes, the poor are often not in a position to embrace the opportunity as they do not have the necessary resources or connections to be able to benefit. They can be easily cheated as only the rich and the powerful are able to read the fine print which is meant to open the doors for the poor.



Bishop Dalcy Dlamini at the AGEN table at Lambeth Conference

NGOs and other programs meant to benefit the poor are often in fact enriching those who already have, at the end the poor receive handouts which does not really change their situation as it does not address the root causes of the problem of poverty.

PSALM 125

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever'. (v.1)

This Psalm is one of the 15 songs of Ascents, meant for pilgrims to sing on their way to Jerusalem for the annual feast days. As they walked they would look up at Mount Zion, the mighty hill on which Jerusalem was built. They sing of the greatness of God, their faith is as strong as the Mount Zion – they cannot be moved.

'For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous' v3

And yet as they come closer they see the Fortress Antonia, the Roman headquarters, and they were reminded that the city was under the control of a foreign invader. It must have seemed as if 'the sceptre of wickedness' was indeed resting very heavily on the land allotted to the righteous!

How well this Psalm reflects our current situation as the Church in Africa, our faith is strong, we

sing, we worship, we proclaim our faith in God. And yet it is Africa that is to be the hardest hit by climate change – we face an insecure and frightening future.

The sceptre of wickedness shall not overcome - reminds us of the gospel hymn 'We shall overcome' we sing out our faith in God, knowing that our God is a mighty God who will overcome. And so, the theme of Season of Creation this year reminds us that we must hope in the God of Mount Zion and act to combat the wickedness that is causing climate change.

Do good O Lord to those who are good ... but those who turn aside to their own crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers v 4-5

In this world, those who are doing the least to cause climate change are the most impacted. But this Psalm looks forward to a time when justice will prevail and God will establish his Kingdom of justice, love and peace.

The poor need to be empowered so that they stop depending on the wealth. Environmental education can help people have good food, plant trees, and heal the land.

JAMES 2: 1-10

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. V1

Modern day culture loves to honour the rich and famous - we think of the lifestyle of the 'influencers' politicians, sports stars. This consumerist society is killing the earth with so many throw aways and plastic rubbish building up.

Why don't we give more honour to the humbly dressed faithful believers who are raising their families within their means, living simple hardworking lives, eating from the earth and giving to their neighbours?



Bishop Dalcy Dlamini (far right) with the "Africa Six" women bishops

Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you.
v5-6

Again, we see how God stands on the side of the poor against injustice and exploitation. Climate injustice is one of the major issues that we are facing globally, and the church should act on behalf of those most vulnerable.

Love your neighbour as yourself
v8

In the context of climate change we are all called to care for our global neighbours and to make decisions about our travel, source of energy etc that will not harm our neighbour. Our neighbours are also the generations to come and our non-human neighbours, God's creatures given into our care.

As a church we need to think of ways of building bridges between

the poor and the wealthy. Such bridges will eliminate the environmental injustices that the poor usually suffer from the hands of the rich. How can the voices of the most vulnerable be heard by the powerful? Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity and the rod of anger will not fail.

As the poor cry under the injustices of the wealthy, we also need to hear the cry of the animals, plants which are fed in a manner that is against their natural way of life. They are confined into little spaces unable to move, such as battery farms.

MARK 7: 24-37

The passage about Jesus and the Syrophenician woman is difficult to understand. Why is he so rude to her – he refuses a request for healing – he refers to her and her daughter as 'dogs'. This seems out of character of the Jesus we know.

"First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." v27

He is pushing the woman to express the faith that he knows she has, before he gladly heals her daughter.

"Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." v28-29

She pushes back persistently. She is combatting sexism, patriarchy, cultural barriers, xenophobia - all these issues can be seen in this passage. What a strong woman! Through her persistence her daughter is healed. We are reminded of the strong women who fight for the health of their children in situations of waters poisoned by mining, air poisoned by coal, forests being cut down- it is often the women who stand up against all the forces against them. Her theology is not rooted in books, it flows from her love of her daughter

The love of a mother is a powerful force!

Bishop Dalcy Dlamini is the second woman bishop in Eswatini and one of the 'Africa Six' women bishops of Africa. She has served on the International Anglican/Lutheran commission and is a member of the Steering Group of the International Anglican Women's Network. She is the liaison bishop for Growing the Church and Anglicans Ablaze and is very passionate about young people

LITURGY: ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR

GOD GATHERS US

PENITENCE

God of mercy,
 we come before you seeking forgiveness
 because we know how much we have failed you.
 You created a world of beauty;
 you gave your people paradise.
 But we have not been good stewards
 of the earth we inherited.
 The rivers are polluted;
 the air has been made impure;
 forests are felled and fertile land turned to desert;
 wild animals are hunted and,
 for pride and greed,
 whole species are endangered

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

A Confession of faith of St. Patrick

Our God, God of all people,
 God of heaven and earth, sea and rivers,
 God of sun and moon, of all stars,
 God of highest mountain, of deepest valleys,
 God over heaven and in heaven and under heaven.

He has his dwelling
 in heaven and earth and sea
 and all that is in them.

He inspires all,
 he gives life to all,
 he surpasses all,
 he upholds all.

He ignites the light of the sun.
 He surrounds the stars and tells them to shine.
 He makes fountains in dry lands,
 and dry islands in the sea,
 and stars to serve the greater lights.

He has a Son,
 coeternal with him and like him.
 The Son is not younger than the Father,
 neither is the Father older than the Son.
 And the Holy Spirit breathes in them.
 Not separate are the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

(This creed is attributed to the 5th century missionary and bishop Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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.

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.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

(Pope Francis, Laudato Si)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

During Season of Creation many churches now hold a service outside, celebrating in Creation, acknowledging that 'The Earth is the Lord's' and we worship in the sanctuary of all Creation

SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Bless the wisdom of the holy one above us
Bless the truth of the holy one beneath us
Bless the love of the holy one within us

(Chinook Psalter)





INTRODUCTION

How do we act with hope, in the face of so much despair and calamity? The role of Christians is very important in the environmental movement. Not only do we bring hope when many are despairing, but we also work in the power of the Spirit – the Spirit of wisdom and the spirit of renewal and re-creation.

