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Introduction by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

Lent is a time for reflection. Before the solemnity of Good Friday and the glory of the resurrection on Easter Day, Christians have the opportunity to remember Christ's withdrawal into the desert for forty days. It is a time to re-evaluate, a moment where we can turn away from the luxuries and distractions of daily life and face God. In so doing we face light, love and life.

Facing God makes Lent a time for renewal. God has entrusted us to look after his wonderful creation. We are called to care for and honour God's creation as a way of



delighting in its Creator. We are also called to care for our brothers and sisters all over the world who face having their families uprooted and their livelihoods destroyed by the effects of climate change. As part of our discipleship to Jesus Christ every single one of us has a responsibility to live a life of stewardship.

This Lent, we hope both adults and children might engage in God's plea for us to "Care for Creation". It is an opportunity for us to rebuild our relationship with our planet, and in turn with the God who is Lord of everything. During this time, we hope you might engage in prayer, learn more about the remarkable world we have been given and build habits that last beyond the season to protect and honour the earth.

These daily reflections and suggestions will provide you, your family and your church with an opportunity to come together to meet with God and rejoice in the beauty of God's creation. There are so many ways to be involved with this year's #LiveLent. Why not download the free app, get a group to pray together, or do some of the activities as a family?

Many Christians use Lent as an opportunity to give something up, to remember that Christ went without during his time in the wilderness. Perhaps you could consider giving something up as well to help the environment:

maybe you could forgo single use plastics, use less water or save electricity by turning off lights. If many of us do little things, they can add up to make a big difference. Even if they are marginal, they remind us of the importance of good stewardship.

At this time of year, we are all called to listen and respond to God's calling of each one of us in humility and repentance, so that Christ's death and resurrection at the end of Lent can bring the renewal, response and reconciliation that we so long for.

***Archbishop Justin Welby &
Archbishop John Sentamu***



How to use this booklet

There are 40 reflections, one for each of the forty days in Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday (which falls on 26 February in 2020) and ends on Easter Eve (Saturday 11 April in 2020), plus one for Easter Day.

For each week (starting on Sundays from Week 1 onwards) there is:

- A **theme**, based on the days of creation as described in Genesis 1
- A **prayer** for use throughout the week, with words taken from well-known hymns.

For each day (Monday to Saturday) there are daily reflections which offer:

- A **theme**
- A **picture**
- A very short **passage from the Bible**
- A **short reflection** on the theme and reading
- A practical **action**.

There is also a version of the **daily challenge for children and families** available in the accompanying booklet *#LiveLent: Care for God's Creation – For Kids*.

Finally, there are a range of suggestions for **Going Further** as an individual and as a church. Find out more about the campaign at:
www.churchofengland.org/livelent



From Ash Wednesday to Lent 1

BEGINNINGS

During Lent Christians prepare to celebrate God's redemption of the world in Jesus at Easter. Our first reflections remind us that God is also our creator, and they encourage us to broaden our view of Christ's redeeming mission – a mission that the Church is called to share.

Prayer for the week

*God is love, let heaven adore him;
God is love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him
and exalt him with one voice.
God who laid the earth's foundation,
God who spread the heavens above,
God who breathes through all creation:
God is love, eternal love.*

Timothy Rees (1874–1939)



Ash Wednesday



REMEMBER YOU ARE DUST

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens ... the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground ...

Read Genesis 2.4b-8

Reflection

On Ash Wednesday, many Christians begin Lent by receiving the sign of the cross in ash on their forehead. The words spoken – “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return ...” – echo the second creation narrative in Genesis which describes God forming Adam “from the dust of the ground”. This image is a timely reminder that human beings and the earth are closely linked. Everyone and everything is part of the community of creation.

Action

Lent challenges us to “Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.” Choose something to give up eating, buying or using this Lent that will help you care for creation.



Thursday

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth ...
Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us,
and we are his ...*

Read Psalm 100

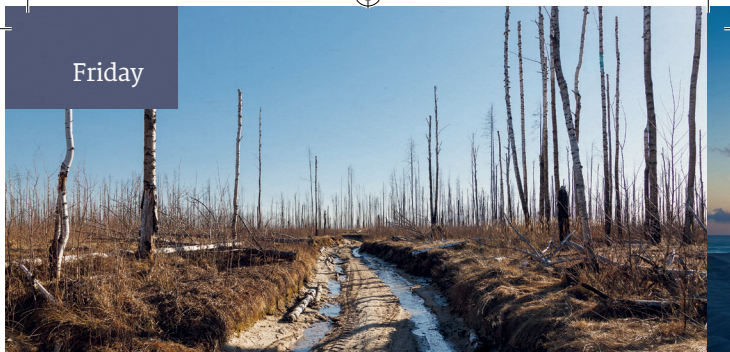
Reflection

The accounts of creation found in Genesis, in the Psalms and elsewhere in the Bible convey a central truth: God is the ultimate creator of everything, the source of all goodness, a God to be worshipped and feared. Each Sunday millions of Christians recite the Nicene Creed: "We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth ... " But do we remember God as creator enough elsewhere in our worship in church or our own prayers?

