

SEASON OF CREATION 2020

*Renewing, repairing
and restoring*

our commitments to God,
to one another
and to all of creation.

Weekly devotions for
Sept. 1 through Oct. 4, 2020



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.



The Anglican Church of Canada

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



Introduction

Each year, Christians around the world join in celebrating the Season of Creation. This is a time for renewing, repairing and restoring our commitments to God, to one another and to all of creation – relationships at the heart of Christian discipleship. It is also a time for deepening and expanding our work and witness for climate justice and environmental care.

Together, we have prepared these devotions for the Season of Creation 2020, one for each week from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. We invite you to join us through Scripture, hymnody, prayer, advocacy and action as we seek to live out our vocation as stewards of creation.

For our four churches, this is also a season of deepening our relationships with each other. We are on the cusp of entering into full communion relationships that reach across the borders between us – as churches and nations – for the sake of our common mission and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are mindful in this season that we share in the gifts and responsibilities of God's good creation. Our stewardship of the earth is not bound by national or ecclesiastical borders, but by our common baptism. By enriching our spirits together, we become emboldened as disciples of Christ and enlivened in our witness to the One, who came to redeem all of creation.

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life in all its diversity and beauty. Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, we praise you that you came to redeem all of creation. Holy Spirit, we rejoice that you breathe in the life of the world. Grant us faith and courage to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus as caretakers of, and justice-seekers for, your beautiful and bountiful creation. For the blessing of your people, the sustaining of the earth and the glory of your name. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 6, 2020

+ Pentecost 14 (Lectionary 23)

Exodus 12:1-14 | Psalm 149 | Romans 13:8-14 |
Matthew 18:15-20

*Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is
now the moment for you to wake from sleep.*

Romans 13:11

Discipleship is a lifelong calling to worship, learn, listen and act in the name of Jesus. In Romans 13, disciples are invited to wake up to the significance of the times in which they live.

Waking up to matters of climate justice and environmental stewardship are among the most important callings people have today. Over many years, through many voices, our churches have come to a growing conviction that loving our neighbour includes loving Mother Earth as a neighbour.

Who helps you to wake up?

For our churches, many voices have come from Indigenous Peoples who continue to teach us the significance of land and relationships. The particular "place you are in" at any given moment is important. "Land" is about relationships between earth, water, animals, plants, peoples, environments and climate. Healing relationships with the land are essential for justice and peace among peoples. God speaks to us anew through relationships with the land.

Worship also wakes us up. Worship helps open our hearts, minds, bodies and spirits to our relationships with creation and to the possibilities for action. We are grateful for the worship you regularly offer in order to support many on the journey of learning, listening, discerning and acting.

We are excited to share these devotions with you during the Season of Creation. We share with you these hymns that speak to our spiritual connections to creation:

National Bishop Susan Johnson

Touch the Earth Lightly (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 739)

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

(Lift Every Voice and Sing II, 217)

Archbishop Linda Nicholls

Now the Green Blade Rises (Common Praise, 237)

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

Light Dawns on a Weary World

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 726)

Perhaps you will have an opportunity to sing one or more of these hymns during the Season of Creation.

What songs, prayers, words and practices encourage you as you express your discipleship through caring for creation? What helps you wake up?

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life in all its diversity and beauty; renew us in discipleship and in love for the earth. Amen.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 13, 2020

National Bishop Susan
Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada

+ Pentecost 15 (Lectionary 24)

Exodus 14:19-31 | Psalm 114

or Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21 |

Romans 14:1-12 |

Matthew 18:21-35



*Lord, if another member
of the church sins against me, how often should I
forgive?* Matthew 18:21

At the 2018 Bishops' Academy, theologian Cynthia Moe-Lobeda reminded us of our call to "neighbour love," to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself. She went on to say that if God loves the creation, then we must think of the creation as our neighbour.

I am reminded of this when I read today's lesson. What if Peter had rephrased his question to Jesus as "Lord, if a neighbour sins against me, how often should I forgive?" Or, what if the neighbour asking the question was creation asking about us? How many times should creation forgive us for overfishing, deforesting, polluting, endangering species, desertification, commodifying or even just not paying attention? Whether it is seventy-seven times, or seventy times seven, we are past the breaking point.

The 1854 speech attributed to Chief Seattle included these words: "Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves. ... The earth is precious to [God], and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator."

How long until we don't just know it in our heads, but know it in our hearts, and change the way we treat the creation, our neighbour?

Creator, we pray that you would help us touch the earth gently. Turn us from our ways of commodifying the earth and consuming its riches without thought. Amen.

