



METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER - August 2021



SEASON OF CREATION

How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. (Psalm 104:24-25)

SEASON OF CREATION – an ecumenical expression in worship and parish life

*The Season of Creation is a global movement,
an annual month-long season when Christian communities pray and act to protect creation.*

*We'll dig deep into our faith and come away feeling refreshed in our unity
and our love for each other and the Creator.*

The season starts 1 September, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and ends 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and ecology beloved by many Christian denominations.

The Season of Creation focuses on the affirmation that the Earth belongs to God, and each beloved creature belongs to this common home. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common role as caretakers of God's creation. We see that our wellbeing is interwoven with its wellbeing. The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together; to join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.

Prayer is a powerful experience and tool to raise awareness and foster transformational relations and ministry. For centuries, our theology, our ethics, and our worship have been oriented in two dimensions: our relationship with God and our human relationships with one another. Now, particularly in our increasing awareness of climate change and environmental concerns, it is time to turn our attention to God's relationship with all creation and with our relationship with creation (and with God through creation).

This global celebration began in 1989 with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Dimitrios I, who proclaimed the recognition of September 1st as a Day of Prayer for Creation - and this is now embraced by the wide ecumenical community. It was embraced by other major Christian European churches in 2001, and by Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic Church in 2015.

A significant compilation of resources is to be found on the Season of Creation website: www.seasonofcreation.org including a full guide, ideas, themes based on the lectionary readings, and calls to action. A further rich treasure trove of resources is to be found on www.letallcreationpraise.org

A video of an intergenerational webinar on the theme “A home for all?”, recorded in June, but can be found on the Season of Creation website, its Facebook page, or on YouTube:

https://www.facebook.com/SeasonofCreation/videos/512297566626042/?so_channel_tab&rv=all_videos_card

or on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fUD_1l2BvA



There are two particular sources for themes to reflect on in this ecumenical season of prayer, worship and action.

THEME OPTION: “Let all creation praise”

This option forms part of a three-year cycle of themes, as noted in the MCNZ/PCANZ Lectionary. This arises from a project influenced by Australian Norman Habel, and has produced a range of liturgical and other resources on the website www.letallcreationpraise.org

A book resource available, that includes reflections from which to develop sermons, is *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary* by Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire, from (Fortress Press, 2011). In addition, the website ‘Singing from the Lectionary’ also includes hymn suggestions based on themes. <https://lectionarysong.blogspot.com/>

This expression of the Season of Creation utilises a collection of three series to sit alongside the traditional 3-year lectionary cycle, though with an alternative selection of scripture readings to the Revised Standard Lectionary. Each series is based respectively on the themes of ‘Spirit’, ‘Word’, and ‘Wisdom’. For 2021 (Year B), the theme is ‘Word’ and has the following themes for each Sunday:

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| 1 st Sunday in Creation | Planet Earth Sunday |
| 2 nd Sunday in Creation | Humanity Sunday |
| 3 rd Sunday in Creation | Sky Sunday |
| 4 th Sunday in Creation | Mountain Sunday |
| 5 th Sunday in Creation | Blessing the animals (St Francis of Assisi Day) |

THEME OPTION: “A home for all? - renewing the oikos of God.”

Oikos is the Greek word for “home,” or “household.” By rooting our theme in the concept of *oikos*, we celebrate the integral web of relationships that sustain the well-being of the Earth.

The Psalmist (24:1) proclaims “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” There are two statements of faith at the heart of this song. The first is that every creature belongs to the Earth community. The second is that the entire community belongs to the Creator.

Sustaining just ecological, social, economic and political relationships requires our faith, reason and wisdom. By faith, we join the Psalmist in remembering that we are not stewards of an inanimate creation, but caretakers within a dynamic and living community of creation. The Earth and all that is not a given, but a gift, held in trust. We are called not to dominate, but to safeguard.