Action

Our prayers each week come from hymns that remind us that God is both creator and saviour. Say – or sing! – the prayers with a grateful heart today and on each day of Lent.

Friday



BRINGING GOOD NEWS

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

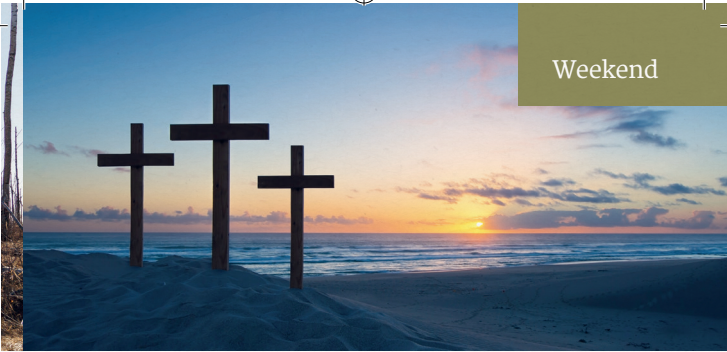
Read Luke 4.16-20

Reflection

In Luke Chapter 4, Jesus sets out a bold and broad vision for of his mission, quoting the prophet Isaiah. He comes to bring good news to the poor, to bring about freedom, healing and justice in a needy world. Christians are called to continue Christ’s mission to the world. The Anglican Communion’s has identified five marks (or characteristics) of mission. Number 5 is: *“To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.”*

Action

A great way for churches to treasure the earth is to join A Rocha’s Eco Church scheme (see page 65). It provides a range of resources and advice. Is your church a member? Could it be?



Weekend

RECONCILING ALL THINGS

And through [Christ] God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Read Colossians 1.15-20

Reflection

Lent is a journey towards the cross, where Jesus gives his life to reconcile all people to God. In today's reading, Paul broadens our understanding of salvation to include all things, not only human beings.

The God who created everything sets out to redeem not only human beings but the whole creation through Jesus, who was there in the beginning (John 1.1), the one through whom and for whom and in whom all things were created.

Action

Spend some time this weekend nurturing something living – planting some seeds, taking care of a pet or feeding the birds – remembering that God made and cares for all things.



Week 1

LIGHT AND ENERGY

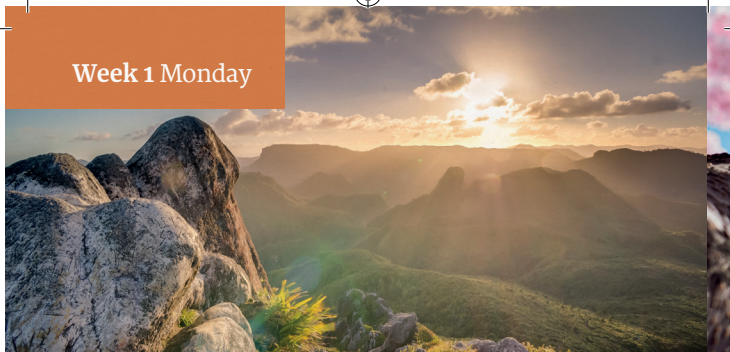
Our weekly themes follow those of the days of creation described in Genesis 1. We begin with an essential building-block of all life: light. As well as exploring the significance of light in the Bible, we will explore issues around light and energy facing the world today.

Prayer for the week

*Spirit of truth and love,
Life giving, holy dove,
Speed forth your flight!
Move on the water's face
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light!*

From "Thou whose almighty word",
by John Marriott (1780–1825)

Week 1 Monday



LET THERE BE LIGHT

In the beginning ... darkness covered the face of the deep ... Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Read Genesis 1.1-3

Reflection

The first chapter of Genesis has much to say about the created order and about the place of human beings within it. But first and foremost, it conveys fundamental truths about God. It tells us that God existed before creation, that God alone made everything, and that God is good. On this first day, God speaks, and light – without which nothing has life – is created. Genesis 1 invites us to hear God’s voice and to see God’s goodness revealed in creation every day.

