



CREATION TIME 2015 - WEEK 2 SEPTEMBER 13TH

INTRODUCTION

Worship material for Creation Time 2015 comes from an ecumenical writing group, with contributors from the Church of Scotland, The Methodist Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Reformed Church.

It follows the World Council of Churches theme, *Joining the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace>

It is written to help prepare and equip congregations, churches and parishes to respond appropriately to the COP21 gathering, due to take place in Paris in early December 2015. (<http://www.cop21paris.org>) Leaders and representatives of more than one hundred and ninety countries will be meeting together to try to agree measures necessary to avoid damaging changes to the planet and its inhabitants, including a possibly catastrophic 2°C rise in the global temperatures.

THE MATERIAL

The material follows the Revised Common Lectionary readings for September, with a particular emphasis on the Gospel readings, which feature Jesus journeying on the road:

- Week One Journey to Meet with Others (Mark 7: 24-37)
- Week Two Journey to the Big City (Mark 8: 27-38)
- Week Three Journey to Understanding (Mark 9: 30-37)
- Week Four Journey in the Company of Others (Mark 9: 38-50)

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THE WRITING GROUP

Members of the Creation Time 2015 Writing Group:

Jenny Adams is a Church of Scotland minister in Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman Church, in Moray. She was a member of the Church of Scotland's Church & Society Council, and has been involved in Christian Aid and Eco-Congregation in various ways for a number of years.

Trevor Jamison, a United Reformed Church Minister, is the Environmental Chaplain for Eco Congregation Scotland (<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>)

Belinda and Andrew Letby are Methodist Ministers. Previously, Belinda worked in the Credit Union movement and retains an active interest in ethical finance. Andrew, formerly an Industrial Chaplain working in the public transport sector, retains an interest in sustainable transport solutions. Environmental concerns played a major role when redeveloping the premises of the busy Edinburgh church community they currently serve.

Richard Murray is a Lay Reader in the Scottish Episcopal Church and a member of its Church in Society Committee, where he has a focus on environmental issues. He is a board member of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

ABOUT CREATION TIME

Creation Time started in the Orthodox Church in 1989 and has been supported by a growing number of churches across Europe since then. The European Christian Environmental Network has urged churches to adopt a Time for Creation, stretching from 1 September to the feast of St Francis on 4 October. This was endorsed at the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania in 2007, when it was agreed that Creation Time "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change".

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PILGRIMAGE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE –
JOURNEY TO THE BIG CITY

The Jerusalem of the biblical era and the Paris of today are both major, capital cities. Both are the meeting place of peoples, both are centres of culture with a reputation that stretches far beyond their geographical boundaries. They are places both of challenge and opportunity.

THOUGHTS ON THE READINGS

ISAIAH 50:4-9A

This third of the so-called 'Servant Songs' like the others (Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6, and 52:13-53:12) stands out from narrative around it, in style resembling a psalm. The 'servant' revealed by these songs has a wide ranging task within the purposes of God which goes beyond Israel and reaches out to the Gentiles. The task includes proclamation of the prophetic word of God, but also has a kingly function and of course involves suffering vicariously for the many. The 'Servant' then, is destined to be a light for the nations. The songs point to a new and hopeful future. In this passage there is a particular emphasis on speaking out the true word which cuts to heart of the matter.

PSALM 116:1-9

A relatively straightforward Psalm of praise for the individual making a thank offering in the temple. God is praised for carrying the supplicant through dark days. Even in translation the language is clearly poetic with thanksgiving and joy shot through every phrase.



WISDOM OF SOLOMON 7:26 – 8:1

For use during Creation time this alternative lection is worth consideration. The writer describes the beauty and power of wisdom by means of a comparison with creation itself. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that at the heart wise living lies a fair and just relationship with creation.

JAMES 3:1-12

This passage aimed at maintaining harmony in the fledgling early church communities has its roots in Jewish Wisdom literature (see e.g. Sirach 5:13, Proverbs 16:27). In essence its message is just plain common sense, the sloppy or malevolent use of words can cause untold harm. We need to be careful though not to take this as an entirely negative passage. The advice to avoid harmful proclamation or conversation is not a command for silence. The mouth can also be an instrument of great good and artistic virtue. Perhaps James should have summarised his message with the idiomatic 'engage brain before opening mouth'. James' call to an active faith can be seen just as much in our speaking as in our actions.

MARK 8:27-38

Mark's Gospel is acknowledged to be a story of two halves and this passage marks the point at which the divide occurs. The narrative which precedes this moment builds up a picture of the nature and power of Jesus' mission, but doesn't attempt to tackle questions of identity or authority. In asking his friends what others are saying about him Jesus now opens up the discussions of these fundamental questions. In response Peter reveals both that he has begun to grasp the significance of what he has experienced, yet also his still feeble grasp on the implications. As the narrative turns toward the apocalyptic events to come in Jerusalem it takes on a new intensity. The story is now focussed on challenging the accepted order. The early chapters encourage contemporary disciples to think about their personal attitudes and relationships, the later ones describe prophetic responses to power and structures. This new emphasis was hard for those who had walked the paths of Galilee, it is no easier for contemporary disciples!



