

SEASON OF CREATION : CREATION TIME: CREATIONTIDE



Living Water
Season of Creation 2026

Immersion in Living Water

EZEKIEL 47:9, 12

These **Revised Common Lectionary** resources Notes , Worship material, sermon suggestions and music suggestions are offered through EcoCongregation Scotland, as participation in the global churches observance of the Season, from 1st September to 4th October, and Sundays close or included.

Any questions, or for help with use: chaplain@ecocongregationscotland.org

WEEK 2

Overview

[Exodus 14] You can go with the joy of the vulnerable and oppressed, or be horrified with the company of the oppressors, that Nature - not unexpectedly - rebounds on communities of injustice, and such action is seen in this Bible book as expressing God's justified decisiveness.

Disaster 'at the hands of nature' **[Psalm 114]** is indiscriminate, though the Red Sea story is exceptional to current experience, in that the most-suffering community got away... by taking notice of the signs they were given. The triumphant song of Miriam **[Exodus 15]** is that of a woman (and her community) freed from unjust suffering. Under what circumstances would a Christian church share such rejoicing at the suffering of enemies? Joseph, [Gen 50] the gifted survivor, (though also Pharaoh's enslaver, in the meantime, (Gen 47:35) of the Egyptian people) finds he is liberated by faith and love to put distance between his own hurt and the common good. Where do we find such 'maturity' in our own lives? Paul **[Rom 14]** in a clearly opinionated fashion introduces the challenge of finding common purpose in a community of diverse lifestyles: difference need not imply conflict or incompatibility. And the clear global call to "eat less meat" [<https://unfccc.int/blog/we-need-to-talk-about-meat>] is a stimulating starting-point. **Matthew 18** continues guidance on the moral quality of a church and reflection - apposite for every community in the Global North- on what our nations may have 'got away with' at the expense of 'loss and damage' to our global neighbours, on whose graciousness we will increasingly find we rely.

Rev Jenny Adams, Chair of EcoCongregation Scotland and Healthcare Chaplain,
contributes notes for Romans and Matthew

Special note: TWO Exodus readings are offered in the lectionary. You may wish to consider if or how to include them as complementary. OR choose just one.

Bookmarked links:

[Exodus 14:19-31](#)
[Exodus 15:1b-11,20-21](#)
[Psalms 114](#)
[Genesis 50:15-21](#)
[Psalms 103:\(1-7\), 8-13](#)
[Romans 14:1-12](#)
[Matthew 18:21-35](#)

Worship material

Sermon suggestion.

Exodus 14:19-31

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

ECS STAFF Exodus 14:19-31 (note Exodus 15, offered as "response")

A thrilling, and terrifying passage, with God portrayed as in direct lordship over and control of the elements. And/or the elements in willing collaboration with the God of Justice. The whole narrative of the Plagues and the Exodus brutally affirms the connection we finally once more see so clearly: of human injustice and environmental disruption.

But there's the other side of the coin: the remedy and intervention God chooses involves those who hear God's word, who act and play their part. Moses' outstretched (created) hand is as vital to the event as the waters who overwhelm the Egyptians.

Then, though we're also left with fear and trust, but not yet love, Creation, working with God, is seen to hold injustice to account. Why should we expect it to be otherwise?

It should be difficult to read the Old Testament and mentally keep separate the personalities of natural forces and their collaboration with God in the quest for justice. In the drama of this defining story, injustice and oppression makes humans (in this case, Egyptians) enemies of the Earth on whom we depend. Those whose community exists by oppression suffer; those who are oppressed escape.

The outcome - in terms of those who suffer -, differs from our own recent experience, of the general absence of that 'climate justice' that our committed protesters of all generations demand 'now'.

Although the science of attribution - from emissions to disaster - has greatly advanced, to the point at least, that we know that 'new oil' will have real victims, polluters still seldom pay for the predicament of the poor. Indeed, we note that the USA has this year acted to remove that legal possibility. Aid agencies are meanwhile unanimous in demanding that responsibility for environmental damage - for the sin of ecocide, which harms all life - should be brought home to those who engage in it.

