

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2016: Followers of Jesus, Caring for Creation



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### INTRODUCTION

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Worship material for Creation Time 2016 comes from an ecumenical writing group, with contributors from the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Reformed Church.

It follows the theme, *Followers of Jesus, Caring for Creation*, emphasising the readings from the Gospel of Luke which appear in the Revised Common Lectionary in September.

Material from 2013, emphasising Year C RCL readings from Jeremiah is available at <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/materials/creation-time/>

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### THE MATERIAL

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- Week One 04/09/16 Careful Planning Priorities (Luke 14: 25-33)
- Week Two 11/09/16 Keeping to the Right Path (Luke 15:1-10)
- Week Three 18/09/16 Caring Locally, Caring Globally (Luke 16:1-13)
- Week Four 25/09/16 Caring for all Creation (Luke 16:19-31)

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### THE WRITING GROUP

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Members of the Creation Time 2015 Writing Group:

Jenny Adams is Church of Scotland minister of Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman Parish, in Moray, in the north-east of Scotland. As part of an Eco-congregation, and through many other connections, she is trying, failing, and keeping trying to live out creation care and concern for social justice in all of life.

Janet Foggie is minister of St Andrew's Parish Church in the Church of Scotland. She is a mediator with Place for Hope, Place an organisation accompanying and equipping people and faith communities so that all might reach their potential to be peacemakers who navigate conflict well, and finds much satisfaction in sharing hope for peace in our church and world.

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

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.

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#### ABOUT CREATION TIME

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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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#### ALSO AVAILABLE

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#### ***Resources for World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation - September 1<sup>st</sup> 2016***

*In 2015 Pope Francis established September 1<sup>st</sup> as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, encouraging the Catholic community around the world to pray for our common home. Now, for its second year, the aid agency, CAFOD, provides a prayer in union with creation at*

<http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/25371/182321/version/5/file/A%20Christian%20prayer%20in%20union%20with%20creation-%20Laudato%20Si'.pdf>

*And resources for organising a prayer vigil at*

<http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/29948/340910/version/7/file/Prayer%20vigil%20for%20the%20care%20of%20creation.pdf>

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CREATION TIME 2015 - WEEK 3 – SEPTEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>

### *CARING LOCALLY, CARING GLOBALLY*

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#### THOUGHTS ON THE READINGS

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##### AMOS 8: 4-7

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This passage provides a strong reminder of God's hatred of injustice and inhuman treatment of others, especially those characterised as 'the needy' and 'the poor of the land' (v.4).

The prophet paints a picture of unscrupulous entrepreneurs, eager to circumvent religious regulation that offers rest to the economic and social underdogs of their day. Disregard for protective regulation is not their only failing. They go further, practising deceit in their business dealings (v. 5).

Such misuse of material resources impacts not only on poorer inhabitants, bought and sold for the price of a pair of sandals (v. 6), but upon the land itself (v. 8), and subsequent verses mention the possibility of famine.

This should not be a surprise. As Pope Francis has pointed out in his recent encyclical, "the human environment and the social environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation." (*Laudato Si: on Care for our Common Home*, 49.) No doubt the prophet Amos would want to add a fervent "Amen".

##### PSALM 113

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As far as the psalmist is concerned the God of justice who speaks through Amos is the same God who presides over creation. As creator, God is the object of praise (v. 1) and God's name is to be blessed (v. 2).



This praise and blessing inescapably takes place within the context of God's creation – the heavens and the earth (v. 6) – and within its patterns and processes: 'from the rising of the sun to its setting' (v. 3).

Such praise or worship is in no sense escapist or other-worldly. Not only does it acknowledge its creation context it must also take note of earthly realities such as poverty, need, sadness and inequality (vv. 7-9).

God's intention is that the poor and the needy are raised to the level of princes. Those reading the psalm through Christian eyes may be reminded of Mary, the mother of Jesus, proclaiming a God who lifts up the lowly and brings down the powerful from their thrones (Luke 1:51-53).

The psalm concludes as it began: 'Praise the Lord!' Acknowledging our creator and raising up the poor and needy within creation are both integral to what it means to praise God.

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#### 1 TIMOTHY 2: 1-7

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'Supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings' are to be made for everyone (v. 1) so that must include the poor, the needy and victims of injustice who feature prominently in the readings from Amos 8 and Psalm 113. That established, special mention is then given of 'kings and those in high positions' (v. 2).

In the context of this letter the specific concern is with how those in authority at that time deal with the small, eccentric, possibly anti-social groups that identify themselves as followers of Jesus. The desire is that they be left alone, to enjoy life quietly and peaceably, in accordance with their convictions and lifestyle (v. 2).