SERMON THOUGHTS

*'The Heaven of Christianity is different from all other Heavens, because the religion of Christianity is different from all other religions. Christianity is the religion of Cities. It moves among real things. Its sphere is the street, the market-place, the working life of the world.'*¹ Thus wrote nineteenth century Scottish theologian Henry Drummond reflecting on the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. The perception of the city as representing a different, rather unlikely image of heaven is one which still pervades: cities are dirty, energy draining, bastions of over-consumption, filled with conflict and best avoided by those who seek to live in harmony with creation. Yet cities are also centres of debate, house seats of government, provide employment and act as distribution hubs for food and the other necessities of life. We cannot ignore cities.

Jesus' encounters with the city are not portrayed positively, yet they are significant. Mark 8 describes a turning point, from a rural focus to an intentional pilgrimage culminating in the city. Jesus not only urges individuals to consider their priorities but prophetically challenges the whole of society.

We can love or hate cities but they are vital as places where we can argue with and challenge the power structures. The city was vital to the spread of the early church – not just as a centre of power but as place of influence and connection. When Paul stood on Areopagus Hill (Acts 17) he brought his distinctive message to the centre of decision making. In the 'courts and councils' we too can make our voices heard, as 'carers', 'co-creators' or 'stewards' of creation.

Both Isaiah and James encourage us to consider how our attitudes and words affect those around us. They speak of the responsibility to live well. Among the crowds of the city this becomes especially important and those who live in, pass through or encounter the commercial and cultural life of the city must recognise a heightened sense of responsibility to live in harmony with the rest of creation.

How we live can be a positive influence. How easily do we become a negative one? We are called to a distinctive lifestyle; e.g. in our use of public transport, meticulously practicing recycling, restraining our consumer driven impulses, promoting fairtrade and making best use of green space.

¹ The City without a Church – Henry Drummond

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MUSICAL SUGGESTIONS

HYMN BOOKS USED

Church Hymnary 4 (CH4) Common Praise (CP)

Hymns Ancient & Modern: New Standard Edition (AMNS)

New Century Hymnal (NCH) Rejoice and Sing (RS) Singing the Faith (StF)

PILGRIMAGE

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah	AMNS, CH4, CP, MP, RS, StF
I Want Jesus to Walk With Me	CH4
I Want to Walk With Jesus Christ	MP
Look Forward in Faith	CH4
O God of Bethel by Whose Hand	AMNS, CH4, MP, RS, StF
One More Step Along the World I go	CH4, RS, StF
We Are Marching in the Light of God	CH4, RS, MP, StF
We Will Walk With God, My Brothers	CH4, StF
Who Would True Valour See / he Who Would Valiant Be	Ch4, RS, MP, StF
Will You Come and Follow Me	CH4, RS, StF

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THIS WEEK'S HYMNS

For the healing of the nations	AMNS, CH4, CP, RS StF
Forth in the peace / thy name of Christ we go	AMNS, CH4, MP, RS
Glorious things of thee are spoken	AMNS, CH4, CP, MP, R&S, StF
God the Lord, the king almighty (after Psalm 50)	CH4
I rejoiced when I heard them say (after Psalm 122)	CH4, StF
Jerusalem the golden / Arise, arise good Christian	AMNS, CH4, CP, RS
Lord, for the years	CH4, MP, R&S, StF
O holy City, seen by John	CP, RS
This we can do for justice and peace	RS
Where cross the crowded ways of life	CP, RS
Lord bring the day to pass	CH4, RS

PRAYERS

COLLECT

Creator of street and field, of noise and peace;
We thank you that you walk beside us in every situation.
Friend who trod city street, preached in the market place
and challenged the powerful without compromise; inspire us.
Spirit of life, fill our dwellings, towns and cities with your grace, justice and peace.
In busyness and calm, in grime and beauty, in trade and debate
May we glorify creation in all that we do and wherever we go,

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Inspired by our hope in the heavenly city where all creation will find harmony.

Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 116

I love the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my supplication ;

Because he inclined his ear to me on the day I called to him.

The snares of death encompassed me ; the pains of hell took hold of me ;

By grief and sorrow was I held.

Then I called upon the name of the Lord : ‘O Lord, I beg you, deliver my soul.’

Gracious is the Lord and righteous ; our God is full of compassion.

The Lord watches over the simple; I was brought very low and he saved me.

Turn again to your rest, O my soul ; for the Lord has been gracious to you.

For you have delivered my soul from death ; my eyes from tears and my feet from falling.

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

From *Common Worship*

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PRAYER OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

Creator God,

You brought the world into being,

You designed and created the universe and everything in it.

You made us in your image and give us all we need.

We are your children.

You are our God.

We praise and adore you

Sovereign God,

Your power and greatness are more than we can imagine.

Your wisdom is far beyond our understanding.

Your love and compassion are endless.

We are here to worship you.

You are our God.

We praise and adore you

Loving God,

You are the constant in our lives.