We might wonder at the parting idea of the "fear" of God, since "perfect love drives out fear" 1 John 4:1. Nonetheless, it's clear that the intent of the ancient writer is positive: this is a respectful, healthy "fear" that inspires the dignity of worship, rather than disables with demeaning grovelling.

How does that feel? Will it influence your own prayer, preaching, and decisions in daily life?

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The Response: Exodus 15:1b-11,20-21

"I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power— your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy.

In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders?" Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

ECS STAFF Exodus 15:1b-11,20-21

Triumph, of a kind, in the mouth of a woman leader, prophet and judge. Triumph over the world's mightiest army. Just let that sink in for a while. The joy is no less that the triumph is God's.

Which is why Christian interpretation, in the light of the one who commanded prayer for enemies, and that we strive to "do good to those who hate you" has to go carefully with any and every text that characterises God as a "warrior".

This Psalm within Exodus is certainly, also, that unlovely and unChristian thing, a song of gloating over enemies - though also and primarily a song of joy at survival despite overwhelming odds, because of the solidarity of God.

The 'Magnificat' - the Song of Mary (Miriam's namesake?) [Luke 1:46-55] looks to the pulling down of the mighty from their thrones, and the poor being filled whilst the rich go empty away.

Whatever else, such texts must not be violated and weaponised by the tongues of oppressive empires.

"The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name," can perhaps be crowbarred into the offensive "warrior ethos" and "modern-day crusade" ideology promoted to support the war begun by the USA against Iran. But the song is sung in Scripture by women who have escaped both slavery and overwhelming military force.

It's not God's beloved, but the enemy of the friends of God is given voice in verse 9:

"The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'"

There's such a huge difference between the songs of triumph sung by imperial armies of overwhelming strength, taking credit for crushing and humiliating their victims in place of God's supposed judgement, and this, the gleeful celebration of liberation, with folk instruments like the tambourine, given for the oppressed people to tap into - and, once more, of Creation - mightily- on the side of justice, in solidarity with the poor.

As a final random thought: the only "army" I've ever seen with tambourines is the Salvation Army: committed above all to the making of peace.

<https://www.salvationist.org.uk/faith/social-justice-peacemaking/positional-statements/social-justice-peacemaking/peacemaking>

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Psalm 114

Hallelujah! When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech, Judah became God's sanctuary and Israel his dominion. The sea beheld it and fled; Jordan turned and went back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like young sheep. What ailed you, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back? You mountains, that you skipped like rams? you little hills like young sheep? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, Who turned the hard rock into a pool of water and flint-stone into a flowing spring.

ECS STAFF Psalm 114

A poem in which the awe-inspiring personalities of land-and-seascape are addressed without awe, from the perspective of God whose transforming power is sovereign over all, as evidenced by the Exodus narrative.

Does it make sense to 'look down' on communities and personalities of Earth because we feel blessed by God? Or are we worried God might be offended by our appreciation of what God has so wonderfully made?

Is there complacency here, and the assumption that, without further ado, we're the ones who can look on from a safe distance? If mountains and seas "fear" God, are we not rather in solidarity with them, called to act justly?

This Psalmist is God's 'number one fan' - but perhaps also nervous and fearful: for, somewhat disrespectfully, the mighty community of Creation is addressed with national pride: hitching a lift on the power of Israel's 'parochial' relationship with a universal God. With the boast that 'God is on our side' comes the question: are we on-side with the will of God for justice in all Creation?

There's something here of the specific polemic against other faiths who worshipped the power of 'creation rather than the creator', [cf Romans 1:25] which may be seized on as a last remaining defence against having to take seriously the connection between environmental crisis and human injustice. That connection made sense to prophets like Jeremiah... and Isaiah, by whom the water cycle and the Word of God are mentioned so closely [Isaiah 55:10]. And is the danger for us not far more, that we insult God by disregarding God's Creation?

To worship God never consistently implies despising what God creates and sustains. It's right to experience awe, wonder and love for landscapes and for fellow creatures who, by the gift of God, share our global habitat. Sharing also, that "fear" which verse 7 imputes to Earth's self.

Perhaps we need to move on, though, from the human-supremacy of the illusion that, uniquely amongst all created beings, only humans can choose to rebel or be so very out of place that God's intervention is called for.

