

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Creation Time – Week Three

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost – 20 September 2020

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank the Creation Time 2020 writing group for their thoughts on the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Our new online music resource is now live: [here](#) you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4). The search function allows you to bring up a list of songs by keyword, tune, theme, author, composer and metre, covering all of the indexes in the hymnbook. The site features Weekly Worship and thematic/seasonal playlists, alternative settings and background information on the hymns.

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Introduction

Creation Time / Season of Creation is a worldwide call to prayer and action from 1 September to 4 October (the Feast of St Francis of Assisi). September's reflections on the lectionary passages are set against the background of the extreme urgency of the climate crisis and the challenges that confront every one of us: to change our own lives and to support and encourage others in the just transition to a world where all will be better able to weather the turmoil that undoubtedly lies ahead. The Covid-19 crisis, overlaying this, had broken by the time these pieces were being written, and the additional pressures on writers who have contributed may be noted.

Our writers are drawn from a variety of church backgrounds and pastoral contexts, and all share, as Pope Francis has said, a 'Common Home', and have a contribution to make to the healing partnership of Christ with God's Creation. In our readings and our thoughts on them, we see, ever more, that the most environmental themes of all are compassion, forgiveness, hope, and the empowerment of the love of God. These are threads that run throughout the whole of Scripture, and sustain us in our partnership with Creation day by day.

[Exodus 16:2-15](#)

Toxic nostalgia! Survival is the imperative, yet it is endangered by dwelling on the fictional luxury of the carefree life of a slave. Or on the 'good old days' in which churches could think and act freely in far more exclusive ways than might be acceptable today.

This passage may be depressingly familiar, even to many within our churches. Those times when it seems 'no good deed goes unpunished.' A response is made, the best possible one in the circumstances, yet all the grumblers have to say is, "What is it?"

The people ignorantly exercise their new-found freedom in lashing out against those who work hardest for their liberation and wellbeing. Again, does this ring any bells in our own most recent history?

To make it worse, they *are* suffering genuine and immediate hardship, which can't be soothed or argued away. The grumblers do have a point. It's compelling, and easy to get sucked in to.

To accompany real change is like being a partner at a birth (and I'm recalling here some of the most exhausting few hours of my life). We may have to wait a while for gratitude and

appreciation. The demands made on us may be extreme, but they arise out of the horizon-blocked urgency of pain and distress.

So if, in a hard-pressed community, in the endless between-times of the desert, there is grumbling, the grumbled-against may need first to listen.

Taken alone, 'facts' may mislead: slave-drivers would have had no interest in damaging their workforce through starvation. The road to freedom therefore seems harsh by comparison.

The costs of a Just Transition – from our enslavement to fossil fuels that have led to climate imbalance and the extinction of vital wildlife – seem high. And the real and sustaining benefits (clean air, better health, less stress) are not readily recognised in advance of a more thorough transition. Or if they are recognised, the distress of those at the sharp end of redundancies and economic slumps makes it hard for them to be sufficiently valued.

Dishonesty about 'solutions' doesn't help, nor does falsely taking on board a responsibility which is not completely yours. Liberation is an arduous journey. Moses and Aaron are right, and perhaps courageous to remind the people of God's involvement. But is there any other time and place where leaders can simply, or conveniently blame God, or blame 'the way things are'?

We can pray, deeply and earnestly, for those who try to get the truth across, noting at the same time the gracious approach of God when the 'grumbling' of the people is not without cause.

Rev David Coleman is Environmental Chaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland and a member of the Iona Community.

[Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45](#)

We pray this Sunday with an excerpt from this psalm of praise. Psalm 105 has a characteristic shared with a few others: it tells the story of Israel's salvation – here it speaks of the Exodus and the entry into the Promised Land. The tone of this psalm is all praise. There is no allusion to sin in it. The Psalmist praises God with all his heart. Moreover, it is a liturgical call – a call to Israel to pray.

