



# Green Anglicans

Anglican Church of Southern Africa Environmental Network



# World Environment Day 2021

## Eco-system Restoration

Renewing the Web of Life

[#generationrestoration](#)



**REIMAGINE  
RECREATE  
RESTORE**  
#GenerationRestoration



**WORLD  
ENVIRONMENT  
DAY**

**UN**  
environment  
programme

**5**  
1972-2022



**PAKISTAN  
2021**



**REIMAGINE YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE.  
RECREATE A LIFESTYLE THAT  
CARES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.  
RESTORE THE WORLD YOU SEE.**

# WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

## RENEWING THE WEB OF LIFE



JEREMIAH 2: 1-7	We have left the fertile earth desolate
PSALM 148	The Great Choir praising God is made up of the whole web of Creation
COLOSSIANS 1.15-20	All things were created by and for Christ, giving particular value to each creature
LUKE 6: 12-16	At a very crucial moment of his ministry, Jesus goes and prays on the mountain

### COLLECT



God of all creation  
Your eternal power is known through the whole flow  
of existence  
and in its intricacies and beauty your voice speaks  
to us of your  
wisdom and purpose.  
Rooted in your love and grace may we with all  
creation  
speak your glory from everlasting to everlasting,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### GATHERING



Bowls of water can be placed on the altar. Explain  
that water is vital to maintain the web of life. There  
is water that we see: oceans, rivers, lakes, and deep  
below our feet there is water that we cannot see –  
the groundwater stored in aquifers. The web of life  
depends on living water.

Invite the Sunday School or youth to create banners  
which reflection the web of life.

### CALL TO WORSHIP



How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands!  
The heavens declare your glory; the arch of sky  
displays your handiwork.  
In your love you have given us the power to behold the  
beauty of your world robed in all its splendour.

The sun and the stars, the valleys and hills reflect  
your glory.  
The rivers and lakes, waterfalls and hidden  
groundwaters reveal your presence.  
The roaring breakers of the seas tell of your awesome  
might.  
The beasts of the field and the birds of the air speak  
of your wondrous will.  
In your goodness you have made us able to hear the  
music of the world.  
You are in our midst. A divine voice sings through all  
creation.

### PENITENCE



Leader Lord, have mercy.  
**All Christ, have mercy.**  
Leader Lord, have mercy.

Leader O God, your fertile earth is slowly being  
stripped of its riches,  
**All Open our eyes to see.**

Leader O God, your living waters are slowly being  
choked with chemicals,  
**All open our eyes to see.**

Leader O God, the precious groundwater has been  
squandered and polluted  
**All open our eyes to see.**

Leader O God, your clear air is slowly being filled with pollutants,

**All open our eyes to see.**

Leader O God, your creatures are slowly dying and your people are suffering,

**All open our eyes to see.**

Leader God our maker, so move us by the wonder of creation,

**All that we may repent and care more deeply.**

Leader So move us to grieve the loss of life,

**All that we learn to cherish and protect your world.**

*(Eco-Church South West Resources)*

## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God, who creates all things, who embraces all things, who celebrates all things, who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.

We believe in God as the source of all life, who baptizes this planet with living water.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one, the poor one, the malnourished one, the climate refugee, who loves and cares for this world and who suffers with it. And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life, who came to reconcile and renew this world and everything in it.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, who moves with God and who moves among and with us today.

We believe in everlasting life in God.

And we believe in the hope that one day God will put an end to death and all destructive forces.

*(Eco Church South West Resources)*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.

They came forth from your all-powerful hand,  
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.

Praise be to you!

Teach us to contemplate you  
in the beauty of the universe,  
for all things speak of you.

Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.

Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined  
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love

for all the creatures of this earth,

for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money

that they may avoid the sin of indifference,

that they may love the common good, advance the weak,

and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.

O Lord, seize us with your power and light,

help us to protect all life,

to prepare for a better future,

for the coming of your Kingdom

of justice, peace, love, and beauty

Praise be to You.