Action

As you notice light around you today – light from the sun, a lightbulb or a candle – become aware of God’s presence in the world. What does God say to you?

LIGHT AND LIFE

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come ... The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom ...

Read Song of Songs 2.10-13



Reflection

In the northern hemisphere, during Lent we can look forward to lengthening hours of daylight and signs of spring. Some of us are particularly sensitive to these changes, but the responses to light in deciduous trees and in birds are even more dramatic. Even birds in parts of the world where the hours of daylight vary little through the year, and even a small adjustment of a few minutes is enough to trigger reproductive hormones and begin the breeding cycle.

Action

We all need light – but we also need to reduce our carbon emissions. Switching to low-energy LED bulbs is a small adjustment that could make a big difference.

Week 1 Wednesday



WALK IN THE LIGHT

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Read Isaiah 2.2-5

Reflection

Light is a powerful symbol of God's presence in the Bible, providing guidance in the darkness and showing his people the way. In Exodus 13, as the Israelites flee captivity in Egypt, God goes before them in a pillar of fire.

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path," declares the psalmist (Psalm 119.105). God's word illuminates our path, providing us with guidance on how we might walk in God's light.

Action

However light and sunny it is – or isn't! – today, make at least one journey on foot. Longer term, could you make more sustainable travel choices, such as cycling or using public transport?

LIGHT AND ENERGY

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.”

Read Matthew 5.14-16

Reflection

Jesus describes himself in John’s Gospel as “the light of the world” (8.12). In Matthew 5 he encourages his followers to see themselves in a similar way. The good news of God’s kingdom we have heard is news to be shared, not kept secret or hidden. How much is witnessing to God’s love for creation part of your own Christian witness? Or that of your local church community? Is it time to make your concern more visible?

Action

As well as adjustments in our own lives, tackling climate change will require governments and businesses to make big changes. Take time to convey your concerns as a citizen, consumer, voter and member of your church.

Week 1 Friday



LIGHT AND HEAT

And God saw that the light was good ...

Read Genesis 1.4-6

Reflection

Light is good. Access to light and electricity brings people many benefits, enhancing our security, education and health. The good news is that more than 920 million people have gained access since 2010. However, some 650 million people are likely still to be without electricity in 2030, the vast majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

We need to provide light – and heat – to the whole world in ways that use renewable sources and neither pollute the environment nor pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Action

A third of the UK's electricity now comes from renewable sources like solar. Ask your provider if you can switch to a 100% renewable energy tariff. If not, find one via www.bigchurchswitch.org.uk

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Read John 1.1-5

Reflection

During Lent we are encouraged to face the reality that there are many dark places in our lives and in our world. We need God's light to open our eyes to the world's needs, to bring hope into the darkness. Whatever challenges we face, it is important we remember, in the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, that *"Good is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death. Victory is ours, through him who loves us."*

Action

Organizations such as Christian Aid and Tearfund work with communities in great need, including those already affected by climate breakdown. Pray for their work, and support it financially, too, if you can.



Week 2

WATER

This week we'll be reflecting on water's central place in both life and faith. We'll explore how we can better use, conserve and share this precious gift of God, strengthened and encouraged by our faith in Jesus who offers "living water".

Prayer for the week

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.*

from "I heard the voice of Jesus say",
by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

Week 2 Monday



A CONSTANT CYCLE

And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”

Read Genesis 1.6-8

Reflection

Water is constantly moving around the Earth from land and sea to air, and then from clouds back to Earth as rain.

God created and continues to create this cycle of water, which is an amazing feature of our world. Although fresh water covers less than 1% of the earth’s surface, we depend on it for our survival. It also provides the habitat for 10% of the world’s known species.

Action

As you notice water today – when you wash, drink, walk by a local pond, canal, river or beach – pause to thank God for this precious gift which sustains the life of our planet.

A SACRED GIFT

*You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water*

Read Psalm 65.9-13

Reflection

Many people's happiest holiday memories involve water. Messing about in the pool, relaxing by or even sailing on the sea. As well as being a necessity, water also delights and inspires us.

The demand for water around the world is expected to rise by up to 50% by 2050. By conserving water we acknowledge that water is sacred – a gift from God. Doing this will not only help us survive but protect our landscapes and wildlife.