In this liturgy, there are the people and God, as well as other characters from the history of Israel: Abraham and the Egyptians.

The Egyptians are mentioned because of the evocation of the Exodus.

Abraham is referred to twice, and both times he is presented as the servant of the Lord. The Father of the Nation is, above all, someone who serves God.

In the desert, the psalm tells us, the people lacked nothing. The Lord provided for their financial and physical needs, protected them night and day, and met their needs for food and water. Finally, they were given land to settle on. For all this, Israel is called to praise the Lord. The Lord did all this so that God's people would bear witness to the laws given to them. According to Jesus, the law of the Lord is primarily about loving God and your neighbour (Matthew 22:37-40).

At Creation Time, we can interpret this psalm, pray with it and express our gratitude by seeing ourselves as Israel in the desert, in *exodus*, fleeing from Egypt and entering the Promised Land. The Egypt from which the Hebrews fled would be the equivalent of our world today marked by consumerism, waste and pollution. The psalm shows us how the Lord provides for all our basic needs, if we leave this contemporary Egypt that oppresses us and destroys the environment. By leaving it, the Lord gives us the goods we need for our lives, provided we obey God's law of love and justice. And Christ leads us to the Promised Land – He opens the door to the Kingdom of God.

This psalm offers the most positive gloss on the Exodus stories, to motivate and encourage those engaged in a struggle – perhaps with desperation – to “Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually” (v.4). The challenges of our day demand that we do not neglect the encouragement, pampering, and enjoyment that sustain our hope and thereby any commitment we must embrace; and to respond with courage and creativity to the global changes which we are unable to avoid or divert.

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[Jonah 3:10-4:11](#)

This is a wonderful, subversive, and humorous story, and one in which the entertainment potential (whales, worms, and repentant animals) should be shamelessly exploited, rather than held respectfully in check. It's really worthwhile briefly summarising the rest of the Jonah story, not taking for granted that everyone even knows the outline.

The multi-faith environment of the story is also useful for us in a culture in which Christianity does not dominate, though our faith has vital things to say, as bearers of God's word of love for all. Where these aspects may appear stern or scary, we need look to Jesus rather than to Jonah: every hard truth must be offered in love. Our expectations of being heard do not determine how worthwhile it is to speak.

Whales and worms aside, by far the most 'miraculous' aspect of this book is that, without waiting either for the impending disaster or for the religious conversion of the Ninevites, indiscriminate life-saving change for all creatures is embraced, to the disgust of the prophet of doom. The pagans of Nineveh get on with it.

God loves those who are messing up their world – loves them enough to throw them a lifeline they don't understand, but will grab hold of anyway.

The book of Jonah speaks powerfully to the institutional inertia of our churches and governments in the face of continuing climate emergency, and indeed, following the 'sackcloth and ashes' of lockdown.

The humblest creation is on side with God, who ordains the worm to 'do its stuff' and deprive Jonah's arrogant despair of its shelter.

The God presented in the Book of Jonah presides over a world in which disasters are both possible and avoidable. This is no peevish tyrant, nor should we see any such intent in 'natural' disasters. Saving life – including animal life – is more vital than getting things right, or even than right belief.

So every suggested response – large or small – of churches to the climate and environmental emergency is for the good of all, seeking the will of God, which is also for the health of beloved Creation, in which our species has never played a neutral role.

And if, for now we have been Jonahs, well, the patient but firm nudging of God – for a prophet who has done their job, but can't cope with the outcome – is for us!

Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland

[Psalm 145:1-8](#)

Whilst stocking up on the awe and wonder of Creation, we also learn that the 'blame game' is not the choice of those who would ingratiate themselves with God, whose majesty is

made all the more evident by the lack of knee-jerk retributive fervour, for God is “slow to anger,” and this very slowness is a sign of strength.

In an age of climate emergency, and following on from the Covid-19 crisis, looking for a culprit and taking it out on them should be one of the many luxuries we set aside.