This year's symbol, Abraham's tent, signifies our commitment to safeguard a place for all who share our common home, just as Abraham did in the Book of Genesis.

You're encouraged to place Abraham's tent in a local garden as a sign of hospitality for the excluded. Communities are invited to pray with and for the most vulnerable in their community. The tent can also be present in liturgies or events throughout the Season of Creation as a symbol of the community's intention to create a home for all.



OPPORTUNITIES OF LOCAL OBSERVANCE

Individuals and communities are invited to participate through prayer, worship, join sustainability projects, study groups/home groups, or add your voice in advocacy ...

Prayer: prayer services during the Season of Creation that unites all Christians to care for our common home.

Some examples: host an ecumenical church service on a creation or a climate-focused service, to explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care and action on climate, to pray, and to commit to action. You could even consider holding a common prayer event outdoors in a park, at a beach, or on a hilltop.

Worship: incorporate elements of the season into your own Parish's worship services. This could be done by including elements or preaching themes across all the Sundays, or focus on the first Sunday as 'Creation Sunday'.

Some examples: use a litany within each service; use hymns and songs focusing on celebrating creation and caring for it; when holding Holy Communion using a liturgy that celebrates God's creation; for your offertory, ask children and adults to gather symbols from nature and take them to the holy table as "fruit of the earth and work of human hands" alongside the bread and wine; create banners or incorporate other symbols of creation for the church/sanctuary space.

Celebrate: Observe and give witness to the beauty of creation in your locale.

For example: create a photo wall in your church, inviting people to bring photos of something which for them celebrates the beauty of creation in their garden, street, or wider town or region; organise a contemplative walk outside to meditate on the gift of God's creation.

Sustainability: Make a commitment as a local church community to taking long term action to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions.

Some examples: invite local youth groups to combine for a beach or waterway clean-up of plastics and rubbish; introduce recycling to your church buildings.

Advocacy: Raise your voice for climate justice by participating or leading an ongoing campaign.

Some examples: join with other churches and wider society in a common call for governments to take much bolder action on climate change in this country in advance of COP26.

Study Group: hold within your own parish, or combine with neighbouring parishes, for a reflection and conversation on a theme related to the Season of Creation. Find a guest speaker, or draw upon people in your own community with a special interest.

Some examples: a local Catholic Parish has invited neighbouring congregations to hear an invited speaker on "Mother Mary as inspiration to care for our common home"; hold a workshop or discussion on the encyclical *Laudate Si*.

SEASON OF CREATION PRAYER

Creator of All,

We are grateful that from your communion of love you created our planet to be a home for all. By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of living beings that filled the soil, water and air. Each part of creation praises you in their being, and cares for one another from our place in the web of life.



With the Psalmist, we sing your praise that in your house “even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.” We remember that you call human beings to keep your garden in ways that honour the dignity of each creature and conserve their place in the abundance of life on Earth. But we know that our desire for power that pushes the planet beyond her limits. Our consumption is out of harmony and rhythm with Earth’s capacity to heal herself. Habitats are left barren or lost. Species are lost and systems fail. Where reefs and burrows, mountaintops and ocean deeps once teemed with life and relationships, wet and dry deserts lie empty, as if uncreated. Human families are displaced by insecurity and conflict, migrating in search of peace. Animals flee fires, deforestation and famine, wandering in search of a new place to find a home to lay their young and live.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that the breath of your creative Word would move our hearts, as in the waters of our birth and baptism. Give us faith to follow Christ to our just place in the beloved community. Enlighten us with the grace to respond to your covenant and call to care for our common home. In our tilling and keeping, gladden our hearts to know that we participate with your Holy Spirit to renew the face of your Earth, and safeguard a home for all.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

MISSION AND ECUMENICAL - Office Relocation

MME is no longer based in an office at the MCNZ Building at 409 Great South Road, Ellerslie; as of 1 July 2021. The Acting Director will be working from his home office – mobile or email easiest ways to make contact.

MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD

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