Jesus' calming of the wind and waves - in person, and face-to-face - suggests something other than an impersonal, and simplistically innocent nature, to be left alone at all costs: the traditional doctrines about the disordered nature of Nature as we encounter "it" (!!!) are not necessarily in conflict with what God "saw was good". [cf Genesis 1]

And yet, to that we now have to add, in climate crisis more than ever, God's word to humanity: 'Cursed is the Earth because of you'. [cf Genesis 3:17] ..and perhaps, as a follow-up question: "So what are you going to do about it?"

We have more to learn about God from the observable facts of our unity and identity with a good-but-damaged Creation, than the twisted illusion of our separation and superiority. How can we seek the unified blessing and healing of humanity and therefore of Creation of which we are not other?

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Genesis 50:15-21

Realising that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

ECS STAFF: Genesis 50:15-21

On the surface, this concluding story of the Joseph narrative seems more exclusively about human-human interaction than other Lectionary passages this Season, but it's valuable as a nuanced presentation of forgiveness as a practical win-win outcome rather than a grudging and costly one, acknowledging greater purposes than might preoccupy us, such as the preservation from hunger of "a numerous people".

In climate crisis, there's much to forgive. Because it's a tragedy that should have been halted as soon as we knew it was coming, or at least mitigated by a change of direction. The Joseph 'epic' has a strong strand of 'reading the signs' of climate threat, leading to decisive action. Knowledge to act on is presented as a gift from God - without discrimination against the 'heathen' Egyptians. The difference is in the causes of the famine: 'mysterious' in God's purpose in the Genesis narrative, and therefore of a different character from the additional, 'supra-natural' impacts of today.

But forgiveness is always in the hands of those who have been wronged. They are blessed with the call to rise to such dignity. A call which we wonder if Joseph is kicking against when he demands his young brother be sent as hostage. Perhaps, in his tears, he realises the forgiveness he requires for such spitefulness.

Reconciliation, alongside genuine change, does not waste time with recriminations, although responsibility does not thereby evaporate. Jesus' maxim: 'From whom much is given, much will be required [Luke 12:48] can vary in its application.

Much has been taken from Joseph's (evil)brothers.

Even in mainland Europe, the USA and Australia, the recent exacerbation of nature's extremes has taken livelihood and homes from many.

Then, too, we could consider the concept of 'Loss and Damage' : the recognition of the harm - now beyond reasonable doubt - caused by polluters of the Global North to the people, nations and ecosystems which have done least damage to the balance of the climate.

Now enjoying wealth and privilege, it's relatively easy for Joseph to step back and acknowledge God's guiding hand in all that has happened. If, at this end of the story, we admire the wise graciousness he displays, then any goodwill at all that we may encounter in sisters and brothers from (amongst others) Pacific communities facing salt-water inundation should command our highest esteem.

We could also approach this by considering our relationship and friendship as a human species with the Earth with whom, within our lifetimes, we have arguably been at war, in the midst of which we have never ceased to be dependent on "Nature" for food, air, water and more.

Of course when the 'Blame Game' is the only game in town, this will be toxic for all concerned. The poor blamed for having children, wildlife for occupying their God-given habitat, indigenous peoples for holding sacred the ancestral homelands which block access to lucrative mineral resources. Or even lands for wind farms. But that's what we'll all be "condemned to" if responsibility is not owned.

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Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all your sins and heals all your infirmities; He redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness; He satisfies you with good things, and your youth is renewed like an eagle's. The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed. He made his ways known to Moses and his works to the children of Israel. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness. He will not always accuse us, nor will he keep his anger for ever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness. For as the heavens/skies are high above the earth, so is his mercy great upon those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us. As a father cares for his children, so does the Lord care for those who fear him.

ECS STAFF: Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13

Selected verses from another Psalm of encouragement by the counting of blessings, calling on the personalities of the whole of Creation, and calling on the wholeness of our entire created being to 'bless God's holy Name'. We should note that the selection made by the compilers of the Lectionary makes the Psalm look more human-focussed, whereas taken as a whole, it celebrates humanity in the context of wider Creation.