God is referred to as King, which, like Father, brings some problems, given the miserable Old Testament experience of human “kings like those of other nations” (Samuel 8). Given Jesus’ critique of ‘the rulers of the gentiles’ (Mark 10:42, Matthew 20:25) should we consider whether this form of address is one which is worthy only for God? And how might this affect what human rulers should aspire to live up to? The absolute dictators of European culture in recent centuries are, in any case, a travesty of the accountable, shepherding ideal of biblical kingship.

The singer of this psalm clearly derives great personal benefit from the regularity of the praise they offer. They are not diminished by acknowledging God’s greatness, indeed the contrary seems to be the case: claiming our place and purpose, and ourselves, as words and acts of God, grants us dignity.

This is enhanced as they join in the chorus of Creation (marvellous works themselves) and God’s action for justice. It is noted that this is worthy not only of led and immediate praise, but also of pondering, thought and discernment.

Over and above the thrill of the beautiful words, how can their power and the benefit they bring sink in and do their work on our lives?

God is ‘big enough’ to be compassionate and Jesus says we can be likewise (Luke 6:36). The multi-generational scope of the psalm raises the question of our responsibility for generations to come: will we have been seen to praise God in our care of Creation?

In the 500 congregations of the EcoCongregation Scotland movement, the love of children and grandchildren has been a powerful motivator for change of lifestyle and outlook, for speaking out, and indeed, for whatever action lies within our power to care. This always comes along with a desire for global justice and concern for human poverty; they are never separate from the Creation of which we are part.

Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland

Philippians 1:21-30

Paul's apparently morbid fixation on 'getting away to a better place' is a ruse to express the depth and value of living your life right now in hope and in justice. Living – the more demanding option – "is Christ."

Nonetheless, the intense and relaxed consciousness of mortality adds a valuable corrective and urgency to our unwillingness to contemplate the fragility of the world – further corrected by the realisation that, within our own lifetimes, we will not be able to solve every problem. Back in the Garden of Eden, the most damaging lie told by the snake was "you will not die." But the point is not to live, unchanging, for ever. In whatever time is given to us, the contribution we make, known or unknown to the world, will be valued by God.

We should also be cautious about the 'privilege of suffering'. The gift is not in the pain, but in solidarity: we more readily face the often unavoidable trials of our lives when we are upheld by the prayerful support of others. Togetherness also mitigates against intimidation, and many churches' experience this year of a very real togetherness despite lockdown and separation, chimes with that of Paul and his friends. Relationships conveyed virtually are nonetheless real. Prayer has long been a medium of the relationship, supported by the letters, emails, etc., which holds our communities together.

Finally, Paul is never under any illusion about either his own value or the dependence of that value on the support of others. In the EcoCongregation movement, we have had to address the problem of humility with regard to the visibility of good and encouraging church initiatives: boasting, of the sort Paul encourages, certainly has its place – "letting our light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16), "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Rev David Coleman, EcoChaplain with EcoCongregation Scotland

Matthew 20:1-16

Like many of Jesus' parables, the story of the workers in the vineyard is offered as an example of what the kingdom of heaven is like. This might be the kingdom of heaven in an afterlife, or the coming kingdom of heaven as envisioned for earth. If Jesus' teachings and actions in the gospels are anything to go by, it most likely offers us a glimpse of both.

Jesus tells the parable to the disciples when they are on the road from Galilee to Jerusalem. Two chapters earlier, in Matthew 18, the disciples have asked who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. What they're asking is who will have been deemed most *worthy* of reward from Jesus when He is in power.

The story Jesus tells in response often feels uncomfortable to listeners, as it probably did to the disciples when they first heard it. Exploring this passage together is about interrogating why it feels uncomfortable, and what we can learn from it.

In the parable, the landowner shows generosity and grace to those who arrive later to the work, paying them the same as the workers who arrived first. This paints an image of justice and righteousness that differs from conventional wisdom. For many, justice is seen as a reward that reflects worthiness (as the disciples show in their questioning). Good living is rewarded well, whereas disobeying God's commandments and living in a way which harms others, is not.