*(Pope Francis, Encyclical)*

## CREATIVE RESPONSES

Video: This is a beautiful video clip of John Rutter's anthem "look at the world"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb0g-npfVcl>

Drama "God the artist" which shows how we have damaged God's world

<http://www.greenanglicans.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WED-2015-God-the-Artist.pdf>

## PEACE SENTENCES

Deep peace of the running wave to you

Deep peace of the flowing air to you

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you

Deep peace of the shining stars to you

Deep peace of the gentle night to you

Moon and stars pour their healing light on you

Deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you

Deep peace of Christ to you

*(traditional Celtic prayer)*

## COMMUNION

### The taking of the bread

Blessed are you Lord God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this bread which earth has given and which we have received from the silent soil. It is the bread of the earth, this silent earth bathed in morning light, this beautiful planet in the teeming galaxies of space: warm and well-lit for us, generous, faithful, and surprising, bringing forth life in all its forms. May it be to us the bread of life.

### The taking of the wine

Blessed are you, Lord God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. In our earth of many blessing the vine was planted, its roots reaching down to that richness from which all nourishment, strength and health are drawn. May it be to us the cup of life.

### The taking of the water

Blessed are you, Lord God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this water to offer, which heals, revives, and cleanses. Your living water flows through rivers, lakes and wetlands and lies beneath us in the hidden groundwaters. May it be to us the water of life.

## CREATIVE IDEAS:

As people come to receive communion, play birdsong instead of a hymn. Birds - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTcxaqilg4U>

## COMMISSIONING

This we know: the earth does not belong to us.

**The earth is the Lord's and so are all its people**

This we know: we did not weave the web of life.

**The earth is the Lord's and so is all that breathes on it.**

This we know: we are called to till and work the earth.

**The earth is the Lord's and so are all who work the land.**

This we know: that we are called to take care of creation.

**The earth is the Lord's, yet we have polluted and abused it.**

This we know; that whatever befalls the earth.

**Befalls the sons and daughters of the earth**

This we know: that the earth is the Lord's

**And so, we will serve Him in it.**

**Amen**

*(Prayer adapted by Bishop Eric Pike)*

# SERMON – RENEWING THE WEB OF LIFE



The theme for World Environment Day 2021 is “restoring our eco-systems”, in other words, to restore the web of life.

During 2020 we realised just how interconnected the web of life is. In late 2019, on the far side of the globe an unknown virus appeared. Theories are that COVID19 jumped species from a sick bat to a captured pangolin in captivity and thus the first human was infected. So called zoonotic diseases that jump from animals to humans are becoming more and more common - SARS, MERS, Swine flu, Avian flu, Mad Cow disease ... the list is ever growing. These diseases are the boomerang effect of biodiversity loss. The growing pressure of urban and agrarian expansion on natural environments is increasing the frequency of contact between human populations and wild animals. Some of these species are hosts for viruses that we have not yet been exposed to. The effect on us is devastating.

In Gen 2:15 God gave humans our first mandate – to work the land and look after it.

We have failed to do so. We have continued to pump carbon pollution into the atmosphere, warming the Earth, causing increased drought, extreme weather events and sea level rise. Drought kills off natural habitats, floods sweep them away and sea level rise poisons them with salt. As the Earth warms there is a huge increase in the number of fires in tropical areas as well the destruction of Arctic eco-systems as the ice melts. As if that is not enough, we are polluting precious eco-systems with plastic waste – by 2050 it is estimated there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans. Our demand continues to rise for consumer goods, for meat, for energy - we are eating beyond our limits.

The words of the prophet Jeremiah are calling out to us:

I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable. Jer 2:7

In one lifetime, we have wiped out almost two thirds of the population of wild animals. The web of life is unravelling.

In order to restore the web of life, we need to examine our relationship with Creation. Consumerism and colonialization are underpinned by the theology of dominion -that we are the rulers of creation and God has given us the right to have dominion over the Earth and to subdue it – to meet our need, and even our greed - as humans.

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground”. Gen 1: 28

In Hebrew the word ‘subdue’ – Kabash – is an agricultural image, bringing to mind small holder farmers who must pull up weeds, digging up tree stumps and large rocks in order to cultivate their land. It is not an image of dominion and destruction.