3

ACT WITH THE SPIRIT

READINGS

Proverbs 1: 20-33

Psalm 19

James 3: 1-12

Mark 8: 27-38

COLLECT

Creating God,

your name is written on every leaf, every bird,
every river, every stone, every living being.

We praise and worship you for the magnificence
of your creation. Make us attentive to the
wounds of the earth and willing to work for the
healing of the whole creation, through Jesus
Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

(Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada)

SERMON NOTES

The Rt. Revd. Rose Nereya Ayiamba Okeno, Diocese of Butere, Kenya

PROVERBS 1:20-33

Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; v20

In this passage Wisdom is personified as a woman, one who permeates creation and who holds divine authority. She is shouting out in the streets and the public squares warning us that disaster is coming. She does not spell out the practicalities of what we must do, she presumes that we know the Torah, that we have learned from our ancestors the right way to live.

When calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind v27

We are ignoring the voices that are calling out to us, the climate scientists, the indigenous voices, and we are staring

disaster in the face. We are already suffering from the affects of our destruction of forests, our overuse of fossil fuels and yet we still do not listen to those voices. We fail to listen to the voice of God who called us to be keepers of the Earth.

Looming over our planet is a threat of extinction, acknowledged now as a sixth extinction. The Season of Creation is an appeal not only to hope but also to act. The living soil, the seas, rivers and oceans are being polluted – trampled underfoot by the massive human footprint. Let us not ignore the prophetic voice of Lady Wisdom, let us learn from climate science, listen to the wisdom of our ancestors and indigenous people from around the world.

It is time to act!

PSALM 19

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech v1-2

The Early Church spoke of the 'two books of God' the first book of creation and the second, the written Scripture. God speaks to us both through the pages of the Bible and also through creation.

Psalm 19 expresses this balance beautifully, in two different sections. In the first section –

v1-6, we see how the heavens are bearing testimony to the presence of God. Without language, we can become aware of the presence and power of God. How often have you walked by the ocean or looked at the stars and sensed the mighty presence of God?

"Very good," is a constant phrase in the entire process of creation. God created the universe to show His Glory. And so, everything that God created was good, but human sin and ignorance brought about confusion and mismanagement of what was meant to be 'good'.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; v10

In the second section (7-14) the psalmist declares the inspiration and trustworthiness of the word of God, words which revive us when we are tired, which bring light and hope and wisdom. The Psalm extols the heart of wisdom which is the fear of the Lord (vs 9) and which is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey (vs 10).

In this Psalm the writer shows the harmony between the beauty of Creation and the law. The universe is indeed sacramental – we can see the fingerprints of God in Creation and we can feel God's presence with us. As Martin Luther said "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone,



Bishop Rose with a Green Anglicans low energy stove



Bishop Rose planting trees

but also on trees, and in the flowers and in clouds and stars”.

As we continue with our environmental work, we need to be grounded, in the word of God and the commandments to care for Creation, but also in our love for Creation. Many people live in concrete jungles and many young people do not have opportunities to connect with nature. This is also part of our ministry, to connect people with nature through outdoor services or retreats, or hikes. For you will not protect what you do not love.

JAMES 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly v1.

As preachers we have a particular responsibility to pass on correct knowledge. What knowledge

are we passing on? There is so much fake news going around it is important that we take the time to study to equip ourselves with scientific knowledge.

Faithful wisdom requires us to confront the frailty of our human behaviour and call forth the richness of human knowledge. Provided we are careful in our exposition, we avoid the unpleasantness that “From the same mouth come blessing and cursing” (v.10).

We also need to avoid getting into useless fights with people – how do you respond for instance when someone says that climate change is a myth? The tongue operates much as a bridle does to control a horse or the rudder to steer a ship (v 3 and 4). It is small but influential. Negatively it can be destructive. It can be the spark initiating a raging forest fire. For the person carrying the image of God it should not be

like this. We need to find ways to disagree and education but with respect for the other person.

And God said...” is a phrase that occurred in every season of creation. By the word of the mouth, there came an existence. God spoke and it was done.

This symbolizes the power of the word. The word of the mouth brings salvation and healing – both spiritually and physically. We are co-creators with God, so our words also are powerful for healing or for destruction.

MARK 8: 27-38

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. v34

Jesus teaches that a prophetic ministry, speaking truth to

power, carries with it the perils of suffering and death. Peter, like many of us, does not really understand, he is hoping to see the restoration of a Jewish king Jesus on the other hand is focussing on the suffering and death ahead. "Get behind me, Satan!" he says for Peter has made the error of offering the same temptation that Satan offered Jesus in the wilderness (Mark 1.13)

Jesus calls together the crowd and reminds them what it means to be intentional in our Christian discipleship. The imperatives "let them deny themselves" and

"let them take up their cross" (v.34) are what it means to follow Jesus. Jesus is seeking in His followers is something more than pious resignation in the face of the ways of the world, but spiritual activism.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? v36

Jesus asks what good it is to gain the whole world but forfeit our souls. What a challenge to the materialism that hardens our heart against God and our fellow creatures! Environmental and climate activism requires

sacrifices, we are called to sacrificial living to live more simply. We will sacrifice our time, our resources, our energy. There may be times when we feel that we are burning out because the challenges are so great, and yet we are called to act with hope.

It is action that brings hope, and it is hope that inspires action.

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The Rt. Revd. Rose Nereya Ayiamba Okeno was consecrated and enthroned as the Fourth Bishop of the ACK Diocese of Butere on September 12, 2021, at St. Luke's Cathedral, Butere-Kenya. The service was presided over by The Most Rev. Dr. Jackson Ole Sapit, the Archbishop of Kenya & Bishop of All Saints' Cathedral Diocese together with other Provincial Bishops. With her consecration, Bishop Rose made history by becoming the first woman to be elected diocesan Bishop in the Anglican Church of Kenya. This achievement, she attributes to God, and takes with humility.