However, in the story that Jesus tells, all are offered the same reward. God is generous with those whom we might deem undeserving. In telling the parable, Jesus directly confronts the listener's understanding of righteousness.

The parable does not mention why the labourers who are hired later haven't been hired by others already. Whilst we often make the judgment that the workers who arrive later are less worthy of good treatment – because they have done less work – they *could* be lazy, or equally they could be the victims of a recession, or a local labour oversupply. Either way, Jesus does not offer this judgment. Neither is there a judgment about why those who are hired first are offered work. The parable makes no judgment as to how deserving any of the labourers are.

Furthermore, no one is disadvantaged by the fact that everyone gets paid the same amount. It is not as though there is a set pot of money available that is distributed evenly – no one loses out in order for everyone to benefit.

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Sermon ideas

Enough is Enough

Three of today's readings (Exodus, Philippians and Matthew) speak about contentment with what God provides. This is a very important idea for living well in and for Creation. So much harm has been done to the planet and its inhabitants because of the greed of the powerful minority, their discontent with what they have and their pursuit of endless growth. It is crucial to the flourishing of life on earth that we learn not simply to be content but to find joy in having enough.

American economist, Kenneth Boulding, said, "Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist."

The dominant model of economics relies on endless growth and leads us into addiction to having more, either without factoring in the impacts of waste, limited resources, injustice and exploitation, or by regarding those negative impacts as a price worth paying for the sake of those who benefit.

Contrast this costly, dominant economic model with the model of God's economics that emerges from these readings. From Exodus 16:18, "Those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage." Or in the parable of the vineyard, where everyone is paid the same. Or Paul in Philippians, being content with whatever fate God provides (this is admittedly a bit weak for our purposes here; you might like to look ahead to 4:11-13). Or Jonah's intense self-interest, as he puts his pride and his wellbeing ahead of anyone else's.

You might like to ask how people feel about the parable of the vineyard. Do they feel that the workers were treated justly? Is it more just that each worker should receive an hourly rate, or that each should receive what they need to live on – a day's wage? What do you feel is God's view?

The idea of God providing enough for our daily needs is a frequent theme in scripture. The Lord's Prayer is an obvious example, but also see Psalms 145:15-17 and 104:14-15, 27-28. Matthew 5:43-48 shows how God's provision is based on grace and love rather than being earned. These passages see God's provision of food as something rooted in the natural order of Creation, and it is easy to see how this gracious provision of the needs of every creature is disrupted and damaged by privatisation of supply, commodification leading to price distortions, and hoarding. God's economics are based on love, generosity and

abundance, compared to what drives the economics of our day: fear of scarcity, greed and the movement of wealth from the poor (and not only human poor) to the rich.

How can Christians live by the economics of God's kingdom? What are some practical actions we can make to change our behaviour and our attitudes?

Further research:

Green Christian's 'Joy in Enough' project: <https://joyinenough.org/>

Kate Raworth on 'Doughnut Economics':

https://www.ted.com/talks/kate_raworth_a_healthy_economy_should_be_designed_to_thrive_not_grow

Rev Alex Mabbs is a URC Minister Brighthelm Centre, deeply involved, for many years, with environmental spirituality and issues.

Prayers

These prayers are based on motifs and themes found in the lectionary readings for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. I have tried to write them in a way which will work with whichever of the OT readings are used.

Opening responses

I have split the responding voices into two; a male/female binary can be seen as excluding, so the voices may be allocated by different criteria as appropriate.

Leader: God the faithful listener
Voice 1: is waiting to be found and known
Voice 2: and will answer those who are calling
All: Let us bless God's name together

L: God the patient watcher
V1: is waiting to be found and known
V2: and will meet those who are seeking to change
All: Let us bless God's name together

L: God the generous provider
M: is waiting to be found and known
F: and will reach out to those who are in need
All: Let us bless God's name together

L: God the wellspring of all life
V1: is present with us now
V2: waiting to be found and known
All: Let us bless God's name together

Approach

I have included an additional optional line [*] which can be used if the service includes Communion.