"all that is within me, bless his holy Name" [v1]

Is there any aspect of your existence identity or behaviour that this excludes? What do you share with fellow creatures - down to the DNA of your cells, your dependence on the oxygen from plants and the sun? How is this acknowledged in your life of faith? Who is part of this 'choir'? Is it for you to exclude? We are special, valuable and loved because we are part of the whole. (And this is what God in Christ chooses to share, and thereby to bless.)

Indeed, this psalm fearlessly adopts inclusiveness as a strategy for praise. It's one of the many Bible texts that does not support the mythology of some twentieth century commentaries that God and the personalities of Creation are necessarily at odds.

God's justice is not parochial, partisan, or restricted just to us. And therein lies the greatness ... though 'Moses and the children of Israel' received a special gift worthy of mention, thus diversity is also affirmed. To be who you are praises God, rather than pursuing the bland and uniform, minimising your God-given distinctiveness.

Nonetheless, to be oppressed, is to be the object of God's particular concern and action, irrespective of national identity. Or perhaps of species? Can a river be oppressed? [See link below] What do you think of the granting of legal rights to rivers, glaciers etc?

The singer is most exuberant of all about the things they have not earned or deserved, being set free to pursue a good life.

And yet this extract concludes with a mention of fear. Not the fear of a captive for their jailer - rather a respectful awareness that warnings are to be heeded. Just as a loving parent would warn their offspring.

What else are the reports and projections of climate scientists, but God's warnings through the community of Creation? The signs of our times, in the seas, skies and soil, that we do well both to read and to heed?

<https://www.rightsofrivers.org/>

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Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God."

So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

**Romans 14:1-12 . Rev Jenny Adams, Chair of Eco Congregation
Scotland and Healthcare Chaplain.**

This passage begins considering how or whether we judge others when they make different choices from us. Paul's examples from religious observance are not dissimilar to choices facing us in ethically responding to the climate and nature emergencies. I think this can challenge "what-about-ery."

Often people speaking out for justice and action for all of creation will be faced with "what about" questions: e.g. "You say you're green, but what about your diet/car/house/wealth?" At an individual level, do we judge others, looking for imperfections that we can label "hypocrisy," as we feel it gives us permission to ignore an uncomfortable message?

What-about-ery is also a regular global excuse for inaction. "What about China/USA and their power stations/wars?" At a communal level, do we judge others so we can deem our contributions insignificant and so avoid acting?

Paul's words challenge us not to judge others in order to let ourselves off the hook. They also remind us of the need for kindness and understanding in considering choices. Every person's circumstances are unique, with different needs and constraints affecting our lives, including

our environmental impact. Too many people do not have affordable access to good food or safe, reliable public transport. Our economy still measures/judges progress in terms of financial spend, with pressure to conform and consume (rather than refuse and reduce). We can feel and express God's kindness and God's accommodation for what is possible for each of us.

When we look with compassion at the choices we have and the changes societies need to make, what then is our measure? Paul suggests we do things in honour of God, giving thanks to God, living and dying to God, accountable to God. We do so in a life known and lived by Jesus, who knows injustice and death within life's fullness. We do so in God's creation where our siblings are human and more, where we should honour plants, animals, rocks, rivers, seas, skies, moon and sun (see the example of St. Francis).

Such accountability is the opposite of what-about-ery. We are each accountable for our part in living with love. Yet that is not an individualised accountability - we are invited to love by and with God who is love for all creation (including us). So, we are accountable for loving others and ourselves within the shared life of creation. Such love frequently requires unjust systems and policies to be challenged – as Cornel West says, "Justice is what love looks like in public."

As we live out God's love as best we can, accountable to God, we may find ourselves judged harshly by others, sometimes because we are imperfectly modelling new possibilities that challenge an unkind and unjust status quo. As we fall short, we may judge ourselves harshly. Can we then remember the understanding, compassion and example of the God to whom we are accountable?

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Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Matt 18: 21-35 Rev Jenny Adams, Jenny Adams, Chair of EcoCongregation Scotland and Healthcare Chaplain.

Here are a few approaches to reading this passage through a lens of the climate and nature emergencies.