She was born in Eshibanga village of Butere in rural western Kenya. Her parents were domestic farmers. So, like many other children in Butere, she grew up supporting her parents with labor on the family farm. She lost her father when she was barely nineteen but remained in the loving care of her prayerful mother. Her calling began as a little girl leading Sunday school. This love was later shaped into a calling as a youth in the late 80s. What started as a need to relate as a child, later became her calling and vocation. Beyond the role of motherhood and wifehood, she had this feeling, a nudge, a relentless probe that there was more to life than the traditional role of a Luhyia woman, a wife, and a mother.

LITURGY: ACT WITH THE SPIRIT

GOD GATHERS US PENITENCE

Let us confess our sins against God, our neighbours,
and all Creation.

We have forgotten who we are.

**We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding
of the cosmos.**

**We have become estranged from the movements
of the earth.**

We have turned our backs on the cycles of life.

We have forgotten who we are.

We have sought only our own security.

We have exploited simply for our own ends.

We have distorted our knowledge.

We have abused our power.

We have forgotten who we are.

Now the land is barren.

And the waters are poisoned.

And the air is polluted.

We have forgotten who we are.

Now the forests are dying.

And the creatures are disappearing.

And humans are despairing.

We have forgotten who we are.

We ask forgiveness.

We ask for the gift of remembering.

We ask for the strength to change.

Help us to remember who we are.

**Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you
all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ,
strengthen you in all goodness, and by the
power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal
life. Amen.**

(U.N. Environmental Sabbath Program Earth Prayer)

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.

For in him all things in heaven

and on earth were created:

things visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers;

all things have been created

through him and for him.

He himself is before all things,

and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church;

he is the beginning, the firstborn

from among the dead,

so that he might come

to have first place in everything.

For in him all the fullness of God

was pleased to dwell,

and through him God was pleased

to reconcile to himself all things,

whether on earth or in heaven,

by making peace through the blood of his cross.

(Anglican Diocese of Sydney, the Anglican Church of Australia)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray for the revealing of the reign of God in
the world, now and always. In the beginning.

God was.

Here and now,

God is.

In the future,

God will be.

Creator of earth, sea, and sky, kindle the fire of your Spirit within us that we may be bold to heal and defend the earth, and pour your blessing upon all who work for the good of the planet. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

Breath of life, receive our thanks for the beauty of our local habitat and all who dwell in it, and grant us the wisdom and will to conserve it. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

Source of life, heal and redeem the wounds of your creation, and visit the places and people who suffer from our indifference, neglect, and greed. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

Lover of all you have made, we thank you for the wondrous diversity of your creatures, and we pray for their well-being. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

Author of the book of nature, receive our gratitude for places of restoration and healing, and continue to bless those places that feed our lives and spirits. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

Giver of all good gifts, awaken us daily to our dependence upon your bounty, and make us always thankful for the abundance of your blessings. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

Divine Physician, heal our communities, especially those where neglect, greed, or violence inflict suffering upon people and other creatures. God, Giver of life,

Hear our prayer.

(A celebration guide for Episcopal Churches)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

During the Season of Creation instead of cut flowers you can have displays of different indigenous plants on the altar to reflect the beauties of biodiversity in your area.

SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Let us arise today
Through the strength of heaven;
Light of sun,
Radiance of moon,
Splendour of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth,
Firmness of rock.

Let us arise today
Through the mighty strength, the invocation of the
Trinity
Through belief in the threeness
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of all Creation

(St Patrick, 5th Century)

4

ACT WITH WISDOM

READINGS

Proverbs 31: 10-31

Psalm 1

James 3:13 – 4:3, 7-8a

Mark 9: 30-37

COLLECT

Gracious God, you reveal your goodness
in the beauty and diversity of creation;
in the circle dance of earth and air and water;
and above all in the gift of Jesus Christ,
who emptied himself to serve your world.
And so we offer thanks and praise to you,
one God in three persons:
the Author and Source of all,
Christ the Incarnate Word, and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

(Honouring God in Creation- the Episcopal Church)



INTRODUCTION

With so many challenges facing us, we need wisdom to know which actions to take. In the Bible, Wisdom is personified as a woman, one who permeates creation who warns us of the consequences of foolishness. Let us be guided by the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom we find in science and the wisdom of our ancestors and indigenous peoples. In our sermon notes this week, Bishop Eleanor challenges us to act with Wisdom.

SERMON NOTES

Rt Rev Dr Eleanor Sanderson, Diocese of Hull, UK



Bishop Eleanor at Climate justice protest

way of the wicked is shaped by mockery and characterised by walking, standing and sitting in a posture that is not open to God nor seeking to honour God. Whilst the way of the wicked is seen to mock the way of the righteous, the psalmist calls the people of God to confidence and trust in God's judgement and God's ways. It may be helpful to this of this psalm in relation to Isaiah 55:8-9, which speaks of God's ways and God's thoughts being different from our ways and thoughts. Psalm 1 shows the righteous being those who are seeking to know and seek God's ways and God's thoughts.

JAMES 3:13 – 4:3, 7-8A

These verses from James are sometimes introduced by a heading, "two kinds of wisdom". Similar to the other scriptures today, they give an embodied, a lived, example of wisdom. This time they depict the wisdom that is shown in the life of a person seeking to live with the way of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of God's wisdom given in these verses have a similarity with the fruits of the Holy Spirit also found in the New Testament. These verses warn the early church that even if they think they are following Jesus, the way that they live and the fruits of their lives will truly show which wisdom, or way, they are living. This battle is

PROVERBS 31:10-31

In Hebrew tradition wisdom is embodied. This is different from many more Western ways of thinking and philosophy where thoughts are often abstract ideas that are then debated. To understand wisdom in the Hebrew tradition, we best understand it best by reflecting on a lived example. This is a way that we can approach Proverbs 31. This means we come to these verses asking, "what is wisdom like?" We then have an example of wisdom embodied in the feminine. These verses then give us a detailed depiction of a wise way of living which shows the strength and character of wisdom expressed in the cultural context of the day. It is full of embodied examples, ways of relating to the world, nature and society and

family. This is a wholehearted and whole of life depiction of wisdom. If we are not used to reading scripture and wisdom in this way, we could come to these passages and think that they are answering a different question, "what should a women be like?", but that would not fit with the wisdom tradition in which they are written.