L: God of transition and change
throughout all history
All: You have led Your people on challenging journeys

L: God of transition and change
across all times and cultures
All: You have called Your people to discomfoting tasks

L: God of transition and change
within all systems of human value
All You have asked Your people to look and question

L: God of transition and change
meet with us now
through word and music
[bread and wine]
**All: Challenge our thinking
and deepen our understanding
that we may be ready to follow You
into the challenges of this time.**

Thanksgiving

God – we thank You that You always listen
even when our voices are less than joyful.

We thank You that You still wait for us
even when we dawdle or drag our feet.

We thank You that your generosity always overflows
even when we are grudging of its bounty to others

God – we thank You
that You are always, and completely,
Yourself
and that Your love is therefore never limited
by our smallness
Amen

Confession (to be said by all)
God of challenge and change
the stories from Your word
show us how great the gap can sometimes be
between divine and human economies.

Forgive us
when we have let attachment
to our own comfort and convenience
deter us from committing to the costly transitions
necessary for the wellbeing of our planet
and the flourishing of all its inhabitants.

Silence or a Kyrie

God of compassion and concern
the stories from Your word
show us how great the gap can sometimes be
between divine and human tenderness.

Forgive us
when we have let attachment
to our own understandings of justice and righteousness
deter us from following the discomforting paths
necessary for the wellbeing of our planet
and the flourishing of all its inhabitants.

Silence or a Kyrie

God of generosity and grace
the stories of Your Word
show us how great the gap can sometimes be

between divine and human understanding.

**Forgive us
when we have let attachment
to our own sense of hierarchy and entitlement
deter us from making the difficult shifts
necessary for the wellbeing of our planet
and the flourishing of all its inhabitants.**

Silence or a Kyrie

Assurance of forgiveness

I have offered two possible options: in one the prayer is said by the whole congregation and in the other by the person leading the service. In the latter instance the leader can use 'we/us/our' or 'you/your', as appropriate.

Either

**All: God
Your compassion for our weakness
and concern for our wellbeing
give us confidence
in the generosity of Your forgiveness.**

**Out of the liberality of Your grace
help us, as we begin again,
to grow into the courage, love, and understanding
which are the hallmarks of Your Kingdom,
and to live in ways
which will help to make this world
a place where all life can flourish.
Amen**

Or

God, who has compassion on [our] weakness
and concern for [our] wellbeing,
gives [us] confidence
in the generosity of God's forgiveness

and, out of the liberality of God's grace
helps [us], as [we] begin again,
to grow into the courage, love, and understanding
which are the hallmarks of God's Kingdom;
and to live in ways
which will help to make this world
a place where all life can flourish.
Amen

Collect

God of the different way –
You are not bound
to human hierarchies and understandings.
Help us to grow
out of our reflex and restricted
habits of thought and action
and into the extraordinary and expansive
patterns of Your Kingdom
that we may become
agents of change and healing
in the world.
Amen

Blessing

May the blessing
of the disconcerting God be on [us]:
the blessings of challenge and change;
the blessings of travel and transition;
the blessings of discovery and deepening;
the blessings of flourishing and fulfilment –
May these blessings of the Kingdom
be [ours].
Amen

Dr Pat Bennett has a dual background in science and theology and a particular interest in the connections between relational experience, health, and flourishing. She is a member of the Iona Community and regularly produces liturgical and theological resources for them, for Wild Goose Publications, and the Spirituality of Conflict project: spiritualityofconflict.com

Prayers of intercession in Creation Time

The situation was changing so fast at the height of the Covid-19 crisis that particular pressing concerns could not be anticipated. We therefore offer a framework of intercessions to take us through the Season of Creation.

Let us pray with Christ:

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

Hear our fears and needs
Hold our hand as You walk beside us
Advise, encourage and guide us.

