

JUBILEE FOR THE EARTH



2020

CELEBRATION GUIDE



**SEASON OF
CREATION**

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Introduction

Thank you for bringing your community together for the Season of Creation. Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our 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. We rejoice in this opportunity to care for our common home and the sisters and brothers who share it.

This year, the theme for the season is “**Jubilee for the Earth**”. We invite you to consider the integral relationship between rest for the Earth and ecological, economic, social and political ways of living. This particular year, the need for just and sustainable systems has been revealed by the far-reaching effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We yearn for the moral imagination that accompanies the Jubilee.

This guide will help you learn about the season and plan to celebrate it. More resources, including webinars and prayer services, a Facebook group, and photos, are available online. Please visit SeasonOfCreation.org to access all the materials.

Season of Creation Steering Committee



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



european christian environmental network

Lausanne/WEA
Creation Care Network



THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION



World Communion of Reformed Churches



World Council of Churches



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Faith Leaders' Invitation to join the Season of Creation

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you. (Leviticus 25:10, NASB)

This year, the global reach of the novel coronavirus revealed our shared human nature and the inter-connectivity of our economies, political structures, health care systems, food production chains, energy and transportation systems in devastating ways. The pandemic also demonstrated that the entire web is rooted in the Earth and limited by the Earth's capacity to sustain our economic and ecological demands. The unjust effects of climate change are a consequence of our inability to find a sustainable balance of this web.

From September 1 to October 4, the Christian family celebrates the good gift of creation. This global celebration began in 1989 with the Ecumenical Patriarchate's recognition of the Day of Prayer for Creation and is now embraced by the wide ecumenical community.

During the Season of Creation, we unite as one family in Christ, celebrating the bonds we share with each other and with "every living creature on Earth." (Genesis 9:10) The Christian family celebrates the season by spending time in prayer, considering ways to inhabit our common home sustainably, and lifting our voices in the public sphere.

The scriptures begin with God's affirmation that all of creation is "very good." (Genesis 1:31) As co-creatures and caretakers of God's creation, human beings are called to protect and nurture its goodness. (Genesis 2:15, Jeremiah 29:5-7) Our vocation to protect and nurture life relates to the sustainability of ecological, economic, social and political systems. A just balance between these aspects of life must be maintained for the health of the Earth and all creatures.

According to this wisdom the Law of Moses included provisions for the Sabbath. On the seventh day of each week, God's people were free from the need to produce or consume. The rest was extended to animals, and the land itself, honoring the Creator by allowing creation to rest. Following the seventh, seventh (49th) year, God's people were to dedicate a year to this ecological, social and economic restorative justice. A Jubilee for the Earth.

As we live into a post-COVID-19 world, can we imagine new just and sustainable ways of living that give the Earth the rest it requires, that satisfy everyone with enough that



restore habitats and renew biological diversity? May Holy Wisdom inspire our imagination.

In this Celebration Guide for the Season of Creation, we offer resources in the ecumenical spirit of our common vocation to protect the Earth and sustain the conditions for life to thrive. We encourage the entire Christian family to join us in this special time to pray, reflect, and take bold action to realize a Jubilee for the Earth.

In the hope born of grace, we pray that the Lord who is our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer will touch our hearts and that of the human family this Season of Creation.

In God's grace,

Members of the Season of Creation Advisory Committee:

Bishop Marc Andrus, Episcopal Diocese of California

Rev. Ed Brown, Care of Creation and Lausanne Catalyst for Creation Care

Dr Celia Deane-Drummond, Director, Laudato Si' Research Institute, Campion Hall, University of Oxford

Msgr. Bruno-Marie Duffé, Secretary, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Josianne Gauthier, General Secretary, CIDSE

Rev. Norm Habel, Season of Creation Project, Adelaide

Bishop Nick Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury, Church of England Environment Working Group

Dr Hefin Jones, Executive Committee, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Metropolitan of Zimbabwe Serafim Kykotis, Greek Orthodox Archbishopric of Zimbabwe and Angola

Bishop Mark Macdonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Anglican Church of Canada

Fr. Martin Michalíček, Secretary General, Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae

Ms. Necta Montes, General Secretary, World Student Christian Federation

Sr. Patricia Murray, Executive Secretary, International Union Superiors General

Dr Alexandros K. Papaderos, Advisor of the Ecumenical Patriarchates of Constantinople

Paulo Ueti, Theological Advisor & Latin American Regional Director, Anglican Alliance

Canon Dr Ruth Valerio, Director Global Advocacy and Influencing, Tearfund



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Event Checklist

This checklist covers the steps to hold a successful event. In summary: plan well, gather wide support, make sure others are aware of the event, and follow-up after it is held.

Here is a detailed, step-by-step list to guide your celebration:

- ❑ Gather a group of one to four people to lead with you. This event committee will share the work, develop ideas, working with your pastor/priest and congregation to ensure that the Season of Creation has broad support in your church.
- ❑ Develop a general plan for your event. Refer to the event suggestions, and either choose the one that is right for you or develop another.
- ❑ Schedule a conversation between the pastor/priest, community leaders. To prepare everyone for the meeting, share the letter from faith leaders, information about the Season, and a link to the website in advance. All are available at SeasonOfCreation.org.
- ❑ In the meeting, start by thanking everyone for the good work they already do to protect creation. Say that you and your committee would like to volunteer for the church by leading a Season of Creation event. Get everyone's feedback, and write notes to record comments.
- ❑ Update your plan in response to the shared comments. Clear the event date, time, and location with your church administrator.
- ❑ Register your event at SeasonOfCreation.org. When you register, your celebration will become visible on the global Season of Creation map. We will also follow up with you by email to provide additional resources.
- ❑ Speak to additional leaders in the church as needed to get feedback and buy-in. The grounds committee, director of religious education, music and worship leader, and parish council might be involved, depending on your event.
- ❑ If your event is ecumenical or interfaith, contact the places of worship with which you hope to collaborate. Request a meeting and present your plan in a way that is similar to the method you used with your own pastor/priest.