When we harm the rest of the community of creation, how often has the rest of creation seemed to forgive us? With astonishing resilience, creation withstands so much – oceans absorb excess heat, ocean currents still bring warmth to the UK, species hang on despite habitat destruction, and plants and animals survive breeding for human use. However, some damage is irretrievable, such as species extinctions, and we are approaching tipping points (e.g. glaciers, permafrost, ocean currents, rainforests) which may be beyond recovery.

Debt justice and climate justice are intertwined. Climate emergencies cause huge damage, and often governments are forced to borrow money to recover. Debt repayments mean that governments are not able to invest to adapt for the future or mitigate against changes that have already occurred. Christian Aid has a Restore campaign, encompassing Debt Justice and Climate Justice: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign> This includes a petition to the UK Government, asking for UK law to be changed to prevent private companies from profiting from vulnerable countries' debts, enabling governments to spend more on their own communities. There is more information about such profiteering from others' debts at <https://debtjustice.org.uk/campaigns/stop-the-debt-vultures>

There is nothing in this story about how either slave got into debt. We may wonder about whether they were having to borrow due to circumstances and systems beyond their control, and the power

dynamics that were at work. Debt campaigners make clear distinctions between debt forgiveness and the cancellation of unjust debt – what might we find behind Jesus’ story? Beyond cancellation there is also the biblical concept of jubilee (see Leviticus 25) which does not just cancel debt but restores relationships and resources for all. In Scotland and the UK much of our wealth comes from centuries of exploitation of other nations, people and the rest of creation, which challenges us to consider debts we owe to others. An example of acknowledging some debts owed and reparative action required can be found in the Church of Scotland’s 2026 apology for its historical relationships with chattel slavery : <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/church-grieved-beyond-telling-in-apology-for-historical-links-with-slavery>

Within Jesus’ story, it is very interesting to consider the other slaves. They see an injustice taking place, when the first slave has the second thrown into prison with no understanding or patience. They are greatly distressed, but do not rest in their distress – they turn towards the situation and take what action they can by reporting what they have witnessed to the lord who holds power. There is a powerful example for us, in an era when we are not short of stories (local, national and international) of the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss – while it may be easier to turn away, avoiding arguments and necessary changes, love asks us to speak up and take action, playing our part in bringing the kingdom of God closer.

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SERMON SUGGESTION WEEK 2

“Only Natural Ingredients!”

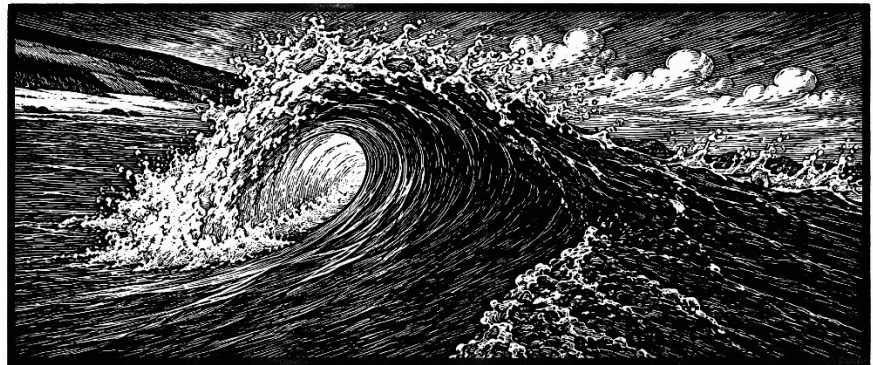


Image: original DJMC photo from the sea at Lona, digitally filtered.

Exodus 14 + Exodus 15

The best place to reflect on the crossing of the red sea may be one of our tidal causeways. Where we can walk on a 'dry land' which at high tide is the sea bed. Like Lindisfarne or Oronsay.

You can get cut off. On the causeway to Lindisfarne, it's not pilgrims on foot who get stranded, but those suffering the "Egypt syndrome" of trust in their "chariots". (cars)

Active travel, on foot, on a bike, is treading lightly, respecting our direct connection with the holy Ground of God's Earth. This goes with respect for justice.

Praise of the "God of all Creation"- invoked whenever Christians share Holy Communion/ Eucharist, belongs, historically in the same breath as love of the God of justice; seen in the "dividing of the waters".