We pray for the world:

Reflect on some of the key global news events this week.

- Are there people or communities in need, or others that can be thankful?
- Are there reports of progress or setbacks to bring to God?
- Can we pray in sorrow or in hope for events that make us feel overwhelmed?
- Can we hear the Earth's voice in any of these stories that we need to bring in prayer?
- Which of our human, animal or environmental neighbours do we need to bring before God?
- Bring our enemies and those we fear to God today and
- Pray for peace throughout Creation

God-with-us,
Hear our fears and needs
Hold our hand as You walk beside us
Advise, encourage and guide us.

We pray for the Church:

- Give thanks for the faithfulness of the church community, and its undergirding of prayer
- Acknowledge any national or local divisions within the church and pray that God's wisdom and discernment will be sought
- Seek guidance on how the Church can increase and weave environmental concerns into our life and work
- Pray for a desire to experience the joy of a deeper fellowship with all Creation

God-with-us,

Hear our fears and needs

Hold our hand as You walk beside us

Advise, encourage and guide us.

We pray for ourselves:

- In silence, we bring our personal concerns to God, who knows and understands our deepest thoughts
- Ask God for support and perseverance when we struggle, and a sustaining sign when we get things right
- Pray for those beside us, acknowledging and respecting what they cannot share with us
- Ask God for a sense of impatience for change, rather than accepting the way things are
- Pray for peace in our hearts, and the fuller joys of Christ in our lives.

God-with-us,

Hear our fears and needs

Hold our hand as You walk beside us

Advise, encourage and guide us.

Amen

Alternative Material

This material has been supplied by kind permission of Spill the Beans and allows you to explore the readings or theme of the service in creative ways that include everyone gathering for worship.

New material from Spill the Beans is provided in the latest issues available from their [website](#).

Bible Notes

Enough is Enough – [Exodus 16:2-15](#)

What do we really need to live on? The NHS currently states that women need 2,000 and men 2,500 calories of energy intake per day from their food.

What do we actually consume? In the UK the average consumption per person is almost 3,500 calories. In the USA it is almost 3,800 calories. Grossly excessive to what we actually need. Now, compare that to a country like Eritrea where the average consumption is a little over 1,500 calories per day. That puts our consumption into perspective.

All very interesting, but what has this to do with this week's Bible focus? After the traumatic release from slavery in Egypt, and the escape from Pharaoh, whose army was destroyed in the process of trying to reclaim the Hebrew people as slaves, we now meet the community of Israelites on the move in the wilderness scrubland around Sinai. There are a lot of them and water and food are scarce. This is a time to get acquainted with sustainable living, to be satisfied with what you need, not what you want.

And, as you might expect, the community is not happy. There are three stories in this part of Exodus relating to the physical needs of the community and their appeal to Moses and Aaron. Two short stories about the provision of water frame the larger story of the provision of manna and quail in the desert that is our focus. All three stories depict God's gracious provision for his people and his patient response to their appeal.

It is a patient response because the community is in uproar with its grumbling and moaning against Moses and Aaron for having dragged them away from the riches of Egypt to the poverty of the wilderness. We read that Moses and Aaron are at pains to remind the people that when they moan about them, they are actually moaning about what God has done for them.

It's all rather typical isn't it? Parents will know well the situation of taking the children out for the day spending a fortune to get into some fun place, having prepared a picnic for the journey, having taken a day off to dedicate to family time. You think you have had a great day out with memories that will last for ever, only to hear in the car on the way home, "I'm bored! There's nothing to do!"

Yet, with eternal patience, despite the moaning of his people, God provides manna in the wilderness. What was manna? Some suggest manna may have something to do with the honey-tasting resin dropped from the tamarisk trees well-known in the region. Others suggest it might be honeydew produced by insects, a delicacy in the Middle East even today, and rich in energy. We will never know.

What we do know is that it was a sign for the people of God that he will provide for them, but not to excess. They are being taught to think only about their needs, not to hoard what they can pick from the ground, but rather to ensure day-by-day that each and every person has enough food for that day.