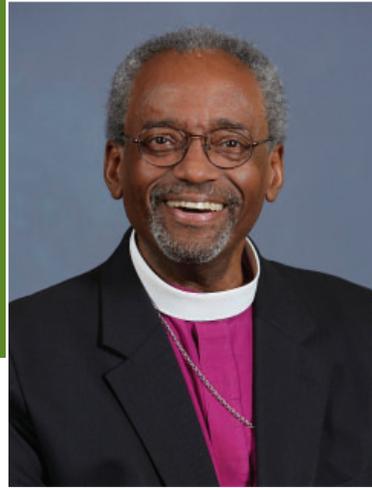
Suggested hymn: "**Touch the Earth Lightly**"
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 739)

SUNDAY, SEPT. 20, 2020

Presiding Bishop Michael
Curry, The Episcopal Church

+ Pentecost 16 (Lectionary 25)

Exodus 16:2-15 | Psalm 105:1-6,
37-45 | Philippians 1:21-30 |
Matthew 20:1-16



*My desire is to depart
and be with Christ, for
that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is
more necessary for you.* Philippians 1:23b-24

There are a lot of good hymns and spirituals about heaven and how wonderful it will be to rest from our labors and be there with the Lord. And this is true. The apostle Paul, when he wrote his letter to the Philippian Christians, was in prison and didn't know if he was about to die. If so, he said, that would be just fine: "To die is gain." But he went on to say that, although this world and its problems can be tiresome, he needed to stick around because there was still work to do. To remain, for Paul and for us, was "necessary for you."

Now, "you" isn't just our loved ones, or even our neighbors, co-workers and folks we meet. "You" is also the world in which we live and breathe, the vineyard in which we toil. To "remain in the flesh" is hard work, because it calls us to be ever more intentional in our care for all around us, including

creation itself. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once affirmed that "it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith." This world, and all that it holds, is in God's hands. But as long as we remain in the flesh, then by God's call it is in our hands as well.

Liberating, life-giving God, help us to know that we and the world you have created are truly the work of your hands. Give us knowledge and wisdom to care for your handiwork now and for future generations. Amen.

Suggested hymn: **"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"** (Lift Every Voice and Sing II, 217).

SUNDAY SEPT. 27, 2020

Archbishop Linda Nicholls,
Anglican Church of Canada

+ Pentecost 17 (Lectionary 26)

Exodus 17:1-17 | Psalm 78:1-4,
12-16 | Philippians 2:1-13 |
Matthew 21:23-32



*I will be standing there
in front of you on the rock
at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come
out of it, so that the people may drink.* Exodus 17:6

As a settler Canadian, I am accustomed to the ready availability of fresh, clean water at any moment on any day. I have also lived in the Himalayas of India where the provision of water was unpredictable day to day, and what was available had to be boiled thoroughly first because it was not safe to drink. Like the Israelites in the desert, I readily grumbled and complained when it was not available. This became a lesson for me in the dangers of the privileges that I had enjoyed and took for granted in Canada. I became acutely aware that the lack of water was a daily reality for millions of people – and that clean water was even more scarce. I also became aware of those who profit from the bottling and selling of a resource that is a necessity of life and a gift of the Creator.

The ongoing protection and sharing of clean water are part of our baptismal vocation to love neighbour as self and to “safeguard the integrity of God’s creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the earth.” Just as Moses followed God’s direction in order to offer water to the Israelites in the desert, we are called to partner with those protecting and sharing water. From joining the advocacy of Autumn Peltier, a young Indigenous water protector, to the relief efforts of the Red Cross to our daily habits to conserve and protect water in our community, we are called to share in the provision of God’s gift of water now and for future generations.

Creator of all, stir in us the passion to share the living water of the gospel as we also protect and share the waters of your creation to nourish all creatures. Amen.

Suggested hymn: **“Now the Green Blade Rises”**
(Common Praise, 237)

SUNDAY, OCT. 4, 2020

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth
Eaton, Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

+ Pentecost 18 (Lectionary 27)

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 |
Psalm 19 | Philippians 3:4b-14 |
Matthew 21:33-46



*The law of the Lord is
perfect, reviving the soul.* Psalm 19:7

In the story of creation God provided a paradise. All of creation was in balance and was a delight. And God set clear boundaries so that balance could be maintained and all created things could flourish. These boundaries provided definition that made possible the amazing diversity of the created world. Far from being a constraint, these boundaries provided freedom and, paradoxically, real connection.

But humankind rebelled and continues to rebel. It is almost as if we view boundaries as an offense and limits as an affront. Creation is ours to use! But that denies the truth that we have this one earth and this one temporal life.

As I write this, we are living in a pandemic. The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has spread throughout the world, bringing sickness and death. Viruses are strange creatures. They have no nucleus or membrane; they are unable to

differentiate like normal healthy cells and are completely dependent on a host cell to survive. They will use up that cell even if it means the death of the host.

So God, through the law, gave us the gift of limits. God is God and we are not. We are responsible to each other. Our actions have consequences. We are not to live as membrane-less viruses.

The law of the Lord is perfect, sure, right, clear, pure and true. It brings wisdom, rejoicing, enlightenment and righteousness.

Creator God, help us to accept your boundaries so that all created things can flourish. Amen.

Suggested hymn: **"Light Dawns on a Weary World"**
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 726).