Action

Find out about the “virtual water” that goes into the things we use, the clothes we wear and the food we eat at www.waterfootprint.org
What could you cut down on?

Week 2 Wednesday



A SYMBOL OF FREEDOM

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Read Mark 1.9-11

Reflection

Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan, the river which the Israelites crossed as they entered the promised land. This place of new life and freedom is the setting for Jesus' baptism.

When we are baptized, St Paul writes, we become "a new creation" and we follow a new way of life. In Jesus, God seeks to reconcile all things to himself. Through baptism we are called to join in that work by caring for all God has created.

Action

Can you take part in a clean-up of a local waterway – pond, canal, river or beach?
Or encourage your church to organize one?



POLLUTION AND POVERTY

Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur ... When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter.

Read Exodus 15.22-27

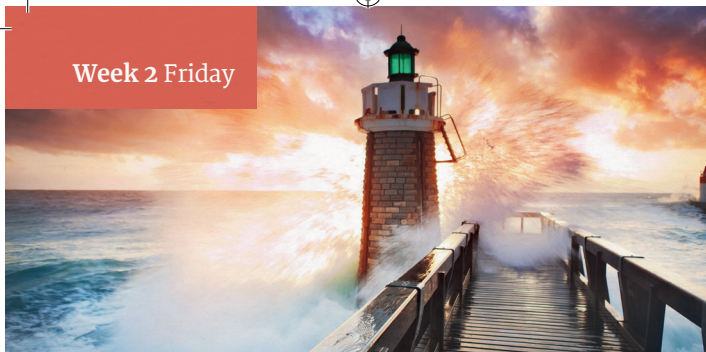
Reflection

Freshwater ecosystems are in trouble. Since 1970, there has been an 83% decline in UK freshwater species of fish. Pollution kills life in our rivers and lakes and harms plants and animals – including humans. This is what sin looks like. Our environment destroyed. The lives of the most vulnerable inhabitants of our world endangered. Reversing pollution – so that the waters can again be fresh and sustain life – requires repentance. By governments, businesses, and by us, too.

Action

Look in your kitchen and bathroom – is there one thing from each you could switch to a product that does not contain harmful chemicals?

Week 2 Friday



OVERWHELMED?

Do not let the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up ... Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good

Read Psalm 69.1-3, 15-16

Reflection

As we become more aware of the effects of climate change – rising temperatures and sea levels, flooding and droughts – it's easy to become overwhelmed. Hopelessness and fear can set in.

We may feel afraid for ourselves, or for future generations. We may feel guilt that we are safe while those who live in other parts of the world suffer. But God is good, his love steadfast. And, by persevering in prayer and action, we can make a difference.

Action

Many places around the world are already experiencing major disruption as a result of climate change. Pray for them and consider how you might cope with changes in the future.

WATER AND THE SPIRIT

“Those who drink the water that I will give them will never be thirsty ... [it] will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

Read John 4.7-15

Reflection

A woman goes to fetch water and finds Jesus waiting at the well. She longs for a more satisfying life. For freedom from the shame that made her go to the well when she expected no one else to be there. Jesus treats her with respect and dignity. Forgetting his own physical thirst, he attends to her spiritual thirst. Jesus offers “living water” – water that brings us blessing and refreshment right to the core of our being.

Action

Can you give – or raise – money for a charity providing clean water and sanitation in areas of need, such as Toilet Twinning?*

* Visit www.toilettwinning.org to twin a home, workplace, church or school toilet.



Week 3

LAND AND PLANTS

This week we'll be reflecting on land and on the tree and plant life it supports. We'll be exploring what the abundance of nature tells us about the God who created it, and the urgent need for humans to value and protect it.

Prayer for the week

*When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

From "O Lord my God!",
by Stuart K. Hine (1899-1989)

Week 3 Monday



GOD'S GOOD EARTH

The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind ... And God saw that it was good.

Read Genesis 1.9-13

Reflection

The Bible shows us that the earth is sacred, a creation of our creator God. It has value because God has made it and declared it is good – not merely useful, adequate or necessary to humanity, but good.

The diversity and abundance of life on earth reflect the generous heart a God who loves to bless who delights in growth and richness and wants us to share his delight in – and care for – the world around us.

Action

Let these words of former Archbishop Rowan Williams inspire you to act today:

“Receive the world God has given you. Go for a walk. Get wet. Dig the earth.”