- ❑ After the plan is finalized, make sure that members of your congregation and any collaborating places of worship are aware of it. The ideal time to start is one month before the event. This step is essential to ensuring robust attendance and an engaging event. Use the template bulletin announcement, flyer, and social media post available at SeasonOfCreation.org.
- ❑ A few days before the event, gather all supplies. Contact any co-hosts to make sure they have everything they need. Do a final push for awareness in the church by asking your pastor/priest to make a pulpit announcement for setting up a table in a public space to pass out flyers after services.
- ❑ Host your event. Have fun!
- ❑ After the event, send a thank-you note to all leaders and volunteers. Let your congregation know about any outcomes or next steps from the event.
- ❑ Share photos of your event at SeasonOfCreation.org. These may be shared publicly, and will inspire and educate people around the world.
- ❑ Complete the event report form at SeasonOfCreation.org.



2020 Season of Creation Theme:

Jubilee for the Earth

Each year, the ecumenical steering committee that provides this Season of Creation Celebration Guide suggests a theme. The 2020 theme is *Jubilee for the Earth*.

Climate change is a result of the intersection of greed, inequality and destruction of God's Earth. The theme of Jubilee is chosen for this year's Season of Creation as it reflects those three interlocking themes. Jubilee is a time to renounce overconsumption and economic systems based on constant economic growth at the cost of the Earth and those who are poor. Jubilee is a time when those who have consumed the most must make restitution to those who have suffered the most. Jubilee is a time of rest for the land from constant exploitation, to restore ecosystems and people.

The concept of Jubilee is rooted in the holy wisdom that there must exist a just and sustainable balance between social, economic and ecological realities. When one variable is exploited to maximize growth of another, the whole system will eventually suffer. When one part of the Earth community is stressed, every part is affected. In 2020, the novel coronavirus pandemic demonstrated this reality on a global scale. While the experience of living with the COVID-19 outbreak points back to this need to maintain justice, the lessons that we learn may point us towards the need for a Jubilee and motivate us to restore balance to the very systems that sustain life.

And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. (Leviticus 25:10, NRSV)

Jubilee means "a ram's horn". It was blown to mark the start of a time of universal redemption. The year of Jubilee involved release from indebtedness, when injustices of the past fifty years were to be restored. It was also a time for rest for the land.

The theme of Jubilee has clear links to the root paradigms fueling unjust exploitation, such as neoliberal and capitalist approaches to the world economy. It brings together the need for a prophetic voice on climate injustice and actions for the restoration of the Earth. The theme of Jubilee affirms the need for equality, justice and



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sustainability, and a transition to sustainable economies. It honours the Jubilee 2000 Campaign, which successfully called for an amnesty on debt for global South countries and redistribution of wealth. And 2020 marks 50 years since the first Earth Day when the environmental movement was born.

A Climate Emergency

We are in the midst of a climate emergency. Several studies have indicated that the world is nowhere near meeting pledged emission reduction rate targets. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlights that “only with rapid and far-reaching” transitions in the world economy, on a scale and at a rate without historical precedent, can the 1.5°C limit be achieved. It is therefore a time to reconcile ourselves with creation through concrete repentance and urgent action. The Season of Creation is a time to acknowledge that tipping points are being reached, threatening the lives of the most vulnerable and putting the lives of future generations in jeopardy. As people of faith, we are being called to stand up against climate injustice in prophetic ways.

The Season of Creation 2020 will also be an important moment for the Christian family to raise a united voice for rapid and radical ambitious action ahead of the 26th annual United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) to address the climate crisis. COP 26 is particularly significant, as parties are due to announce how they will implement the Paris Climate Agreement (and whether they will fall short). It is a time when faith communities are called to support and challenge their countries’ leadership to implement visionary and significant goals. It is also a time when we must listen to the prophetic voices of young people.

Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the Day of Atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. (Leviticus 25:9, NRSV)

Prophetic call of hope

As people of faith we are called to sound a voice of hope, like the Jubilee. We lament, for everywhere we hear the groaning of creation. So we act as carriers of creation, and we sound the horn of hope, for the Earth and all they that live in it belong to the Lord. We know that God has promised the renewal of this Earth.



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During this critical and trying time, we acknowledge our role as people of faith in sounding hope amidst this current crisis and affirm ourselves as prophetic witnesses. Jesus has given us a choice between God and Mammon. For the sake of the Earth and all creatures, we have no choice but to pursue Justice (Micah 6:8).

Season of Creation 2020 is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Jubilee today, especially in the lead-up to COP26. How will we, as persons and as the Church:

- ❑ Recognise God’s ownership of the whole Earth, and all our ‘possessions’?
- ❑ Release what we have back to God, both spiritually and practically?
- ❑ Recognise our total dependency on God and his creation?
- ❑ Receive God’s provision, in patience and trust?