PSALM 1

This Psalm opens the song book of the people of God, our psalms, with two different ways of living before God. The way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The way of the righteous is seeking to grow towards God in all things: to learn the ways of God, to draw from the water of God's presence and bear the fruit of God's spirit. The

constantly within us as we seek to become more like Christ in all our ways. As our humanity and Christ's divinity come together in our new creation in God. This epistle makes that calling clear and raises the standard of Christ high for the early followers and for us today.

MARK 9: 30-37

Two different ways are again juxtaposed in this Gospel. The way of the cross and the way of human ambition. Jesus takes the disciples to a place where they are able to safely de-brief and pre-brief all that has happened and all that is about to happen. The way of the cross is clear: surrender, sacrifice, service. The love and the wisdom of God embodied. However, the conversation between the disciples on the journey shows the very different human way of hunger for success and greatness. I want to encourage us to notice the extended family grouping within which Jesus and the disciples travelled which is shown in this Gospel. We see this shown in many parts of the Gospels, but very clearly here. They return to Jesus' home town and even to his home. The extended family of men, women and children are together. The children are with Jesus. Jesus gives a powerful illustration to welcome the least amongst them as if they were the greatest amongst them. How often are our own eyes shaped by the human wisdom of looking to the most

important and missing those who might be most important to God?

The power of the Gospel stands out with its clear counter-cultural call to serve the least and not to hunger for human ambition. There are also strong themes connecting all of the readings for this Sunday. These themes are 1) wisdom, 2) the way of life in God (the wise way of living) and 3) the lived/grounded/earthed calling of our faith. Each theme builds upon each other and then culminates in the Gospel story of Jesus with the disciples and the clear call to seek to serve and be the "least". If we begin with a focus on the Gospel and the clear teaching of Jesus about the way of the Kingdom (the last being first), we can then bring in the example of the Epistle to illustrate the way that this teaching was needed again and again in the early church. We can link the inner battle described in these verses from James with our human nature and are calling to "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27) and become God's new creation.

Our psalm and our Proverbs scripture further illustrate the ancient choice of either seeking to live a life orientated to God or not and illustrate the ongoing call of the Judaeo-Christian tradition for God's wisdom (now given in the eternal living presence of Christ) to be embodied in our own lives.

The clear call to be the least

and to serve the least is as revolutionary now as it was when Jesus spoke these words from his lips. Throughout our world and our connection in community and creation, we can clearly illustrate the transformational impact on environmental and justice issues if we followed this calling. A world shaped by human self-sacrifice and service would be very different from a world shaped by human hunger for greatness and power. It may be particularly significant to speak about the different power relationships between men, women and children and the significance of this teaching to those relationships. This may be especially helpful in interpreting Proverbs 31.

Is there a particular marginalised group in your context that could be the "least" in the world's sight, but who might be the most important in God's sight and God's desire that they be welcomed and served? Today's scriptures challenge our own personal ambition, but they also challenge our culture as a church. We can too easily slip into a hierarchy of importance or living in ways that are not giving birth to the fruits of peace. Is there collective, as well as personal, repentance that the Holy Spirit might invite amongst you today in your shared life together?

It is important that we hear the embodied, the lived, character of God's wisdom and God's way. Today we do not want to simply

think about things, we want to clearly focus on the way that we live. A practical encouragement to do something in the coming week would be a very fitting response to today's scriptures. For example, to ask God to guide

us in an act of practical service in the coming week. Inviting people to physically respond in action is important to honour the way of wisdom shown in these scriptures.



Rt Rev Dr Eleanor Sanderson is currently the Bishop of Hull in the Diocese of York, Church of England. Ordained in the Anglican Province of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia she served in the Diocese of Wellington for many years, concluding as Assistant Bishop. She has a background in geography, development studies and cross-cultural research.

LITURGY: ACT IN WISDOM

GOD GATHERS US PENITENCE

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers and sisters, the animals to whom you gave this 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 you in song, has been a groan of travail.

May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for you, and that they love the sweetness of life even as we, and serve you in their place better than we in ours. We pray through our Savior Jesus Christ, who lifts up and redeems us all.

Amen.

(Adapted from St Basil the Great 4th Century)

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH

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

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

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

And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life, who came to reconcile and renew this world and everything in it.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, who moves with God and who moves among and with us today.

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

(Lutheran Theological College South India)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Dear God, Creator of the earth, this sacred home we share:

Give us new eyes to see the beauty all around and to protect the wonders of creation.

Give us new arms to embrace the strangers among us and to know them as family.

Give us new ears to hear and understand those who live off the land and sea, and to hear and understand those who extract its resources.

Give us new hearts to recognize the brokenness in our communities and to heal the wounds we have inflicted.

Give us new hands to serve the earth and its people and to shape beloved community.

For you are the One who seeks the lost, binds our wounds and sets us free,

And it is in the name of Jesus the Christ we pray.

Amen

(Bishop Carol Gallagher Episcopal Church)



CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

As we prepare the altar we can also use symbols reflecting the destruction and devastation we are creating. Dried out twigs instead of beautiful flowers can be used.

SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

May you be carried by the flow of the great river of life.
May you discover a hidden spring within, gushing forth.
May you be carried to the shores of the
sacred and renewed
And may the Blessing....

(Trinity Wall Street Lenten reflection)





INTRODUCTION

Faced with the triple challenges of Climate change, Biodiversity loss and pollution, how are we to act?