TREES

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord ...
They shall be like a tree planted by water ...
in the year of drought it is not anxious.*

Read Jeremiah 17.7-8

Reflection

The Bible points to trees as an example for us to follow so that when difficulty comes, we, like them, can hold fast to life. Trees do so much to support the world around them. They absorb carbon from the atmosphere. They hold back storms and flooding. They protect the soil and restore moisture to it. They provide habitats for wildlife. Deforestation has put the whole earth in danger. Planting more trees is a vital way of protecting our world.

Action

Can you plant a tree this Lent? If not, the Woodland Trust (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) can plant one for you. Or why not encourage your church to plant a tree whenever someone is baptized?

Week 3 Wednesday



LAND AND SALVATION

For you shall go out in joy ... the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Read Isaiah 55.10-13

Reflection

Reading the Bible reminds us that the earth is not silent and inert. In today's reading we have a picture of the human beings, mountains and trees united in joy and praise. Land is an indispensable part of what salvation looks like. Isaiah 65 describes a future where people live in their own houses and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. Revelation pictures the New Jerusalem as a garden city with a river and trees.

Action

Reduce your paper use this week. Always ensure it is 100% recycled or from sustainable forests.* Only print if you really have to – and always double-sided.

*Find out more at www.fsc-uk.org

A WITNESS TO SIN

The fields are devastated, the ground mourns; for the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil fails.

Read Joel 1.2-4, 10-14

Reflection

Failures of justice and of care to places and peoples over time destroy lives and landscapes and God's creation is grief-stricken with the exploitation and loss. The earth witnesses to the sins of humanity.

St Paul speaks of creation groaning like a woman in labour and that it longs to be set free (Romans 8.22). We too mourn for our planet and long for its health. As children of God let us repent and turn to life.

Action

So much news today reports bad things happening to our planet, yet most people do care. Pray for those leading positive change and encourage environmental action by your own local church community.



PRUNING

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower ... Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit."

Read John 15.1-4,7-9

Reflection

Jesus was surrounded by trees throughout his ministry. He was hailed by palm branches when he entered Jerusalem, and a few days later was nailed to a wooden cross, wearing a crown of thorns.

Jesus speaks of himself as the vine, with branches that draw from their strength and fruitfulness from him. Jesus' disciples, then and now, are invited to abide in him through prayer, and bear the pruning necessary for new growth and fruitfulness.

Action

Prune your life and create space by taking items you no longer use to a charity shop or recycling centre.

REST FOR THE LAND

“Six years you shall sow your field ... but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord ... ”

Read Leviticus 25.1-5

Reflection

Allowing land to lie fallow – rather than always seeking to gain all that you can from it – is the way God taught his people to farm, and also to live.

Buying and consuming as much as we can and feeling we must have more can become a habit. We can also look at others and imagine that the more productive they are, the more valuable. The sabbath principle challenges us to think differently, to live more sustainably.

Action

Buying local seasonal produce helps support biodiversity as well as reducing carbon emissions. Try to buy local for at least two meals in the coming week.



Week 4

STARS AND SEASONS

As well as providing light (our theme in Week 1), the sun, moon and stars divide time into day and night, seasons and years. This week we explore how attending to these rhythms can help us live in greater harmony with God and nature.

Prayer for the week

*Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed thy hand hath provided —
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

From “Great is thy faithfulness”,
by Thomas Chisholm (1866–1960)

Week 4 Monday



WAKING AND SLEEPING

“Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years ...”

Read Genesis 1.14-19

Reflection

We live by a natural rhythm of day and night, with that rhythm encoded in our DNA, and we know how it feels when that pattern is disrupted. Ahead of the weekly pattern of rest we find on the seventh day (the sabbath), the fourth day in Genesis 1 sets out a daily cycle of waking and resting. Taking time on waking to dedicate our day to God and to review the day in thanksgiving and prayer before sleep is an ancient Christian tradition.

Action

As we enter the second half of Lent, can you establish a rhythm of prayer that echoes the natural pattern of day and night?

Visit www.churchofengland.org/everydayfaith for some suggestions.

STARGAZING

The Lord brought Abram outside and said, “Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them ... So shall your descendants be.”

Read Genesis 15.1-6

Reflection

To be able look up on a clear night sky and see the stars can take our breath away. The immensity of space that we see humbles us and enables us to glimpse a little of our immeasurable creator.

Abram (later renamed Abraham) couldn't count the stars but believed that God's promise to bless him and give him descendants would come to pass. Gazing at stars – so many we cannot count them – can remind us of God's care, also beyond measure.

Action

Make time this evening (or on the next clear night) to gaze at the night sky. Pause to reflect on how everything and everyone is bound to one another and to God.