What does it mean for the church to declare ‘the Year of the Lord’s Favour’? How can we glorify God for the hope we have in Christ, who restores and redeems the Earth? What changes will we see for those who are poor, and the land we enslave? We are far from a picture of Jubilee provision. As God’s Earth suffers, God’s people suffer also. Season of Creation 2020 encourages churches and Christians to participate through:

- ❑ Prayer: including praise for God’s provision, repentance for our greed and complicity in the suffering of Earth and our neighbours, intercession for those vulnerable to climate chaos, and releasing all we have back to God
- ❑ Practice: auditing our own mistreatment of the Earth, and committing to new practices individually and as worshipping communities
- ❑ Advocacy: encourage states to ensure that climate justice and steps to a green economy are part of the COVID-19 economic recovery plans
- ❑ Action: participate in civil action to put pressure on Governments to produce ambitious national targets (NDCs) for COP26



Season of Creation 2020 Prayer

Creator of Life,

At Your word, the Earth brought forth plants yielding seed and trees of every kind bearing fruit. The rivers, mountains, minerals, seas and forests sustained life. The eyes of all looked to You to satisfy the needs of every living thing. And throughout time the Earth has sustained life. Through the planetary cycles of days and seasons, renewal and growth, you open your hand to give creatures our food in the proper time.

In your Wisdom, you granted a Sabbath; a blessed time to rest in gratitude for all that you have given; a time to liberate ourselves from vicious consumption; a time to allow the land and all creatures to rest from the burden of production. But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits. Our demands for growth, and our never-ending cycle of production and consumption are exhausting our world. The forests are leached, the topsoil erodes, the fields fail, the deserts advance, the seas acidify, the storms intensify. We have not allowed the land to observe her Sabbath, and the Earth is struggling to be renewed.

During this Season of Creation, we ask you to grant us courage to observe a Sabbath for our planet. Strengthen us with the faith to trust in your providence. Inspire us with the creativity to share what we have been given. Teach us to be satisfied with enough. And as we proclaim a Jubilee for the Earth, send Your Holy Spirit to renew the face of creation.

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

Amen.



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Ideas to Celebrate the Season of Creation

There are many different ways to celebrate the Season. The ecumenical Season of Creation network has suggested a few ideas, which are available below. Be sure to visit SeasonofCreation.org for other ideas and campaigns, including denomination-specific initiatives.

As you are planning your event, be sure to register it on the website at SeasonOfCreation.org. When you register, your celebration will become visible on the global Season of Creation map to inspire others and increase attendance. We will also contact you to provide additional resources.

However you celebrate, be sure to share your experience

Photos and videos

- ❑ Be sure to take photos of your community in action. Your photos will be shared with people around the world, and could inspire prayers and action to protect creation (*kindly ask consent to share people's images, and refrain from close ups of children without parent/guardian permission*). Please upload your photos at SeasonOfCreation.org.

Social media and blogs

- ❑ Post images and stories while you plan and during your celebration. Be sure to tag your post or tweet with #SeasonofCreation, and it will appear on the Season of Creation website.
- ❑ Join our English-language [Facebook community](#) and share your experiences.
- ❑ Write a blog post about your community's Season of Creation celebration.

Pray and worship

Prayer is at the center of our lives as Christians. Praying together deepens our relationship with our faith and brings forth new gifts of the Spirit. As Jesus taught us, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am with them" (Matthew 18:20).



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The following suggestions will help you shape a prayer or worship service during the Season of Creation.

Host an ecumenical prayer service

Hosting a prayer service is a simple and beautiful way to celebrate the Season. While a prayer service that stays within your church community is welcomed, this Season offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with Christians outside of your denomination or network.

If interested, contact local Christian communities of denominations different from your own, and ask the clergy or justice coordinator whether he/she would like to collaborate in co-hosting a prayer service for the Season of Creation. If you send an email, be sure to share a link to the Season of Creation [website](#) and to include information about the season.

Start with the event checklist. Ask all participating communities to advertise the service. Broadcasting information via social media, print and web media will ensure good attendance and lead to a diverse, dynamic celebration. Sample flyers, bulletin inserts, and pulpit announcements are online. Appoint either one clergy person or a group of clergy people from participating churches to lead the prayer service.

The following is an example of a prayer service developed for Season of Creation 2019 that you can use and adapt to your context.



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Ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation:

Jubilee for the Earth

Opening prayer

Begin your service by lighting a candle, and setting the space with other natural items that represent the agriculture or wilderness of your local ecology, and open by praying:

We gather in the name of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the Earth and all its creatures!

Praise be to the Holy Trinity! God is sound and life, Creator of the Universe, Source of all life, whom the angels sing; wondrous Light of all mysteries known or unknown to humankind, and life that lives in all.

(Hildegard of Bingen, 13th Century)

Opening sentences

One We gather in the image of the Creator

***Many* who is a community of love.**

One We gather in the name of the Redeemer

***Many* who reconciles all of creation.**

One We gather in the presence of the Life Giver

***Many* who inspires new life and renews it.**

Song

Sing a hymn that praises God as Creator. If possible, find a hymn that is shared by all participating traditions.



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Psalm 104

One Bless the Lord, O my Soul!

***Many* All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.**

One 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.

***Many* All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.**

One The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God; The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening.

***Many* All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.**

One From your lofty abode you water the mountains; You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal;

***Many* All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.**

One You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the Earth, wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.