The ethics of food production today are fraught. It only takes a cursory investigation into industrial food production to be shocked at the seeming unsustainability of what we are doing. A 2008 documentary, *Food, Inc.*, exposes what we are too often unaware of in the food chain.

When the gluttony of the developed nations is compared with the impoverishment of many other nations the justification becomes ever harder to sustain. When is enough enough?

Retelling for Young People

Hide pieces of bread around the space. Gather everyone together and give each a yogurt carton. Begin the story in your own words of the Israelites being in the desert.

Ask what deserts might be like and what would be difficult to find (food, water, etc.).

Explain that the Israelites were complaining to Moses because they couldn't find enough water or food. But that God heard them and asked them to be prepared to collect some special bread that would appear on the ground in the morning.

So when the Israelites woke the next morning they looked out their tents and the ground was covered in manna, which is a special kind of bread. Moses said to everyone, "Go and gather enough for today, no more, no less." So they did.

Ask everyone to take their yogurt pot and collect a piece of bread hidden in the hall.

When they come back pour the bread into a pile and invite everyone to have a piece if they are allowed.

The next day, they were hungry again and God said,
“Every morning from now on there will be bread waiting for you.
Never take too much.
Take just what you need so everyone can have enough.”

Invite people to go and find a piece of bread and ask them this time to help each other finding a piece.

Bring them back and pour them out.

Again ask them to go and find a piece. The pieces may be more difficult to find, so remind everyone to help each other find a piece. If there aren't enough pieces tell everyone to come back, pour out all the pieces and divide them up between each other so everyone has some.

Activities

Gathering Activity

Provide a few loaves of bread. Simply and briefly remind people of stories of bread in the Bible, or times when people have been fed and with each one, break the bread. Examples are: feeding the 5,000, the stone themselves will turn to bread, the Last Supper, Mary and Martha, Passover, David in the Temple.

Invite people to reflect on the times they have broken bread and shared a meal with others.

Make a Wish

You will need: a food item for each child related to bread (e.g. slice of white bread, brown bread, pancake, pitta, cream cracker, muffins, bagels, doughnuts, etc.)

This is a memory game that will encourage thoughts of fairness in sharing and taking enough food. Sit the children in a circle and give each child a bread item. They must all hold their item in full view for 30 seconds, encourage everyone to look at the different items everyone has. After that they have to place it on the floor behind their back.

One child will start with, 'I wish for white bread from (name).' If the named person has the white bread they must hand it over. The successful child could continue until they make a mistake and then the next person in the circle takes a turn at making a request. You may find that someone has many items at the end and others have none.

Reflection – Manna

Enough – simply enough,
not too much,
not an over abundance,
but – enough.

Sufficient for the day,
not for storing up
or hoarding for the lean times,
but – enough.

Seems fair that everyone
should get just what they need
regardless of status,
just – enough.

Those are the resources
supplied by God.

Prayers

Manna Agape

Provide a variety of whole loaves of bread in a central place in the worship space. Invite people to come forward and tear a piece of bread but not to eat it yet.

Play some music or sing a communion hymn while this is happening.

Invite everyone to place their piece of bread in their hands in front of them or somewhere they can see it.

Ask people to reflect on the bread:

- If this was a banquet, do we need it all?
- If this was all there was, do we need to eat it all now?
- If this was a meal for a family, how much would you take?
- If this was God's gift to the world, what would you do with it?
- Would you share it or give it to another?

Play a little more music. Then say something like:

“This is the banquet of heaven, it is all there needs to be, a meal for the whole family of God, God's gift to the world. Now share in this gift of grace in whatever way you need for it is a symbol of what we do with the gifts God has given us in life.”

Bread Prayers

Using different breads that represent different parts of the world that are in the news this week, break each as you pray for that region or issue.

Following the prayer, at an appropriate time, even after the benediction, invite people to come forward and share in the bread, a symbol of praying and journeying with people in that particular situation.