It's a recycled Creation Story, enhanced by emphasis on liberation; God as a warrior against the futility of human warfare.

The Red Sea story is thrilling, and terrifying, with the God of Justice leading the charge of the elements, who willingly fight against war and oppression.

The triumph dance of Miriam and her liberated women needs to be cherished in context, like the rejoicing of Mary that the birth of her child leads to the pulling down of the mighty from their thrones. It's the song of slaves liberated, not of armies of conquest.

Walking across these tidal stretches, we're reminded we exist at the mercy of the Earth on whom humanity chooses to wage war. War in which so many species and human communities become expendable collateral damage. As if the tide that went out will never turn.

Today, we see Creation not just groaning, but desperately fighting back, with the difference in Exodus, that it's the worst are hit first. From the Plagues to the Red Sea, Exodus brutally affirms the unity of human injustice and environmental injury.

The remedy and intervention, which God chooses, involves powerless and insignificant people who hear God's word, who act and play their part. Moses' outstretched hand is as vital to the event as the waters who overwhelm the Egyptians. The small things make the difference, by the grace of this 'God of all Creation'. So that Creation, working with God holds injustice to account. Why should we expect it to be otherwise?

Pope Leo has re-emphasised that caring for creation is "an expression of **humanity** as well as solidarity." This is who we're meant to be. People who also," read the signs".

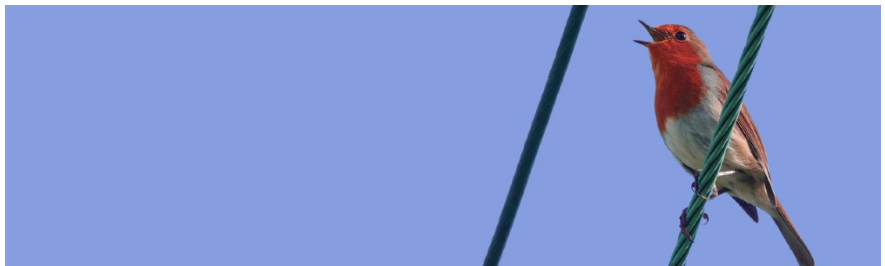
Of such things I was reminded at the Council for World Mission Assembly in American Samoa, where locals shared the prelude to the Tsunami. First of all, the animals and birds vanished inland, then the sea rapidly receded, before returning with devastating force.

Tsunami readiness is now taught in their schools: "if the sea recedes, head for the hills". 'Read the signs', as Jesus said. Let the creatures be our teachers.

We ourselves are Creation; and that connection is integral to what it means to be human at all. Sisters and brothers in Christ, particularly those from indigenous communities, find meaning in their Christian faith as creatures amongst creatures, albeit, with a special commission to serve and protect, and yes, sometimes decisively to intervene, with beneficial outcome for life as a whole in the life of the world, to the glory of God.

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WORSHIP MATERIAL



Gathering prayer / Call to worship

Option 1:

The song for the downtrodden
is sung by the Soil

The song for survivors
is sung by the Sea

The birds of the heavens:
their song fills the sky

And God's blessing 's bequeathed to the creatures excluded
for they shall inherit the Earth

Option 2:

Beloved and liberating God
breaking chains, planting seeds
parting seas, and toppling tyrants
so that those who cried out from oppression
and from lives diminished and impoverished
might grow into the fullness and freedom
which is proper to those who worship you;

So we join in the praise
of all who so robustly serve you:
the seas and seasons;
dry land and forests
yes, even predators and prey
in that balance which paints hills green;
with the evening and morning,
who, together make up
this Good New Day

Confession / Repentance

Beloved and liberating God;
to praise and worship you,
and to extol your love and compassion
is also to acknowledge
our most urgent, constant need
to reflect, and then again,

on choices and customs,
costs and purchases,
attitudes and scorn;
on speech and action,
and even on silence and disinterest
which carry us away in collusion
with injustice which injures the Earth.

The crises that surround us, it is true
may be beyond what we can remedy alone;
so that fear and despair constrain
what yet our hands can change;
our lips correct.
the harm we're part of here and now.