***Many* All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.**

One The Earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

***Many* All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.**

***All* May the glory of the Lord endure forever!**



Confession *(based on Leviticus 25:1-25)*

We praise you God, for the Earth that sustains life. Through the planetary cycles of days and seasons, renewal and growth, you open your hand to give all creatures our food in the proper time. In your Wisdom you gave a Sabbath for the land to rest. But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits. Our demand for growth, and an endless cycle of production and consumption are exhausting our world. The forests are leached, the topsoil erodes, the fields fail, the deserts advance, the seas acidify, the storms intensify. Humans and animals are forced to flee in search of security. We have not allowed the land to observe a Sabbath, and the Earth is struggling to renew. And so we confess. God of mercy and justice,

One You tell us the land must rest, free from the burden of production.

***Many* We confess our demand that the Earth produce beyond its limits, and our bondage to desire more.**

One You call us to pause from sowing, pruning, and reaping in ways that destroy the soil.

***Many* We confess our vicious consumption of food and energy.**

One You assure us that we can be filled from the yield of the land.

***Many* We confess our lack of trust that we can thrive within the Earth's limits.**

One You affirm that our security is found in enough.

***Many* We confess our lack of courage to resist the myth of endless growth.**

One You tell us that the land must not be sold permanently, because the land is Yours, and everything in it.

***Many* We confess to thinking of creation as given, instead of a gift.**

One You call us to leave enough fruit on the vine and in the fields to feed our neighbours, animals, and replenish the Earth.

***Many* We confess our failure to share what we receive from the Earth.**



One You call us to fairness and justice.

Many We confess our lack of faith, not loving you with our whole heart and strength and mind, or our human and non-human neighbours as ourselves.

One Turn us from fear and mistrust,

Many and free us to imagine a life reconciled to the Earth and all creatures, through the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

One The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26–27).

Many Amen.

(adapted from the Lutheran World Federation)

Reading of Scripture followed by preaching or participatory reflections

See the thematic readings offered below in this resource, or locally designate a text that reflects the particular context of your prayer service. Suggested scriptures are on the Season of Creation website.

Song

Sing a hymn that praises the biodiversity of creation. If possible, find a hymn that is shared by all participating traditions.



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Profession of faith

One We belong to the Creator in whose image we are all made.

Many **In God we are breathing, in God we are living, in God we share the life of all creation.**

One We belong to Jesus Christ, the true icon of God and of humanity.

Many **In him God is breathing, in him God is living, through him we are reconciled.**

One We belong to the Holy Spirit, who gives us new life and strengthens our faith.

Many **In the Spirit love is breathing, in the Spirit truth is living, the breath of God always moves us.**

One We belong to the Holy Trinity, who is one in all and Three-in-One.

Many **In God we are all made, in Christ we are all saved, in the Spirit we are all united.**

(Per Harling)

Offering and offertory prayer

You may want to have an offering, perhaps to collect money for a particular project or ministry that contributes to ecological restoration, or an aspect of climate justice, or you may want to showcase local plants, animals from your area as a way to raise awareness of the rest your local habitats need.

Prayers

One We pray in thanksgiving for Mother Earth in whom all life is rooted, Brother Sun whose energy radiates life, Sister Water who nurtures and revives us, and co-creatures with whom we live, and for whom we are called to till and keep this garden.

Many **enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.**

One All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that



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exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. Creative Spirit,

Many enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

One O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the Earth. Creative Spirit,

Many enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

One Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. Creative Spirit,

Many enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

One In the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, hear our cries of compassion, and heal our world and all creatures. Inspire our hearts with a holy imagination, to rise, freed from the demands to produce and consume to imagine a just, sustainable way of living, where all have enough, and all may be restored.

Many enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

One During this Season of Creation, grant us courage to observe a Sabbath for our planet. Strengthen us with the faith to trust in your providence. Inspire us with the creativity to share what we have been given. Teach us to be satisfied with enough. And as we proclaim a Jubilee for the Earth, send Your Holy Spirit to renew the face of the ground.

Many enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

One We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Creative Spirit,

Many enlighten our hearts and remain with your world. Amen.

(adapted from A prayer for the Earth, Pope Francis, Laudato Si)



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Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on Earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
Who transforms chaos to order,
Lead us to transform our lives and the Church
To reflect God's glory in creation.

(CTBI Eco-Congregation Programme)



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Integrate creation into Sunday liturgies

Encourage your pastor/priest to preach a sermon on creation or integrate creation themes into prayers during the Season of Creation.

The following ideas will help your pastor/priest or prayer leader shape a sermon or prayers. Each week in the Season of Creation has a suggested theme. Scriptures from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament, and Gospels are listed along with a synopsis of how they connect with the theme. Any or all of these may be used during the season. More ideas can be found at <http://www.sustainable-preaching.org/>