The theme from last year's Season of Creation reminded us that we are part of a river of justice. If we act alone we are a tiny drop, but when we work in partnership with others, the drop becomes a tiny stream, joining other streams until it becomes a roaring river of justice.

5

ACT IN PARTNERSHIP

READINGS

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; Ch 9: 20-22

Psalm 124

James 5: 13-20

Mark 9: 38-50

COLLECT

Great Spirit God, we give you thanks for another day on this earth.

We give you thanks for this day to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator.

We acknowledge with one mind our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycle of life.

Bind us together in the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and one another.

Amen.

(Ojibwe Evening Prayer)

SERMON NOTES

Bishop Magda Guedes Pereira, Diocese of Parana, Brazil



Bishop Magda at Lambeth

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

This passage from the book of Esther clearly expresses the desire for the people to reclaim their lives in fullness. To do so, it would be necessary to denounce the injustices of the oppressive system, which sold, excluded and killed the people. Esther had a bold attitude and also risked her life to save her people and this people she puts herself at the service of them.

Psalm 124

Psalm 124 is one of the many texts attributed to David. It is a song of gratitude and acknowledgment of God's help and protection.

This passage prompts us to reflect on what would have happened if God had not been on the side of David and the

people of Israel.

We can also interpret that David wrote this psalm out of gratitude for God's faithfulness and saving power, recognizing that without divine protection they would have faced far worse consequences in their adversity. Thus, Psalm 124 is a song of thanksgiving and acknowledgment of God's help and protection.

James 5:13-20

We must remember that the letter of James was written around the year 50 A.D. bringing up practical issues and problems often faced by many Christian people in the communities. It also emphasizes that God's Law must be practiced in everyday life and not only in temple rituals. For James, the Christian person sanctifies God through obedience to God's will.

This epistle offers wise counsel for life and day-to-day problems. Therefore, our thoughts and attitudes must demonstrate that we serve the God of Life, the God of Jesus Christ, whose will says that the only power people should have over one another is the power to serve.

For James, a person is truly religious when he practices what the religion professes. And the high point of this perception of James, in this part of the text presented, is the prayer for the sick and the communal confession of sins. "If any of you is sick, let him call the elders of the church to pray and put oil on the person's head in the name of the Lord. Such prayer in faith will save the sick person. The Lord will give you health and forgive the sins you have committed. Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a person obedient to God has much power" (James 5:14-16).

Mark 9:38-50

"Whoever is not against us is for us!"

The Gospel indicated for this Sunday places us, once again, in the context of Jesus' teaching to his disciples. It presents important elements that need to

be continually remembered by every follower of Christ. The text reminds us that God is no one's property. No church, institution, or hierarchy has a monopoly on the Spirit, nor can it hire him, much less chain or hide him. The Spirit, however, is in all those who, through the practice of the values taught by Jesus, are open and willing to take up the path that leads to the true building of the Kingdom of God, which is not food or drink, but love, peace, justice, solidarity, sharing.

Our faith communities are challenged to be able to promote dialogue and to know how to value the good deeds of other religious groups. We should do good because we are Christians and faith in Christ leads us to such an attitude, not because a certain person belongs to our group. In this sense, the disciples are somewhat limited in their understanding of the Kingdom. Last Sunday, they were interested in knowing who would be the greatest, today, they show weakness by wanting to silence someone who also does good, but does not officially participate in the "elected group".

These are difficulties that are part of our life and the daily life of our parish communities, but we need to learn to recognize and rejoice in the attitudes of life that take place around us,

even when these attitudes result from the action of non-believers or people who do not belong to some Church institution.

We must be clear that God acts through other people and strives every day to bear witness to the values of the Kingdom, and we must rejoice in the signs of God's presence in so many other people who struggle to build a more just and fraternal world.

Another prominent part of today's Gospel confronts us with the problem of the scandal of the "little ones in the community". We need to understand that "the little ones" are not just children, but the excluded, the poor, the sick, the orphans, the widows, and the strangers. And, the meaning of the word "scandal" means "stumbling block." So, we must be aware that it (stumbling block) can even be certain attitudes that do not allow the growth of the community. This is a special warning to the leaders who are primarily responsible for the community.

The radicality demanded by Jesus is not to be considered in the physical realm. Using typically Semitic imagery and language, Jesus orders everything that could cause problems, whether in a personal or community context, to be cut off and thrown away, even if it requires a drastic

attitude, so as not to be a cause for anyone to fall.

The journey to Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark is a great teaching of Jesus for those who want to follow him as a disciple. Step by step, he changes their thinking and sows the seeds of the Kingdom. And today, we are challenged to practice true ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, acceptance of what is different, and to review our way of acting and thinking, so that the Christian experience in our Churches may be a real example of the values of the Kingdom of God.

Let us not allow ourselves to be conditioned by norms or personal or group interests that want to take advantage, but let us follow Christ and let ourselves be moved by the Spirit of God who blows where he wills, for whom he wills and on whom he wills. Amen



Bishop Magda with an indigenous leader from the Amazon

Bishop Magda Guedes Pereira, is a resident in Curitiba, state of Paraná in Brazil. Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Paraná, consecrated on October 17, 2021. Ordained deacon for 28 years and priest for 27 years. She served as General Secretary of the Church from 2018 to 2022.

LITURGY : ACT IN PARTNERSHIP

GOD GATHERS US

PENITENTIAL LITANY OF CREATION

God the Creator of all,
Have mercy upon us.

God the Incarnate Word, present in Creation from the beginning,
Have mercy upon us.

God the Spirit of truth and forgiveness,
Have mercy upon us.

Holy Trinity, divine community,
Have mercy upon us.

We come before you in this time of deepening social and climate crisis to confess our complicity and inaction, to pray for those most severely affected, and to ask for the courage and perseverance to be diligent in prayer, in seeking truth, in allowing ourselves to be transformed, and in acting with Spirit-led wisdom for the good of our human and non-human siblings.
Hear us, gracious God.