You are always available to us and hear all our words.

You communicate with us in many different ways.

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You lead us and guide us, you love and forgive us.

We thank you for all you give us.

You are our God.

We praise and adore you

Living God,

You gave us your creative Word in Jesus, and in him

You show us how to live and love.

You want us to care deeply for one another.

We come to commit ourselves once again to you.

You are our God.

We praise and adore you

In the name of Christ. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving and merciful God,

We bring to you those times we have lost sight of what it means to be created in your image and to reflect you in the way we live.

When we have let selfish desires be our priority, and have neglected or mistreated your creation ...

Silence

Lord, forgive us. Remind us that all we have comes from you, and

Help us to be better carers for your creation.

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When we have spoken words that have hurt others, or failed to speak words of love and affirmation ...

Silence

Lord, forgive us. Remind us of the love and grace you show to us, and
Help us to consider carefully the effect our words have on others.

When we have not spoken out for justice and peace, not challenged those in power
When the vulnerable are unfairly treated ...

Silence

Lord, forgive us. Remind us that you call us to be agents of change, and
Help us to use our words to bring about positive change in our society.

Merciful God,

Forgive us for all that we get wrong.

Renew our hearts and minds so that our actions and words speak of your love and compassion.

Mould us and shape us into the people you created us to be and help us to reflect your light to all who we meet.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

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PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Loving God,

We give you thanks for all you give to us:

For the beauty and splendour of your creation;

For the landscapes, sea and sky;

For all creatures, made with care.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God,

We give you thanks for one another, each made lovingly in your image, different, individual, unique, created to be in relationship with you;

Families, friends and colleagues;

Fellow travellers no longer with us.

For all you give to us, we give you thanks.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God,

We pray for this world - as beautiful as it is, yet with places where the ugliness of war, violence and corruption destroys all you have given us —where it is difficult to see signs of any justice or peace. We pray for the people in these places whose lives are treated with little or no respect or compassion; who live in constant fear of violence or being killed.

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Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God, give integrity and compassion to those in leadership of our nations; give courage and perseverance to those who work for justice and peace; and give us voices to speak up against injustices in the world.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God,

We pray for your Church – knowing that your desire is for us to be one. We acknowledge the issues that divide us, and we pray for all of your Church, especially where we struggle to agree, are not prepared to listen to others, and are divided in worship and beliefs.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God, give wisdom and discernment to those in leadership in our churches; give all Christians a passion for reconciliation and unity; give us ears to hear the words of others, to have a real understanding of other views, and help us to be the ones who break down barriers and embrace the diversity of your Church.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God,

We pray for our communities – the places where we live, work, play and worship;

For rural areas, where life looks idyllic amid the beauty of the countryside, with fabulous views wherever you look, the changing colours of the seasons, wildlife all around.

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But life can be hard in these places so we pray for those in the farming and agricultural industries, for people who feel lonely and isolated, those who travel long distances for work, school or shopping.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God,

We pray for communities in towns and cities, where we find colour, vibrancy and diversity. Places that are centres of learning and nurturing; cultural hot-spots with theatres, art galleries, museums; where councils, courts and government meet, where voices can speak up for justice and peace, and can challenge authority.

But life for some here is a struggle. We pray for the homeless, the lonely, those addicted to drugs and alcohol, people in stressful jobs who have no free time, those who are unemployed.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God, whether we are in rural or urban communities, help us to speak out on environmental issues, help us to be the voices for justice and peace; help us to live out our discipleship by our faithful care of your creation and by our actions towards the most vulnerable.

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

Loving God, you created us to be in relationship with you and each other and you call us to be a community of love and care.

We pray for those who we know who are sick, in pain, grieving or struggling with life in general.....

Help us to support one another, to bring comfort and hope, to share our joys and sorrows, to be a people of love and acceptance. Help us to be your presence in our communities and among your people.

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Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

In a time of silence we bring to God our own needs.

Silence

Creator God,

Hear our words of prayer.

We pray these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

ALTERNATIVE TIME OF PRAYER

If you have a projector/screen you could show images of countryside, seascapes, towns, cities, etc., on a continuous loop, either in silence or with some music in the background. Suggestions for music (with links to listen to the songs):

God of this city – Chris Tomlin - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d61LamkXfwk>;

City of stone – The Weatherfolk (a song inspired by Edinburgh) -

<http://noisetrade.com/the-weatherfolk/this-bell-will-ring>;

Indescribable – Chris Tomlin - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWdM4B1HEyI>;

Creation calls – Brian Doerksen - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwGvfdtI2c0>;

The earth is yours – Michael Gungor -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4EPnM62O8A>

Youtube don't allow their videos to be played in public. The references above are to enable preachers/worship leaders to listen to the music themselves and decide whether it is appropriate for their congregation. All churches would need to check they have the relevant licence to play music in an act of worship.

You will need a mixture of images that depict different aspects of our communities – the beauty and the troubles, the landscapes and the architecture, etc. Invite people to look at the images and spend the time in quiet prayer giving thanks for our different communities, and praying for those in need.

Don't rush it!

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