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Text</i> | <i>Theme</i> |
|---|---|--|
| 6 September, 2020 <i>14th Sunday after Pentecost – Season of Creation 1</i> | 1st Reading: Ex 12:1-14 Psalm 149 2nd Reading: Rom 13:8-14 Gospel: Matt 18:15-20 | <i>The Greatest Commandment, Love your Neighbour</i> |
| 13 September, 2020 <i>15th Sunday after Pentecost – Season of Creation 2</i> | 1st Reading: Ex 14:19–31 or Sirach 27:30-28:9 Psalm 114 2nd Reading: Rom 14:1–12 Gospel: Matt 18:21–35 | <i>Protecting the Commons</i> |
| 20 September, 2020 <i>16th Sunday after Pentecost – Season of Creation 3</i> | 1st Reading: Ex 16:2-15 or Isa 55:6-9 Psalm: 105:1-6, 37-45 2nd Reading: Phil 1:21-30 Gospel: Matt 20:1-16 | <i>There is Enough for our Need, not our Greed</i> |
| 27 September, 2020 <i>17th Sunday after Pentecost – Season of Creation 4</i> | 1st Reading: Ex 17:1–7 or Ezek 18:25-28 Psalm 78:1–4,12–16 2nd Reading: Phil 2:1–13 Gospel: Matt 21:23–32 | <i>The Gift of Water</i> |
| 4 October, 2020 <i>The Feast of St. Francis</i> | 1st Reading: Psalm 148:7-14 Psalm 121 2nd Reading: Gal 6:14-18 Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30 | <i>Creation Spirituality</i> |



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Hold a Prayer Service Outside

To celebrate God’s creation fully, it is good, where practical, to take our worship outside a building and to worship in the context of God’s creation – which is already worshipping God eloquently as every creature, and even mountains, rivers and trees worship the Lord simply by doing what God created them to do. You might like to consider a site of environmental significance. If it is a place of great natural beauty, the focus would be on giving thanks to God and committing ourselves to protecting the site and others. If it is a place of environmental degradation, the focus is on confessing our environmental sins and committing to actions of healing and restoration.

- ❑ Depending on your style of worship and the weather, consider an informal service or brief Eucharist.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Include a moment of silence to listen to, and wordlessly join in with the song of creation’s worship.
- ❑ Include readings from Isaiah 65:17–25 or other appropriate readings.
- ❑ Include a lament for our abuse of creation, and a time of listening to creation’s groaning (Romans 8:22) in the Confession.
- ❑ In place of the sermon, divide into groups for a short Bible study.

Bible Study

Read Isaiah 65:17–25 “A New Earth”

What issues do we see in this passage in relation to poverty, injustice and the environment?

Share personal experiences of these issues that you know of or have faced in your own life.

What is your vision of a new (renewed) Earth?



Closing Prayer

You asked for my hands that you might use them for your purpose,
I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard.

You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice.

I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

You asked for my life that you might work through me.

I gave a small part that I might not get too involved.

Lord, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you

only when it is convenient for me to do so,

only in those places where it is safe to do so,

and only in those who make it easy to do so.

Lord, forgive me, renew me, heal me, nurture me,

empower me, send me out as an instrument of your peace and justice

that I might take seriously the meaning of servant-leadership.

Amen.

(Joe Seramane, Christian Aid Lifelines, South Africa)

Organize a Creation Walk or Pilgrimage

You might consider organizing a contemplative walk outside to meditate on the gift of God's creation and our response to be in deeper communion with all life. This might be in the form of a "Via Creatio" or Creation walk in which you meditate on the 7 days of creation using stations. You could also organize a pilgrimage in a significant ecological site, or praying with ecological themed Scripture or prayers, like this [ecological rosary](#), while walking. Your pilgrimage could also culminate in a prayer service, or the following Earth Examen.



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Engage your local ecology through this Earth Examen:

An examen is a way of beholding an object or being in prayerful wonder. Through questions, you are invited to reflect on God's presence and the goodness of that which you behold. During this Season of Creation, consider contemplating a part of your local ecology. This is an exercise that you can choose to do alone, or with a group.

Pick a natural or agricultural place to contemplate. A forest. A river. A city street with a natural area. An urban park. A farmer's field. A hilltop. Find a comfortable place to rest in or near this place. Enter into prayer in whatever way is natural to you. Invite Holy Wisdom to open the eyes of your heart. When you are ready, reflect on the following questions:

1. Become aware of God's presence in a natural or agricultural place that you are contemplating.

How is God present in this place? How does all the life you see exist in God's spirit? How do you feel knowing that the Holy Spirit has filled this place for geological ages, with every creature that has been here in the deep past, is here with you now, and will be here with creatures in this place in the future? How do you feel knowing that you, Earthling, belong to this place, are made of the same carbon, breathe the same air, are nurtured by the same cycles and life processes, and are enlivened by the same Spirit of the Creator?

2. Reflect on the ecological cycles of this place with gratitude for all that it provides.

What nutrient cycles are supported by this place? Is this a watershed that filters water? Is this a rainforest (tropical or deciduous) that fixes nutrients? Is this a meadow or field that fixes nitrogen? Is this a green space that absorbs CO₂ and cleans the air? What plants, animals, microbes and minerals are sheltered here? How do they serve the whole Earth in their being? For all that this place provides, let a feeling of gratitude fill you.



3. Pay attention to what you feel as you contemplate the fragility, health of this site.

Is this ecosystem healthy? How is this ecosystem at risk of illness? What are the keys to sustaining the equilibrium and balance of this place? What niches and diversity must be protected to maintain the health of this habitat? What are the sources of stress that threaten the balance of this particular ecosystem? How do you feel when you consider the fragility of life that depends on the health of this place? What is your effect on this balance?

4. Choose one feature of the site and pray for it, its rest and its renewal.

When you consider the ways that this place is under stress, what does it need for rest, restoration and renewal? What needs to be conserved for this site to heal itself? What features need to be reclaimed? Pray for this site, and the wisdom to care for it.