We confess that we have wasted and polluted water, the drink of life and main substance in our bodies. We have discharged metals into the seas and rivers, choked them with fertilizer and manure run-off, clogged the oceans with plastic, and poisoned our most vulnerable children with industrial chemicals and lead-filled water from old pipes.
Have mercy on us, merciful God.

We confess that we have abused the soil, the Earth mother who teems with life and provides food for all land creatures. We have squandered her, allowing her to blow away, killing her vitality with chemical pesticides and fertilizers, depleting her by overuse and greed

Have mercy on us, merciful God.

We confess that we have turned your diverse, interconnected Eden into sterile monocrops of bioengineered food items and grass lawns. We have ravaged the forests for cheap paper and wood, and leveled rainforests to grow meat cattle.
Have mercy on us, merciful God.

We confess that we have caused the deaths of many millions of birds, reptiles, amphibians and water creatures and wiped out countless species, due to loss of habitat and food, overfishing, and pollution.
Gracious God, deliver us.

For those most directly affected by rising temperatures, rising seas, extreme weather events, drought and climate migration, we pray, especially those you now name...
Hear us, O God of life.

That we may have a renewed and restored relationship to all of Creation, we pray,
Hear us, O God of life.

(M. Lise Hildebrandt)

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We say together in faith
**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:
**for by his will they were created and have
their being.**

We believe in God the Son, who was slain:
for with his blood, he purchased us for God

from every tribe and language, from every people and nation.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:

**the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'
Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen**

(Revelation 22:17)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Come, O Holy Breath of God, poured out for us
Caring God, the earth and we cry out to You
Along with the earth, we ask You to free us from
greed, selfishness and indifference

Along with the air, the water, the land and the
wind,
we ask You to help us get rid of all the pollution
Along with the forest, birds and animals, give
us the strength not to destroy ourselves and the
delicate webs that connect our ecosystems and all
life together

Along with those on the edges of society, the
unheard, the powerless, the struggling and the
suffering, we ask You the strength to be just,
merciful and compassionate

Along with those in power and positions of
authority, we ask for wisdom to be good stewards
of our common home

And finally, along with the whole of creation and
peoples, we give You thanks for all the efforts to
restore our sister mother earth

Amen.

(Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay. Mumbai, India.)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Instead of using wafers today you might like to
use bread baked by a family or local baker and
if possible a local wine. You can reflect on where
the wheat was grown and the grapes were grown
giving thanks for the bounty of creation.

SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As we prepare to embrace the challenges of our
lives and our world, let us ask for God's blessing.
May God bless us with wisdom to care for our
earth. **Amen!**

May God bless us with love to bring forth new life.
Amen!

In the name of God, the Maker of the whole world,
of Jesus, our new covenant, and of the Holy Spirit,
who opens eyes and hearts. **Amen!**

Go in peace and be witnesses to hope.

Thanks be to God! Amen!

6

FRANCISCAN
SPIRITUALITY**READINGS**

Job 1: 1, 2:1-10

Psalm 26: 1-12

Hebrews 1: 1-4, 2: 5-12

Mark 10: 2-16

COLLECT

Lord of the lost ones

You come to our broken world
and call us your own.

May our tables be graced
by your presence as guest
And our possessions freed
to serve the poor;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen.

adapted from *Prayers for an inclusive church*



INTRODUCTION

St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, is incredibly relevant today, especially within the context of Environmental Spirituality. The spiritual framework he has laid down about our environment and how to take care of it has some sort of deep connection with nature and is very much aligned with modern ecological concerns. St. Francis's life and teachings reflected his deep respect for the natural world around him. He considered everything in creation to represent God and frequently referred to them as his brothers or sisters. This understanding stands for an all-encompassing approach towards the environment thereby nurturing reverence and love for life. Through Brother Sun, Sister Moon, etc., he praised God in his famous "Canticle of the Sun", indicating an inherent bond between human beings and nature which is central to Environmental Spirituality.

St. Francis' path looks like a call to action against environmental degradation. His lifestyle challenges us to move away from anthropocentric views towards eco-centrism. If we do so, we will understand the moral obligation to act, because preserving nature is one of the ways we worship God. Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* (2015) drew on the saint's spirituality, addressing urgent environmental challenges and calling for an integral ecology with environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

In the face of today's climate crisis, the challenge of St Francis to simple living is vital to sustainable livelihoods. By adopting Franciscan principles, one can reduce consumption levels, cut down on wastage, and reduce the ecological footprint, thus enhancing the earth's overall health.

St. Francis's legacy facilitates interfaith dialogue about ecology, encouraging collective spiritual response towards humanity's environmental challenges. By integrating his principles, individuals and organisations can foster a culture of respect and care for the earth, aligning spiritual practices with environmental activism.

In conclusion, St. Francis' teachings on nature and simplicity have profound implications for Environmental Spirituality today (it will be important to explain what is meant by green spirituality and there are different interpretations). These are invaluable for the spiritual and ethical grounding for addressing ecological crises and fostering a harmonious and sustainable relationship with the natural world.

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SERMON NOTES

Bishop Vicentia Kgabe, Diocese of Lesotho with Rev Dr Twum Darko

JOB 1:1; 2: 1-10

In Job 1:1, Job is shown to be innocent and righteous by the author. This is a prelude to his challenges as it establishes his moral and spiritual integrity. In Job 2:1-10, Satan accuses Job of being religious only when things are going well for him. Although God allows Satan to harm him physically, Job's resilience in suffering proves him to be a genuinely believing man. St. Francis of Assisi's life mirrored the character traits of patience and humility evident in Job's adversity. Job, like Francis, was also born into a wealthy family but later rejected material wealth to identify with the poor and needy as God's servants. The concept of voluntary poverty, as represented by Francis, is akin to the notion of involuntary suffering associated with Job; both ideas demonstrate the renunciation of worldly goods in favour of gaining deeper spiritual understanding or insight from above. In hard times just like those faced by Job, St. Francis demonstrates his faithfulness towards God. St. Francis's example today, like that found within the story of Job, exhorts us to seek spiritual abundance through simplicity and strength during hard times. Both remind us that no matter what happens, we must remain faithful and merciful at heart, notwithstanding whatever comes our way in life,

while still being kind toward others. They teach us how we can live lowly lives full of sacrifice and hope, depending on divine help irrespective of social status and material prosperity, amidst harsh conditions where people are constantly judged by one another.