Feeding the World

Provide a large world map on a central table. In a separate place provide a number of loaves. As a prayer of intercession invite people to simply make their own prayers by travelling to the place of bread, tear a piece and pilgrimage to the world map and place the piece of bread on the map in a place they wish to pray for and think about this week.

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Musical suggestions

You can hear samples of these suggestions in the 'Weekly Worship' section of <https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/>. This new online music resource will allow you to listen to and search the breadth of music available in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4).

You will find hidden gems and alternative arrangements to familiar songs that will inspire creativity and spark fresh curiosity about how we best use music in worship.

- CH4 159 – “Lord, for the years” – A song of thanks, of praise, of prayer and of commitment
- CH4 167 – “Guide me, O though great Jehovah” – This classic hymn is inspired by the Exodus story
- CH4 231 – “For the fruit of all creation” – God’s will is done in the just reward of labour
- CH4 253 – “Inspired by love and anger” – A song of justice with “the fear of lost advantage” in verse 3 particularly appropriate for the parable
- CH4 346, CH4 751, CH4 752 – “Alleluia” – With few paraphrases for this psalm you might use an Alleluia as a sung response
- CH4 502 – “Take my life, Lord” – We commit ourselves to living in the way Christ leads us
- CH4 542 – “Lord, speak to me, that I may speak” – Verse 2 speaks of the manna provided to those who are hungry
- CH4 725 – “Today I live” – This explores what life and death mean for people of faith
- “Stand O stand firm” (<https://www.wildgoose.scot/product/many-great-cd>) – A song from Cameroon which picks up the line in Philippians about standing firm in one spirit
- “One Church, one voice” (<https://www.satelliteworship.com/albums/one-church-one-voice>) – A gathering song which connects with the oneness of gathering together as church expressed in Philippians
- New hymn-poem – “Deep our longing to dwell with you” (Rev David Coleman) – St Augustine wrote: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”. That rest begins with life lived here and now, through trust in Christ. Can be sung to tunes with the metre 87 87 87, e.g. Westminster Abbey [CH4 200]

Deep our longing to dwell with you
Christ our risen, present, Friend:
Gawping up to boundless heavens
choosing not to comprehend;
that where need, injustice, threaten,
yours are hands that reach for aid.

You rejoice in flesh as Jesus;
share the blood, the breath the clay:
building blocks of cells and bodies;
vibrantly entwined today.
Neighbours' needs in many species
constantly your face display.

We deceive ourselves, if loving
“god” at cost of blessed Earth.
Food and drink and warmth and loving,
Tears and joy and death and birth;
All we need to live in your House:
Here and now: Christ offers worth.

Jesus taught the prayer converging
“World-as-is” with “Earth-to-be”;
Love, without exception; justice
wise compassion, debtors free.
Not deserving; just responding
grants God's solidarity

In addition to the [Creation Time playlist online](#), the following songs are also suitable throughout this season:

- MP 1170 – “Indescribable” – The wonders of creation show us how amazing God is
- MP 1268 – “Creation sings the Father's song” – Picks up themes of Christ's return bringing peace to all creation

- “Let creation sing” (Hillsong) <https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/4433390/let-creation-sing> – Inspired by Psalm 148, which describes all of creation praising the Lord
- “From life’s beginning / Let praise resound” (Resound Worship) https://www.resoundworship.org/song/from_lifes_beginning_let_praise_resound – An uplifting call to worship, almost stadium anthem-like
- “Come one, come all” (Malcom Gordon) – <https://malcolmgordon.bandcamp.com/track/come-one-come-all-2> – Written by a Presbyterian minister from New Zealand, this is based on Psalm 65 and would be particularly appropriate for communion during Creation Time
- “Rejoice in all your works” (Wendell Kimbrough) <https://wendellk.bandcamp.com/track/rejoice-in-all-your-works-psalm-104> – A setting of Psalm 104 which concludes with a nice Trinitarian creation doxology

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