5. Look toward your response. What can you do to ease demands or promote the rest of this ecological site?

Based on your examination, how do you identify with this place? What have you discerned is required to care for this place? What will be your act of compassion to promote rest for this place?

Hold a sustainability event

Companionship enriches our experience of the natural world. By joining others in our community, we share both the joy of experiencing creation and the challenge of caring for it. Finding strength in unity is a principal celebrated by our scriptures, which say that “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

The following suggestions will help you design a sustainability event for your community.



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Clean local waterways

Cleaning local waterways is an important way to protect the creatures who live in them. 71% of the Earth's surface is covered by water, and pollution and waste can have a devastating effect on the many species – including humans – that depend on clean water.

Pollution in our waters includes run-off from fertilizers and pesticides, industrial waste, human sewage, and an enormous amount of plastic. Plastic causes many deaths through entanglement, and by breaking down into microplastics which can be ingested in vast quantities (see [A Rocha's Microplastics Toolkit](#) for more information and practical ideas for churches).

Participating in a water clean-up protects the web of life, and it honours Christianity's symbolic engagement with water, from the cloud that guided the Israelites to the river that baptized Jesus. Your group may wish to conceive of its travel to the clean-up site as a pilgrimage that connects you with the foundations of our faith.

Each year, the international community unites to clean waterways. This year's international clean-up will be held 21 September, but an event on any date is welcome. By participating, you will stop plastics and other harmful materials from entering the water and its food chain. This activity is especially well suited to families.

In reaching others in your church, you might want to incorporate a lesson on plastics into the Sunday School curriculum. The Anglican Communion Environmental Network/Green Anglicans has developed [Oceans of Plastics](#), a Sunday School lesson that is designed to help children understand the wonders of God's oceans and the harm plastic causes. The guide provides a brief list of concrete actions we can take to protect the oceans and the creatures that live in them.

For more information about The International Coastal Cleanup, please visit the [Ocean Conservancy](#).



Grow a tree

Trees help combat climate change, clean the air we breathe, and provide habitat for much of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. Planting trees and nurturing them to grow can also celebrate your community's shared commitment to creation.

Consider having a tree-planting event during Season of Creation that involves a prayer service. See a sample prayer service [here](#). Guidance for how to select a tree and choose a site for it is [here](#). If possible, choose a native species. This will best support insects and other animals, contributing to the health of the entire ecosystem on your grounds. Don't forget to work with the facilities manager, grounds committee, and your own team to care for the tree after it is planted.

Encourage sustainable living

The Season of Creation is a wonderful time to reflect on how our lifestyles affect the environment and to make a commitment to more sustainable ways of living. The good news is that making more sustainable lifestyle choices in just a few areas adds up to a big difference overall.

Reduce your carbon footprint

Encourage your community to reduce its ecological impact by joining the Living the Change initiative during the Season of Creation. [Living the Change](#) is a multi-faith initiative that helps diverse people of faith around the world put their beliefs and values into practice by reducing their personal carbon footprint. Together, these efforts add up to a collective effort to limit global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Ultimately, reducing global warming is an important way to protect the plants and animals who are affected by the bigger deserts, warmer summers, and changing rainfall associated with climate change.

Here are some suggestions for ways to join Living the Change:

- ❑ Pledge to put your beliefs and values into practice by reducing your personal carbon emissions at www.livingthechange.net.



- ❑ Make a concrete lifestyle change commitment in one of the three high-impact areas of transportation, diet, and energy.
- ❑ Learn about how making personal changes in response to climate change is part of our Christian faith through Living the Change webinars.
- ❑ Host a Living the Change Supper to discuss the Christian faith and climate-friendly lifestyles with members of your community.
- ❑ Organize a Time for Living the Change event to encourage and celebrate meaningful reductions in carbon footprints.
- ❑ Information and resources for the activities above can be found on our website: www.livingthechange.net or at info@livingthechange.net

Diet : promote sustainable consumption by a) lessening red meat consumption, b) buying ecological and fair-trade foods from local producers, c) reducing food waste, d) avoiding disposable (single-use) articles e) promoting reusable food packaging and items (no plastics and tins for daily diet)

Transportation: Promote climate-friendly mobility by supporting climate-friendly and post-fossil mobility. Dependent on your context: post timetables for public transport, use bicycle, and sharing, installing one of the many carpooling or car-sharing systems, installing charging points for electrical cars – or – over all: reduce the need for mobility by regionalizing daily-life economy!

Energy: Monitor our energy consumption at least once a year and strive for a complete change to renewable energy.” The consumption of fossil-fuel based energy harms the climate

Materials: Engage materials use consciously. Every time we purchase something, we pay for its raw materials, production costs and disposal as waste after use. The acquisition of raw materials is often very harmful for people and the environment. Small changes like duplex printing on recycled paper or avoiding buying new mobile phones, computers, laptops every one or two years can help the Earth restore. Think about a “Jubilee for the Earth” before buying.

Networking: “Whenever two of you on Earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19) We can have more impact, if we do things together! Raise our voice on economic and ecological issues in our communities and beyond.



Making sustainable changes on an Institutional level

As well as making changes at an individual level as outlined above, changes at institutional level can have a huge impact and result in tangible reductions in negative environmental impacts.

An institution's services and facilities offer a huge opportunity for change. Conducting an energy audit of the building is a great starting point and looking at key areas such as heating, lighting, ventilation and insulation offer many opportunities for immediate footprint reduction.