Week 4 Wednesday



GOD OF SUN AND MOON

*The Lord determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.*

Read Psalm 147.1-11

Reflection

From the earliest times people have looked to the sun and moon and worshipped them. And many people today still look to the stars to predict what will happen, expecting them to reveal their fate. The psalms remind us that the glory of the heavens has been created by God, who names and cares for everything. Our lives are not determined by the stars – rather we trust in God in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17.28).

Action

Like the stars, so the Church’s year follows set patterns, with links to the seasons. Find out more online about Rogationtide, Lammas Day and Creationtide. How might reclaiming these ancient traditions help today’s churches and communities?

TO EVERYTHING A SEASON

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

Read Psalm 19.1-6

Reflection

The movement of the sun, moon and stars punctuate time for us, but we spend much of life trying to diminish the inconvenient aspects of the seasons.

We turn up our central heating rather than putting on a jumper. We buy fruit and vegetables that have been transported from far away because they are not in season. Not being in touch with the natural world can cause us to harm it by using energy and resources needlessly.

Action

With over half of Lent gone, spring is on the way in the UK. Today may be a good time to turn heating controls down a degree or even more.

Week 4 Friday



LET THERE BE DARKNESS

*You have made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting. You make
darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the
forest come creeping out.*

Read Psalm 104.1-4, 19-23

Reflection

On the fourth day of creation darkness, as well as light, is declared good. Light pollution, however, means that more than one third of the human population is no longer able to see the Milky Way. But it is not just about what people cannot see. Frogs and toads are affected by the artificial light, as are migratory birds flying at night. Natural darkness enables humans to appreciate the wonders of the night sky and many other creatures to flourish.

Action

Are there any outside lights you could switch off or lower at night? If your church has floodlighting, could it be switched off for the rest of Lent?

THE END OF THE WORLD?

“The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.”

Read Acts 2.14-21

Reflection

The Bible contains a number of “apocalyptic” predictions – often associated with signs in the sun and moon. For too many people, a belief that this world is going to be destroyed has led them to conclude we need not bother about saving it. The Bible certainly anticipates a time when God will transform this present reality, bringing in a new heaven and a new earth. But the hope of this glorious future – of Resurrection – is one that inspires us to heal our world and love our neighbours now.

Action

Reflect on these words, attributed to Martin Luther: *“If I believed the world were to end tomorrow, I would still plant a tree today.”*



Week 5

CREATURES OF SEA AND SKY

“Look at the birds of the air,” suggests Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel (5.26). This week we will be doing just that, as well as considering fish and other sea creatures described on the fifth day in the Genesis 1 narrative.

Prayer for the week

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.*

*He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.*

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–1895)

Week 5 Monday



LORD OF SEA AND SKY

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.”

Read Genesis 1.20-23

Reflection

On the fifth day of the Genesis 1 account, God does not merely cause the sea and the sky to team with vast quantities of creatures. He also creates an extravagant diversity, with over 10,000 species of birds and over 30,000 species of fish have been so far identified.

God blesses the living creatures (literally, “living souls”) he has created and commands them to multiply and fill the waters and fill the earth. And God sees that they are good.

Action

Allow yourself to wonder at the abundant, varied and often beautiful creatures who share our world. Discover more about birds or sea creatures by watching a documentary or researching online.

LARGE AND SMALL

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

Read Psalm 104.24-28

Reflection

The sea is filled with innumerable creatures, from microscopic to the largest creatures on earth. But this diversity is threatened not only by global warming but also by plastic pollution.

Currently over three billion of us worldwide currently have no safe way of managing our plastic waste. Plastic waste not only causes pollution that damages human health, it leads to vast floating islands of plastic in the seas and microplastics threatening even the tiniest marine creatures.

Action

There is an urgent need for us to break our plastic addiction. What more could you do to reduce your own use of plastic at home and on the move?

Week 5 Wednesday



LET DOWN YOUR NETS

Jesus said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

Read Luke 5.4-11

Reflection

Simon Peter and the others had not caught anything all night. When Jesus advised them about where to fish, they did as he asked, hauled in a great catch but then left their nets and followed him in a new way of living.

Today, we are over-fishing and using methods which mean that many species of marine life are unsustainable. When the way in which we live our lives as human beings no longer enables us to flourish in our environment, then we must change.

Action

If you eat fish or shellfish look out for products that carry the Marine Stewardship Council's blue fish label which certifies sustainable fisheries.