PSALM 26: 1-12

A prayer for vindication and an assertion of one's integrity before God is Psalm 26: 1-12. As commonly believed, the author of the Psalm, King David places his trust in God and denies himself deceitful paths to secure His mercy and redemption. The principles of this psalm are epitomised by St. Francis of Assisi. In his life, which is marked by simplicity, humility, and unwavering faith, we find a response to the call towards integrity before God made by the Psalmist. Saint Francis gave up all material possessions like those who associate with evil men and hypocrites (Psalm 26:4-5), such as what the psalmist did in verses six and seven when he asked God to declare him innocent based on his righteous living and sincere worship. Today, St. Francis calls us to lives characterised by realness, fairness or equity to others, and concern for the environment, including marginalized communities, due to the Psalms writer's love of godly existence.

By looking at our lives and considering his example, we can avoid being caught up in a web of deceitfulness and selfishness instead of embracing the way of truth, shedding light upon issues while showing kindness. St. Francis' legacy serves as a reminder that a life lived according to God's will requires an understanding that goes beyond praying alone but also extends into relating well with fellow human beings as well as taking good care of nature, thus fostering unity among people.

HEBREWS 1: 1-4, 2: 5-12

These verses express the superior nature of Jesus, as seen in his being God's last word. In His making everything that is, we are told about Jesus as the Son through whom God made the world. He radiates with God's glory, and he even sometimes becomes like Him. Furthermore, these passages are understood to mean that Jesus was created "lower than the angels" so that He could taste death on behalf of everyone and bring many children to glory. By suffering, He became perfect through what he suffered and led many to salvation, thus sanctifying them. Relating these passages, to the relevance of the life and teachings of St Francis, they epitomise St. Francis of Assisi as a great follower of Christ who demonstrated humility

and servant leadership that consists in being obedient to one another, just like Hebrews suggests it does. St. Francis' teachings emphasise living out the Gospel through acts of love, poverty, and simplicity, mirroring Christ's teachings and sacrificial love. In contemporary times, St. Francis's example urges Christians to live humbly and serve others; promoting peace and care for creation is his alignment with Christ's model portrayed in Hebrews, which continues until today.

MARK 10: 2-16

Marriage and children concerned Jesus greatly, as evidenced in Mark 10:2-16 and he was more concerned with the principles of the kingdom of God for which children are representatives. It starts with the Pharisees who sought to test Jesus by asking him about divorce, to which he replied that it was a sin against God's original plan of creating man. St. Francis of Assisi's life and teachings closely resemble this passage. Saint Francis lived a radical simple life in total submission to what he believed was God's purpose, therefore rejecting all worldliness and embracing pauperism. His poverty was not so much a rejection of wealth as it was an attempt at living out the values espoused by his faith: modesty, charity, and service. In addition, St. Francis' love for all creatures of God is reflected in Jesus' acceptance

of little children (Mark 10:13-16). For instance, he extended his compassion towards the weak, like animals and marginalised people, just as Christ told his followers to accept the kingdom with child-like simplicity. Mark 10:2-16 reminds believers about honouring relationships among men through the conscious practice of divine precepts while embracing humility and simplicity in their daily lives. This can be seen from Francis, who associated himself with poignancy and kindness.

SERMON ON ENVIRONMENTAL SPIRITUALITY: THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Environmental spirituality is a term associated with St. Francis of Assisi that we celebrate today. Born in 1181, Francis lived an ascetic life and deeply loved all creatures of the earth. In these modern times, his attitude towards affluence and the subsequent embracing of nature as a godly gift are still significant. For Francis, all animals and all living things were his brothers and sisters. Even Sister Death is honoured in his Canticle of the Sun, which shows how much he adored Mother Nature. In an era when the world is grappling with environmental catastrophe, we can look to Francis's teachings for ways to live peacefully alongside nature. His actions urge us to honour and safeguard our world by embracing eco-



Bishop Vicentia at the ACEN stall at Lambeth

friendly lives.

We begin our reflections with Job in today's first reading who did not forsake his faith even in times of suffering (Job 1:1, 2:1-10). Just as Job did, Francis had to undergo trials and sold all his wealth to stay among the poor. Hebrews 1:1-4 2:5-12 captures Christ's example of self-abasement that mirrors St. Francis' modesty. In Mark 10:2-16, Jesus accepted little children as an embodiment of purity and openness to God, as seen in the life of St. Francis.

St Francis' teachings are still relevant today especially when it comes to environmental justice and sustainability, he is called the patron saint of ecology and was known for his deep love for nature, where he saw every creature as his brothers and sisters. There have been severe ecological crises on this planet, such as global warming



Bishop Vicentia blessing cattle in Lesotho

and desertification rates, which have increased while there is a rapid loss of species diversity within society. St Francis leads us to respect and care for God's creation by fostering acceptable behaviours that support sustainable living.

God calls us to live in harmony with creation as did St. Francis,

act justly towards one another and love mercy (Micah 6:8). We need to think about how we consume too much stuff, use the environment badly, and relate with others around us. He lived simply by sharing food, clothes, and shelter among other less fortunate people in their life like those living on the streets or being sick at home without any

money left after giving everything away except what seemed necessary to maintain health until death came along (Lea et al., 1997). What does simplicity and sustainability mean to us today? How can we extend the love of Christ to our neighbours or others in the world amid such conditions?

Let us, therefore embrace simplicity, practice sustainability, advocate for justice, and cultivate a deep connection with God, others, and the world around us. In the spirit of St. Francis, renew our commitment to stewardship of creation, for it has a divine presence within it through honouring St Francis today, lovingly nurturing the earth, and always becoming instruments of peace and caretakers of creation. Amen.