In addition, the land that the institution occupies can also be a source for positive environmental change. For example, thoughtful management of green spaces can help absorb carbon from the environment, promote local biodiversity, and even create space for community gardening.

Many Church networks now have platforms and resources to support churches and congregations that want to make sustainability changes. A Rocha has developed [Eco-Church](#). The [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) is developing an interactive "Laudato Si Action Platform", which will support Catholic Institutions and families to review their impact and take action across a number of areas.

Practice the Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice.

Invite your congregations, communities and churches to discuss and practice the 5-step WCC programme to change the way we deal with the economy and our ecological surroundings. Information and resources for the Roadmap activities can be found on the WCC website:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/diakonia/economy-of-life/roadmap-for-congregations-communities-and-churches-for-an-economy-of-life-and-ecological-justice>



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Advocacy: Participate in campaigns that call for restoration

The theme “**Jubilee for the Earth**” highlights the integral relationship between economic security, ecological sustainability, social wellbeing and just relationships between people, the earth. Jubilee is a justice oriented model that reflects God’s will for living well so that every creature can flourish as individuals and in society. N.T. Wright points out: ‘Jubilee is concerned for social and economic need but cannot be understood or practiced without the theological and spiritual principles intrinsic to it.’

COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing inequalities of an unjust economy. When the immediate health crisis is over recovery efforts must focus on building a just, sustainable, and resilient economy. The COVID-19 crisis highlights the need to restore healing rhythms more than ever.

We call for urgent advocacy to climate justice, rooted in restoration for the earth and all people. Post COVID-19 recovery and the climate crises need to be tackled in tandem. The Jubilee concept imagines sustainable models of economic development that create equitable, healthy, safe communities for all, while reining in extreme consumption and unsustainable economic growth.

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) outlined the dire risks of maintaining current pathways of global warming. The report made it clear that to limit global warming to 1.5°C, emissions must be cut in half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050. To achieve this target we must cease expansion of fossil fuel extraction and transition rapidly to renewable energy.

We advocate for just climate finance. Some states in the global South have historically low per capita emissions but suffer extreme effects of climate change. Climate disasters wipe out entire infrastructures and they must borrow more to rebuild. The historic exploitation of the global South (gaining access to cheap labour and raw materials for industrialization) created the gross global inequality and poverty we see today. Climate finance should be seen not as “aid”, but the fulfilment of a historic responsibility to restorative justice - **Jubilee.**



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“Speak up for the poor and see that they get justice” (Prov 31:9). How can we as faith communities speak up for these issues of justice? Here are some of the calls:

- ❑ **Call for a debt jubilee.** All external debt due in 2020 to be cancelled in recognition of the severe impacts of the health, social and economic crises faced by countries as a result of COVID-19.
- ❑ **Bail out people not polluters** Stimulus packages post COVID-19 must not bailout polluting industries but rather invest in people and decent jobs, with a focus on the most vulnerable people and the planet.
- ❑ All nations must adopt **more ambitious national targets** to reduce emissions by the end of 2020, to hold temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C.
- ❑ Richer countries must **scale-up grants for adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage** in developing countries.
- ❑ End fossil fuel subsidies and all investments in fossil fuel expansion. **Divestment** from fossil fuel companies and investing in just climate solutions is a powerful action that all actors can take, including faith-based institutions, to send a powerful signal that the fossil fuel era must end urgently.
- ❑ We support the U.N. call to **safeguard 30% of Earth as protected habitats by 2030** in order to stem the alarming rate of biodiversity loss.
- ❑ We uphold the human **right to food, clean drinking water and safe sanitation**. We commit to a rapid **reduction in single use plastics**, and push for national bans, promoting a circular economy.
- ❑ We support the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals** at local and international levels.



By exercising our prophetic call to speak truth to power, we grow in love and strength. The following are ways you can advocate for the just renewal of our common home.

1. Organize a campaign as a Faith Community

Stay tuned with our [Season of Creation website](#) and social media pages for the global calendar of events and those included in this celebration Guide. Support those that include advocacy and encourage your local church to include one or more advocacy issues in their events. [Register them on the website](#). Here are some ideas:

- ❑ Cycling/marathon races, youth led sports activities, church services and vigils, clean-up exercises, tree planting exercises all in raise awareness of climate injustice – invite community leaders, representatives of government and businesses to participate.
- ❑ Organize church and community photography, poetry writing or painting/competitions to show post-COVID-19 changes in your community and vision a more just future.
- ❑ Use the Season of Creation to discuss how your church can reduce its carbon footprint. Individuals can commit to doing the same at work and at home. Look for ways to do this [here](#).

2. Join advocacy activities online

Follow the campaign on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, and amplify our **advocacy asks** on your social media handles by using #SeasonofCreation. Also, join the [Season of Creation public group](#) to get inspiring updates and share your events and experiences.

- ❑ Share photos, poems and paintings about post-COVID changes in your community to tell the story of nature around you and your relationship with creation
- ❑ Write a blog about the activity you organised or participated in, or about the significance of Creation Time for you and share with us.