NO PLACE TO SETTLE

Then Noah sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark ...

Read Genesis 8.6-12

Reflection

Doves are among the birds most often mentioned in the Bible. Noah sends one out to see if the land has recovered after the flood. The dove returns when it finds “no place to set its foot” and later does not come back, having found a new home. In our own time, many bird species are in decline as the habitats that provide their homes are lost as a result of climate change, deforestation and intensive farming.

Action

Intensive farming is associated with hedgerow loss and reduced biodiversity. When you buy fruit and vegetables, look out for produce from less intensive organic or LEAF-certified producers.

Week 5 Friday



THE SPARROW'S HOME

*Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow
a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts ...*

Read Psalm 84.1-4

Reflection

The tree sparrow population in the UK has declined by 95% since 1970, in large part because of the loss of habitats due to urban development. As we have increased our building of homes for people, we have reduced habitats for birds.

The psalmist describes sparrows nesting in the Temple, much as bats live in many churches today. Jesus taught that God notices and cares when a sparrow falls to ground, despite them being small, common and “two a penny” (Luke 12.6-7).

Action

Can you create or restore a habitat for birds in your garden – or in your local churchyard or other community space?

THE HEN AND HER BROOD

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”

Read Matthew 23.37-39

Reflection

This weekend we mark Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jesus can see the trouble that is brewing for the city and longs to be able to comfort the people like a mother hen gathering her brood.

Within a few days Peter will hear a cockerel crow three times and realize he has betrayed Jesus. Later on, after a breakfast of fish on the shore, Peter will receive the risen Jesus’ grace and forgiveness.

Action

Eggs are closely associated with Easter celebrations and decorations. How happy are the hens that lay the eggs you will buy? Look for free-range in the shops, sourced locally if possible.



Week 6

HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS

In this final week – Holy Week – we turn to creatures of the land, including humans. We'll consider what it means for humans to be made “in the image of God” and how it affects our relationship with one another and with the rest of creation.

Prayer for the week

*For each perfect gift of thine,
To our race so freely given,
Graces human and divine,
Flowers of earth, and buds of heaven:*

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our sacrifice of praise.*

from “For the beauty of the earth”,
by F. S. Pierpoint (1835–1917)

Week 6 Monday



ANIMALS OF EVERY KIND

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind ...” And God saw that it was good.

Read Genesis 1.24-25

Reflection

The Bible shows us a God deeply concerned for creation, not least for animals.

Genesis 1 depicts God creating all land animals – including humans – on the sixth day. We will see later this week that humans are given particular qualities and responsibilities by God. But we are also share so much with other creatures. God declares animals to be “good”, and gives to them (as well as to us) the earth and the plants it contains for food.

Action

Give thanks to God today for the animals with whom we share a common home, and for making such an abundance of life.



Week 6 Tuesday

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness ... "

Read Genesis 1.26-31

Reflection

While the other animals created on the sixth day are made "according to their kind", humans are made "in God's image".

Humans are chosen by God to bear his image and be his representatives. Being God's image-bearers equips us for the job of being God's caretakers and gardeners, caring for the land and our fellow creatures. That gives humans a particular place before God. But the whole created order is caught up in God's plans for redemption, not humans alone.

Action

Reflect today on these words of Pope Francis:
"Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator."

Week 6 Wednesday



A PEACEABLE KINGDOM?

*The wolf shall live with the lamb ...
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.*

Read Isaiah 11.6-9

Reflection

When the crowds cheered as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, they were hoping for a king, the Messiah, whose reign would reflect Isaiah's vision of a peaceable kingdom, with people and animals living together in harmony.

This vision contrasts sharply with our own age, when one in four mammals now face extinction. Underlying current unprecedented levels of loss of biodiversity is consumerism. Humans are causing the problems, but humans as well as other animals are suffering the consequences.

Action

We need to buy and use less to take better care of the natural world and free up resources for those who need them. Ask yourself: do I need this?



Week 6 Maundy Thursday

HOLY EATING

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them ...

Read Luke 22.14-20

Reflection

Food plays an important role in our humanity. The meals we share not only give our bodies energy but also build community and relationships. At Holy Communion – the heart of Christian worship – we remember the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples before he died.

Food is one of the critical challenges we face in finding a more sustainable future for people, animals and planet. Do we pay enough attention to how it is reared, grown, transported and packaged?

Action

A key step to more sustainable eating is to reduce our food waste,* which accounts for an estimated 8% of all global carbon emissions.