More recently the idea of humans as rulers of creation has been replaced by the concept that we are stewards of Creation – God has placed Creation into our care. Although this is an improvement on the idea of rulers, it is based on the view that we are separate from Creation, that Nature is ‘out there’. We visualise ourselves as part of a pyramid, with God at the top, humans next and then creation below us.

The reality is that we are not separate from Creation, we are part of the web of life. We did not even get our own day of Creation; we were created with all the other animals!!

Psalm 148 - the song of all Creation - describes an amazing, diverse, praise chorus encompassing the whole web of life. We worship God within this choir, the Community of all Creation. Kings and young people praise God together with the giant sea creatures and the tiny creeping insects. What a great tragedy when one of those voices is stilled ... for ever.

In Franciscan theology this relationship of the Community of all Creation goes one step further. In the Canticle of Creation based on Psalm 148, St Francis praises God for "our Brother, Wind and Air, our Sister Water, and our Sister Earth, our Mother".

We not only sing in the same choir, but we are also kindred, we are part of one family.

What kind of spirituality will help us to restore this relationship with the web of life?

Firstly, we must recognise that God speaks to us through Creation. In the early church there was an understanding of the "two books of God" – the first book was Creation, and the second book was the written word of God.

Psalm 19 shows this balance beautifully - the first section (v 1-7) describes learning from the book of nature: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge'. (Psalm 19.1-2), The second half of the Psalm speaks of the "law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul"

God is speaking to us through nature, but we are not listening. Through nature we not only learn about, but also experience, the greatness, the glory of God.

For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. (Rom 1;20)

Creation is not God – but it is created by God and therefore we can see the fingerprints of God in all of Creation. Nature is not divine – we do not worship it – but it is valued by God and points us to God.

We can develop a creation spirituality by holding services, or retreats, meetings, Sunday school or youth meetings in creation. This is the perfect opportunity as it is much safer to hold services outside due to Covid concerns. "The Earth is the Lord's" says the Psalmist in Psalm 24:1 – why then do we so often only worship God within the confines of the four walls?

For Jesus, spending time with God in nature was very important – he started his ministry with a 40-day retreat in the wilderness and often chose to go and pray in nature at particularly stressful times. Having just received news of the brutal murder of his close friend John the Baptist followed by a marathon ministry day of preaching and feeding an enormous crowd of people, he sends the disciples ahead and goes up onto a mountain to pray alone. (Matthew 14.23)

We can incorporate an awareness of the fingerprints of God when we take young people on hikes – to reflect on the many scriptures that talks of mountains, rivers, lakes, birds – they will see Scripture come alive before their very eyes.

As we celebrate the beauties of creation, we must also develop a spirituality of lament, for the eco-systems and for those whose livelihood depends on them. "The rural poor depend directly on the natural resource base. This is where their pharmacy is, this is where their supermarket is, this is in fact their fuel station, their power company, their water company. What would happen to you if these things were removed from your local neighbourhood?" (Dr Stella Simiyu- Kenyan botanist)

We can learn from the liturgies of indigenous Christians – a Lutheran Navajo pastor told me that when she reads Psalm 117 “Praise God, all you people” she sees the human people, the plant people, the four-legged, flying and swimming peoples, rock people, star people and more.

One of the most beautiful Anglican prayer books is the one from New Zealand, Aotearoa, and Polynesia - influenced by Maori theology. Listen to the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer “Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!”

We became members of the body of Christ through the waters of baptism, and so our sacred element is water – as part of our spiritual journey we need to commit to protecting the eco-systems that are dependent on the living waters of God. From springs to wetlands to rivers and lakes, water gushes through the pages of Scripture. Water heals, restores, and brings new life.

And so let me end with a question of reflection from Isaiah 49:10

“The scorching heat of sun will not strike them down. For he who has compassion will lead them. And will guide them to spring water”.

We can see the waters of rivers, lakes, and waterfalls. Deep below our feet are the hidden groundwaters. At times of plenty our church services, conferences and fellowship gatherings fill us with living water. During COVID these have dried up, how now can we reach down to our spiritual groundwater?







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