Vicentia Refiloe Kgabe is the Diocesan Bishop of Lesotho. Prior to becoming a Bishop, she worked as Rector and Principal of the College of Transfiguration Theological College for seven years. She currently serves as a Research Fellow at the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice. She is the Bishop Protector of the Third Order of St. Francis, African Province.

Rev. Fr. Prof. Michael Twum-Darko, an ordained Anglican priest since 1997, is the first Black African Minister General of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis and oversees 3680 members worldwide and serves as Priest-in-charge at Church of the Holy Redeemer, Cape Town.

LITURGY: FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

GATHERING

THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN AND SISTER MOON - ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
all praise is Yours, all glory, all honor and all
blessings. To you alone, Most High, do they
belong, and no mortal lips are worthy to
pronounce Your Name.

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through
whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and
radiant with great splendor, of You Most High, he
bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars, in the heavens you have made them
bright, precious and fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind
and Air, and fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water, so
useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night, and he is
beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother
Earth who sustains and governs us, producing
varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praise be You my Lord through those who grant
pardon for love of You and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace, by You
Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no one living can escape. Blessed are

they She finds doing Your Will. No second death
can do them harm. Praise and bless my Lord and
give Him thanks, and serve Him with great humility.

(St. Francis of Assisi)

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We are not alone; we live in God's world.
We believe in God: who has created and is
creating,
who works in others and us through the Spirit.
We trust in the Creator.

We are called to be,
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and to resist injustice,
to seek out models for hope and peace.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.
We are not alone.

(United church of Canada – a new Creed)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Merciful God and Creator of all,
We praise You for the gift of the earth, home to so
many forms of life. The common home of peoples,
cultures, and species.

We have made it an unjust place where some
consume and pollute more than others, and the
poorest face the greatest impacts of climate
change.

Therefore, we ask You to help us achieve climate
and ecological justice so that no one takes for

themselves what belongs to all,
that we may share the world's goods equitably,
and live simply so that we may bear witness that
the earth is the sister and mother of all.

Help us to respect its rhythms of regeneration,
so that it may sustain all living beings
both in the present and for future generations.
Amen.

(Br Daniel Castellanos Velasco, Mexico)

SHARING OF THE PEACE

Lord, make us instruments of your peace,
where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light; and
where there is sadness, joy.
And may the Peace of the Lord....

Based on prayer of Saint Francis

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Today we remember that we worship with the
whole choir of creation, encourage children to
bring their soft animal toys, pictures of animals and
lay them around the altar. Remember to also have
pictures of endangered species and animals that
are kept in cruel conditions for food. We should
care as much for those animals as we do for our
beloved pets. They feel the same pain and love as
our beloved pets.

SENDING OUT BLESSING

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

May God bless you with anger

at injustice, oppression,
and exploitation of people,
so that you may work for
justice, freedom and peace.

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

And may God bless you
with enough foolishness
to believe that you can
make a difference in the world,
so that you can do
what others claim cannot be done,
to bring justice and kindness
to all our children and the poor.

(A Franciscan blessing by Sister Ruth Marlene Fox)

LITURGICAL STORY

One of the most amazing stories about St. Francis
of Assisi's spirituality was his experience with
the wolf of Gubbio. A savage wolf terrorised the
town of Gubbio by killing animals and people. The
community was terrified into inaction. Being an
animal lover, St. Francis could not stand idle. He
went on a quest to locate the notorious predator in
the forest. Rather than running or fighting, Francis
greeted it tenderly when he met.

He made a sign of blessing himself and spoke
gently to the animal, calling it "my little brother".
Surprisingly, the agitated wolf calmed down as if it
was listening to a human being's voice, conserving
its energy for future use against this lifeless enemy
audience. The first thing he did was name it after
him: he called it "Brother Wolf" when everybody
thought that in moments, they would be eaten
by them but eventually turned out to be wrong
because instead, they would be fed from their bare
hands without any fear. St. Francis and Gubbio's

wolf tale teaches humanity how to settle disputes peacefully irrespective of their seriousness or magnitude, hence becoming timeless fairy tales that never lose relevance to anyone who reads them.

The story instils in us that even those conflicts which are very deep cannot get out of hand if we have understanding, love and respect for each other. Therefore, the account of St. Francois and Gubbio Wolf reminds us of how we should live together without war between nations and within nations in one global village characterised by divisions and tensions we seem unable to overcome. St. Francis and the Wolf still inspires us today to seek peaceable methods or means towards resolving issues like these, thereby focusing upon our common humanity amidst such significant historical disparities ever brought about by our ancestors; but now mostly remembered through dogmas regarding religiosity from whatever culture/background there may happen across globe.

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- Videos: <https://www.anglicanfranciscans.org/index.php/resources/2023-joint-sessions-of-the-chapters-of-the-1st-3rd-order>

BLESSING OF PETS

Blessed are you, Lord God,
maker of all living creatures.

You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air,
and animals on the land.

You inspired St. Francis to call all of them his
brothers and sisters.

We ask you to bless this pet.

By the power of your love,
enable it to live according to your plan.

May we always praise you
for all your beauty in creation.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
in all your creatures! Amen.

Consider donating pet food or used blankets and towels to the local animal shelter around this time of the year. The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi provides an opportunity to teach children about endangered or abused animals and what we can do to help.





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



**SEASON OF
CREATION**
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Our beloved Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya was truly great in the kingdom of God. The first woman Anglican 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 BBC's 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, collected litter and promoted reforestation and biodiversity conservation. The Diocese won an award for two years as Environmental Champion from the Minister of the Environment of Eswatini.

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." . . .

When she was already in hospital a prayer that she wrote was sent out by the Lambeth Conference. She wrote:

"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 of 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.

A tribute to the late Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya - Diocese of Swaziland, Eswatini

Mash, R
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