*Find tips at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com



CARE FOR EVERY PERSON

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.”

Read John 19.25b-27

Reflection

The belief that every person is made in God’s image drives Christians to fight against poverty, injustice and oppression and care for those who suffer.

Jesus not only *taught* us to love our neighbour – on Good Friday he *shows* us the ultimate example. Even as he is executed, Jesus extends mercy and hope to the criminals on either side of him. Amid his own suffering, he makes sure that both his mother and his disciple John will be cared for.

Action

Many Christians eat no meat or fast today in solidarity with Jesus and all who suffer. In the light of the climate crisis, are you ready to eat less meat and dairy from today?

SUFFERING AND LAMENT

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb ... they laid Jesus there.

Read John 19.41-42

Reflection

One of the Church's prayers for today begins: "In the depths of our isolation we cry to you, Lord God," and ends by asking God to "bring us out of the prison of our despair".

As we recall with grief Jesus' death and his burial in a stranger's tomb, we also lament all the suffering in our world. We acknowledge with sorrow our own part in causing or contributing to it. And we wait for God to forgive us and free us.

Action

Make a space today to lament the ways we have failed to treat people as made in the image of God or care for the world entrusted to us.

Easter Day



REST AND RESTORATION



Supposing him to be the gardener, Mary said to Jesus, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him."

Read John 20.11-18

Reflection

Genesis 2 begins by describing the Seventh Day – the Sabbath, when God rested from the work of creation. But by Genesis 3 we encounter Adam and Eve's disobedience and the tragic consequences of human sin. As Ruth Valerio writes in her conclusion to *Saying Yes to Life*:

"The rest of the Bible is then the story of how God works to bring restoration: to put back to rights what has gone wrong and bring about the Sabbath rest that has been promised."



Adam and Eve turn away from God in a garden, and it is in a garden that Mary Magdalene first encounters the risen Jesus. For Christians, the First Day becomes the new Sabbath, a day not only of rest but of resurrection and restoration.

Our faith in the risen Jesus gives us hope of a future when creation will be set free in the age to come. But this hope also strengthens us to live in the world as it is – a world where there is great suffering, a world which we are called to serve and to sustain.

Action

What will you take forward from all that you have learned and done during Lent?

How might your prayer, your actions and your giving change to reflect your care for God's creation?

Prayer

*Now let the heavens be joyful,
And earth her song begin!
The round world keep high triumph,
And all that is therein;
Let all things seen and unseen
Their notes of gladness blend,
For Christ the Lord hath risen,
Our joy that hath no end.*

from "The day of resurrection",
John of Damascus (c. 750),
translated by J. M. Neale (1816–66)



Going further: next steps for individuals and churches

AS AN INDIVIDUAL

- **Stay in touch.** For ongoing news and useful information, sign up for the Church of England Environment Programme quarterly newsletter: cofe.io/EnviroNews
- **Learn.** Find more information, try the Church of England website: cofe.io/environment
- **Act.** How many of the Top 10 Pledges can you complete in 2020? <https://climatevision.co.uk>

- **Campaign.** Write to your MP and local councillor to tell them what you learned during Lent and ask them to take action. Support campaigns such as Tearfund, Christian Aid and Operation Noah.

AS A CHURCH

- **Learn.** Take the Eco Church survey – a simple framework that breaks down your eco journey into manageable steps, focusing on buildings, land, worship and teaching, lifestyle, and community/global links.
<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>
- **Switch.** Cut your carbon footprint by switching to “green energy” with the help of the Big Church Switch (www.bigchurchswitch.org.uk) or Parish Buying Green Energy Basket (www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/energy/energy-basket).
- **Pray.** During the Season of Creation (1 September to 4 October) take part and raise your voices in prayer for the climate. Many churches will choose one Climate Sunday to focus on during the season.
- **Talk.** Plan ahead and hold a climate conversation in your community during COP26 (9–19 November). Engage different generations in looking ahead to a low-carbon future.

- **Need advice?** There is lots of guidance on our website: cofe.io/biodiversity, and you can contact your Diocesan Environment Officer via cofe.io/DEOMap

IF YOU HAVE GREEN SPACES

- **Make homes for wildlife in your church and churchyard** with the action pack from Caring for God's Acre www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/action-pack/havens-for-wildlife and support from the Bats in Churches project <https://batsandchurches.org.uk>

AS A SCHOOL

- **Become an Eco School.** Speak to the head teacher about becoming an Eco School, or how you can support them to achieve a higher level www.eco-schools.org.uk