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3. Join advocacy campaigns

- ❑ The Global Prayer and Action Chain for Climate Justice
<https://www.prayandact4climate.org/>
- ❑ Act Now for Climate Justice
campaign <https://actalliance.org/climatejustice/>
- ❑ The Big Shift Campaign <https://bigshiftglobal.org/>
- ❑ Join the blue community projects
<https://www.blueplanetproject.net/index.php/home/water-movements/the-blue-communities-project/>
- ❑ Protect biodiversity with WWF. <https://explore.panda.org/newdeal>
- ❑ Global Deal for Nature, with the goal of protecting 30% of wild spaces by 2030. During this Season, consider supporting initiatives like the [Global Deal for Nature](#) or other petitions to protect biodiversity.
- ❑ Divestment campaign: [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) and [Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign](#) Investors can also assess how well any company is prepared for the low-carbon economy by using tools from the [Transition Pathway Initiative](#)

4. Join a mobilization

Young people and their supporters from all generations are coming together for global strikes in the movement known as **Fridays for the Future**. Visit [Fridays for the Future](#) or [Laudato Si' Generation](#), the movement of young Catholics, for more information the strikes.

You can urge action on climate change, to protect biodiversity and promote Jubilee for your local ecology by holding a strike in your community or joining a strike that is already planned.



Global calendar of events

Due to public health precautions during the pandemic, many global gatherings are postponed or reformatted. The situation evolves weekly, and will still be in flux during this Season of Creation. Please [check the website](#) for updates and opportunities to participate in global events online. While each Christian community around the world celebrates the Season of Creation in its own way, a few events present opportunities to tie all communities together.

September 1: Creation Day/World Day of Prayer for Creation

Creation Day, also called the World Day of Prayer for Creation, opens the season each year. Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, the World Council of Churches, and many other leaders have called the faithful to celebrate this day. Globally, Christians are invited to join the online prayer service to come together in a joyful celebration of our common cause. More information will be updated at [SeasonofCreation.org](#).

September 21: International Coastal Cleanup Day

For over 30 years, communities have come together to remove rubbish from coastlines and waterways including ponds, lakes, and rivers. Together, these volunteers remove and catalogue mountains of litter every year. Your community is invited to join. To learn more, please visit the [Ocean Conservancy](#).

October 4: St. Francis Day

Many traditions view St. Francis as an inspiration and guide for those who protect creation. October 4 is his feast day and the last day in the Season of Creation. The faithful around the world will come together in an online prayer service to reflect on how St. Francis has informed their spiritual journey and to celebrate our month-long journey together. You can find registration information about the online prayer service on the [Season of Creation website](#) and our social media pages.



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Join us on social media

Join us in prayer and reflection and share exciting news about your celebration on social media. A supportive global community is forming on Facebook and Twitter.

Join the global community by using the #SeasonOfCreation hashtag on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Hashtag posts will appear on the [Season of Creation website](#).

We invite you to like or follow the Season of Creation [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, as well as join the [Season of Creation public group](#) to get inspiring updates and join the conversation.



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About the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is the time of year when the world's 2.2 billion Christians are invited to pray and care for creation. It runs annually from September 1 through October 4.

The Season of Creation unites the global Christian family around one shared purpose. It also provides flexibility in celebrating prayer services and engaging in a variety of actions to care for creation.

History

September 1 was proclaimed as a Day of Prayer for Creation for the Eastern Orthodox Church by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989. It was embraced by other major Christian European churches [in 2001](#), and by Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic Church [in 2015](#).

In recent years, many Christian churches have begun celebrating the "Season of Creation" (also known as Creation Time) between September 1 and October 4, the Feast of St. Francis that is observed by some Western traditions. St. Francis is the author of the Canticle of the Creatures, and the Catholic saint of those who promote ecology.

Several statements from the past few years have called the faithful to observe this month-long season, such as those of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines [in 2003](#), the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu [in 2007](#) and the World Council of Churches [in 2008](#).

The Steering Committee

As the urgent need to solve the environmental crisis continued to grow, Christian churches were called to strengthen their united response. The Season of Creation ecumenical steering committee came together to provide resources to empower Christians respond to of our faith, each in the way of his or her



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own denomination or network, during this shared season of reflection and action.

The steering committee is comprised of World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Evangelical Alliance, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Anglican Communion Environmental Network, Lausanne Creation Care Network, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the European Christian Environmental Network, and Christian Aid.

As an ecumenical network, we are inspired by the urgent call from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*, "for a new dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet" and "We require a new and universal solidarity" where the most vulnerable are supported and to enable them to in dignity. We invite you to join us in these efforts.



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



europaean christian environmental network

Lausanne/WEA
Creation Care Network



THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION



World Communion of Reformed Churches



World Council of Churches



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Contributors

We are grateful to the following people who contributed to the development, review, and editing of this publication.

Arnold Ambundo, Act Alliance

Dr Louk Andrianos, World Council of Churches

Dr Dave Bookless, A Rocha

Ed Brown, Care of Creation and Lausanne Catalyst for Creation Care

Cecilia Dall'Oglio, Global Catholic Climate Movement

Dr Celia Deane-Drummond, Laudato Si' Research Institute, Campion Hall, University of Oxford, UK

Reba Elliott, Global Catholic Climate Movement

Henrik Grape, World Council of Churches

Dr Hefin Jones, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Christina Leano, Global Catholic Climate Movement

Rev. Dr Rachel Mash, Green Anglicans/Anglican Communion Environmental Network

Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer, the Lutheran World Federation

John Paul Roberts, Green Anglicans

Dr Paulo Ueti, Anglican Alliance

Canon Dr Ruth Valerio, Director, Tearfund

Abena Afari, Christian Aid



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