For the call of Christ has not diminished:
to change minds for each new day;
let go of harm;
and seek Good News
To hear Christ's call:
"Those who come to me, I do not turn away.

Christ forgives.

As forgiven people, and those on the way, so we pray
the Way he taught us.

Lord's Prayer/Our Father

Thanksgiving / Gratitude

cf 1 Thessalonians 5:18 "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
'Hallelujah anyway' - the spiritual defiance of the oppressed.

God who strengthens the enslaved
with the defiance of gratitude
for all which escapes the hands of oppressors

With Christ, we give thanks for all that's hidden
from those in charge,
but given to the vulnerable.

We thank you for all that it's easy to love:
the sunshine, the birdsong, the puffins, the dolphins
good food and drink,
for new life, and new hope,
and the church at their best

We thank you for what you love anyway, because you see the good in it:
midges and wasps; winter and fire;
the ending of lives, like the leaves of autumn

when their time has come;
yes, for duties and obligations that shape our lives.

We thank you together, when gratitude's hard on our own.

And we thank you alone, when community's hurting too much.

We thank you... for the difference thanks makes;

And dear God for Christ, your own thanksgiving of yourself.

Thank-you. Hallelujah, AMEN.

Prayer for others / Intercession

Things are changing so fast that particular pressing concerns cannot be anticipated. Thus we offer once more this framework, which can see us through the Season of Creation, and give continuity.

Let us pray with Christ:

God, who makes us with the Earth
God, who gives us to the world
God; God-with us in our struggles:

Hear us, stand with fears and needs

And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.

For the world

What have we heard, in the news this week?
Who is in need and who should give thanks?
How far have we got, and where have we stumbled?

And what seems completely beyond us?
Listen for Earth's voice: what is it saying?
We remember our neighbours, of whatever species
We pray for our enemies, and those we fear.
And pray for peace throughout Creation.

Hear us, stand with fears and needs

And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.

For the church

Give thanks for the faithfulness, undergirding prayer.

Be open about continuing divisions, including local ones.
Look to a greater integration of environmental concern in our life and work.
And seek openness to the joy of deeper fellowship with all Creation

Hear us, stand with fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.

For ourselves

In silence: bring to God what no one else need hear: not for God to 'hear'
but to remind ourselves that God knows and understands.

Pray for those we pray with, acknowledging and respecting
what they cannot share with us.

Look for support and perseverance,
and some sustaining sign when we get things right.

Pray for 'impatience' - not simply to accept 'the way things are'
And pray for peace in our heart, and the fuller joys of Christ.

Hear us, stand with fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.
AMEN

Blessing / Closing prayer

Closing week 2

Praise God for our differences
Heal our divisions!

Praise God for our freedoms
Guide our bold choices!

Join Earth's many voices
for justice, for love!

OR

May the God whose names are many
but whose nature is constant,
the One whose story is complex,
but whose purpose is clear,
enable you/us to deepen in love,
develop in understanding,
and be determined in action

that you/we and the world you/we inhabit

can move ever nearer
to that which God intends.

Thus enfolded and equipped for lives of love and justice
may God, Father Son and Spirit [God, Beloved. Wild Wind]
bless us through all that lies ahead, to the End of the Age AMEN

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MUSIC: 5 Suggestions

- 1) **We warmly commend** the short Creation section, **153-165** in the supplementary '**God Welcomes All**', - as well as **GWA 147**, perhaps as a challenge for a choir.
- 2) **We suggest great caution** with what may be thought of as specific 'creation' hymns written in the late twentieth century without a consciousness of the crisis of nature and climate. Simply for a hymn to **mention** creation or fellow creatures may not help deepen our spiritual understanding for this time of crisis. look for relatedness to the Earth and fellow creatures as co-worshippers with God's people.
- 3) **Iain McLarty and Trinity College** created a resource of music recommendations : "[Songs for Sunday](#)"
- 4) **CH4**
 - for Exodus 14 and 15, try: **167, 414, 709**
 - for Genesis 50: **721**
 - for Romans 14: **524**,
 - for Matthew 18 **528, 393, 485, 486**
- 238, 243, 244 198, 501** also raise good points for justice and praise.
- 5) New words - coming soon!

