

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Year A

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – 1 October 2023

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank the Eco-Congregation Scotland writing team for their thoughts on the 18th Sunday after Pentecost.

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

Since 1989, the 'Season of Creation', 'Creation Time', or 'Creationtide' has grown to be a lively global and ecumenical movement in Christian churches, dedicating the Sundays of September and the first in October (closest to St Francis' Day, 4th October) to worship, prayer, reflection and action on the Commission of the Risen Christ, to bring Good News to All Creation (Mark 16:15). It's a chance to celebrate what it means to be Church against the real, urgent and increasing threat of climate and other environmental crises. And to rediscover the meaning of a distinctive human calling of justice, care, guidance and partnership with - as well as dependence on – fellow creatures with whom we share so much.

Our original resources, gathered and curated in Scotland, and in fellowship with the global movement, respond with hope and openness to the God-given witness of trustworthy peer-reviewed science. Vital too are the experiences of our sisters and brothers in Christ around the world – including in Scotland – of changes more brutal and far-reaching than we imagined. There's never been a more compelling reason for prayer; for the Christian claim on hope beyond hope. And the joy and deepening of faith we've seen amongst the most committed congregations in the EcoCongregation Scotland movement, sharing stories and encouraging each other, especially as we gather on Sunday, offering worship and receiving nourishment from our Creator.

Our resources fully support the continued use of the Revised Common Lectionary, with every passage covered, as well as 'thematic' material which can be used at any time of year. For the Season is 'training' in discerning and recycling the strong green threads re-woven every new day through the whole of our faith, as creatures of a loving and sustaining God.

Themes for this week

For this week's resources visit [EcoCongregation Scotland's website](https://www.ecocongregation.org.uk).

Summary

- [**Exodus 17:1-7**](#) Do we really want to live in ‘Grumbletown’? Exodus gives us an unlovely picture of people with genuine and reasonable grievances comparable to cost-of-living issues – how do we treat the leaders we ask to sort out environmental circumstances for which we need God’s help, as well as wisdom?
- [**Psalm 78:1-4**](#) suggests the resources of faith and Scripture should have something to offer – though only when devoutly recycled in daily use. What are we ‘hiding from our children’ which could inspire us to respond creatively and in partnership with the Earth and other people?
- [**Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32**](#) is a helpful reflection on the ‘sour grapes’ tendency of generations to blame each other: does your church reach out to young people in despair about the damage undeniably done by those who have been in charge of human societies in our lifetimes?
- [**Psalm 25:1-9**](#) and [**Philippians 2:1-13**](#) deal with the place of humility in our change of course, whereas
- [**Matthew 21:23-32**](#) shows us the unlovely and even tragically familiar spectacle of religious leaders who know they’ve lost the argument, digging in, in the hope of delay by means of procedure. Have no patience with such tactics: Jesus’ crafty response is exemplary.

Musical suggestions

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.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

A [suggested playlist of songs from CH4 throughout Creation Time](#) can be found on the Church of Scotland website.

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'.
- While singing in our congregations is still 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

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

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](#)

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