

## **Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost– Year B**

**Sunday 22 September 2024**

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank EcoCongregation Scotland for their thoughts on the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost and throughout this season of Creation Time.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the Sanctuary First website:  
<https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship>

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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## Revised Common Lectionary material

Weekly worship material throughout Creation Time is hosted on the EcoCongregation Scotland website and can be found, along with other resources for the season at [EcoCongregation Scotland](https://www.ecocongregation.org.uk).

## Introduction

Creation Time has come of age.

Born of ecumenism 35 years ago, following an initiative from the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, the Season, and a special celebration at its opening, now has backing from the World Council of Churches, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Anglican Communion, Lutheran World Federation, Laudato Si' Movement, Middle East Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, Christian Aid, and other partners. The steering committee puts it like this:

**“We know that with the current climate crisis accelerating ecological instability, millions of species including the human family are at risk and the only way forward must be united.”**

A major conference was held in St Francis' hometown of Assisi this year, to look at ways of embedding prayer with Creation into the regular practice of churches, rather than as an occasional opt-in, which can be ignored as if this were not 'the real business' of the Church.

Having attended the conference, EcoChaplain Rev David Coleman, of EcoCongregation Scotland, who curates these resources for Scotland, begs lovingly to disagree with anyone who might imagine that the mainstream prayer and mission of the churches should be other than 'green'. We also eagerly encourage your local church to work with others during the Season.

The globally shared context of urgent and accelerating threat from the Crisis of Nature and Climate – of which Scotland has experienced some hints in the exceptional storm season of last winter, and the torrential rains of the spring – is prompting churches around the world to attend to the omission in their official calendars, and adopt, according to their local and particular church customs, a 'season' of prayerful and active engagement with our relationship with the Earth and fellow creatures.

This runs from 1st September, which is the Orthodox ‘anniversary of God’s Creation of the World’, to the Feast of St Francis, whose emphasis on partnership *with*, rather than exploitation *of* our kin in Creation, has given renewed energy and authority to mainstream concern that Christianity should integrally involve care and prayer for and with a living Creation full of fellow stakeholders in God’s Rainbow Covenant between God and the Earth [cf Gen 9]. Just as Jesus refused the temptation to leap off the Temple pinnacle, when assured, ‘God will save you’, there is no cause in faith for complacency, but rather for attention to the ‘signs’ in the skies and soil; [cf Matt 16:3]; for learning from the birds, the trees, and the despised wisdom of indigenous peoples [cf Matt 6:26, Luke 21:29, Job 12:1-10].

We know the changes experienced by ourselves and global neighbours are not ‘natural’, but in their current form, the clear result of knowing and chosen injustice.

Those who pollute least are usually the hardest hit, and the widespread and responsible attention, in many churches, to the legacies of slavery, illuminates for us many of the strategies which delay an ‘ecological conversion’.

Jesus’ first call was for just such a ‘change of mind’ [‘repentance’]. We hope the resources we have provided and linked to will encourage the deepening of faith and the enjoyment of the change of mind Creation is crying out to see in the liberation of God’s children [cf Global SOC theme, Romans 19-24].

## Themes for this week

For the full resources for this week visit EcoCongregation Scotland’s website:

<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creation-2024/>

### Summary

- [Proverbs 31:10-31](#) The ‘capable wife’ is someone whose practicality certainly extends to the necessary negotiation with climate and the environment.
- [Psalm 1](#) compares wise and righteous folk to trees planted by streams of water: what a lovely and profound natural image!
- [Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1, 12-22](#) The option of reading from this apocryphal book encourages a godly community to stand up for the wisdom of justice and God’s love and favour for the poor, and for Creation.

- [Jeremiah 11:18-20](#) Perhaps drawing from the same source as Psalm 1, Jeremiah squirms and cries out when opponents scheme to “destroy the tree with its fruit”, in a passage which has been traditionally linked to the mission of Christ.
- [James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a](#) James considers the most extreme dysfunctionality in churches, but gives hope that this can be resisted with trust in God.
- [Mark 9:30-37](#) offers the most radical model of Christian leadership – and greatness.

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Our trust in God is like a tree  
**by living streams of water.**

The fruit we bear refreshes all  
**when justice blossoms bright.**

We tend the tree, we breathe their air  
**May God be praised by all!**

### Gathering prayer

Dear God, Creator and Sustainer,  
Christ Jesus, saviour and friend,  
Holy Spirit, our constant guide,  
We come before you as your people.  
We come with the dust of the world on our feet,  
acutely aware of strife,  
both within and without.  
We seek your cleansing power,  
your presence, your promptings, your peace.  
We come in response to your invitation,  
knowing that you will work within and among us.  
We offer you ourselves, open, expectant,  
ready for new life to take root within us,  
and to become more like Jesus. Amen.

## Closing prayer

We have drunk deep, our roots refreshed  
**Our branches stretch to bless the sky**

As trees by water, friends by Gospel  
**Refreshed, refresh the Earth!**

## Musical suggestions

*God Welcomes All* is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music version is now available; and the words-only book, digital resources including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from <https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

- A suggested playlist of songs from CH4 throughout Creation Time can be found on the Church of Scotland website. <https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/creation-time>
- The Compilers of *God Welcomes All* recognise that Creation is a major contemporary theme, and the book includes a whole section devoted to issues of celebrating and care for Creation, climate justice, and more.
- You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

## Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord's Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of 'holy chaos'.
- If singing in our congregations is restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?  
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/  
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different "Spiritual Styles"?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?  
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?

Did it function well as a whole?

How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?

- How balanced was the worship?  
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?  
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/  
community?  
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?  
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

## Useful links

*God Welcomes All* can be ordered from [Hymns Ancient & Modern](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)