Given God's concern for all people (v. 4), and presumably for wider creation, what are the implications in the very different twenty-first century setting. Now, persons in authority – social, political and economic – include those that identify themselves as followers of Jesus. What does this passage say to them/us?

On the narrower question of religious tolerance, it suggests that Christians in authority should extend to others the positive treatment they themselves have hoped for since the first days of the Church. Taken more widely, we look to our leaders to facilitate a quiet and peaceable life for those mentioned by prophet and psalmist, and to do so with an eye to the flourishing of creation that makes this possible.



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#### LUKE 16: 1-13

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If there was a contest for “the strangest story ever told by Jesus” this parable would be a strong contender to take first place. Jesus’ injunction to ‘make friends for yourselves by means of “mammon”’, which the NRSV translation of the Bible renders as “dishonest wealth” (v. 9), is challenging to say the least. On top of that, his suggestion arises from a story where the central character is commended for “cooking the books”; in fact, he is described as having ‘acted shrewdly’ (v. 8).

A couple of things are worth noting though. Firstly, there is no indication whether the charges levelled against the manager are true. He might be a crook who has been found out or he might be the victim of an injustice. Secondly, whatever the case, he has to survive in a situation where he is not in charge; he is the manager but the rich man is the owner, and only one can dismiss the other.

When job loss, arising solely on the basis of accusations, leads directly to homelessness and begging (vv. 3-4) to what extent is the manager now bound to play within this system’s rules? Possibly, those rendered poor or needy by a capricious system may not have to respect its rules. This is a further unsettling thought for those (of us) who are the controllers and beneficiaries of such systems today.

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#### SERMON THOUGHTS

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‘Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.’ (Luke 16:10)

Where do you feel you fit in the social pecking order? Are you at the top of the tree or at the bottom of the pile? Alternatively, like the person in Jesus’ parable, are you more middle management? Does your standing vary according to whether we are talking about your family, your work or education? Maybe you are a big player in church but only have a bit part in your local community, or perhaps it’s the other way around.

Although those at the top – kings, rich men and those in high positions – get a positive mention in the Bible readings, God’s concern seems greater for those further down the pile; the poor and needy are lifted up, the manager gets to keep his job. As followers of Jesus we too seek to cultivate such an attitude, but that can’t be restricted to how we feel about ancient Israelites, early Church congregations or characters in a parable.

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Some careful thought is needed to identify who qualifies as needy, poor, sad or vulnerable in today's world. If we make the link between creation and justice that psalmist does then we have to include those who suffer because our systems degrade the environment that they and we share.

Fine thoughts alone will not suffice. Action is required, but what if our place in the scheme of things limits what we can do? Most of us, after all are not kings, rich men or hold high position. Jesus' call to be to be 'faithful in a very little' offers a positive way forward.

Small actions in caring for creation at an individual and local level have worth in themselves. They also create an atmosphere in which those with greater authority feel freer to act positively. And if that chance comes to any of us, then practising being faithful over little things equips us to be faithful also in much.

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#### MUSICAL SUGGESTIONS

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#### ***Hymn Books Used***

Church Hymnary 4 (CH4) Common Praise (CP)

Hymns Ancient & Modern: New Standard Edition (AMNS)

Rejoice and Sing (RS) Singing the Faith (StF)

#### **Hymns on Discipleship and Following Jesus**

For ourselves no longer living	R&S			
Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go	AMNSCH4	MP	R&S	StF
I want Jesus to walk with me	CH4			
I want to walk with Jesus Christ	MP			
Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult	AMNSCH4	MP	R&S	StF
Lead us heavenly Father, lead us	AMNSR&S	MP	StF	
Lord of creation, to you be all praise	CH4	R&S	StF	

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One more step along the world I go	CH4	R&S	StF		
We are marching in the light of God	AMNSCH4	MP	R&S	StF	
Will you come and follow me	AMNSCH4	R&S	StF		

#### Hymns for this Week

Bless the Lord, O saints and servants	CH4				
For the healing of the nations	AMNS	CH4	R&S	StF	
In an age of twisted values	StF				
Let all the world in every corner sing	AMNS	CH4	MP	R&S	StF
Lord, we have come at your own invitation	CH4	StF			
Praise God for the harvest	CH4	StF			
Praise the Lord! Praise, you servants	R&S				
Sing to the Lord a joyful song	CH4	MP	R&S		
This we can do for justice and peace	R&S				
We lay our broken world	CH4	StF			
Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim	AMNS	CH4	MP	StF	R&S

#### God, You Spoke Your Word Through Amos

BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D

God, you spoke your word through Amos long ago and far away.  
Still your call for love and justice speaks to people in our day:  
For we've trampled on the needy and brought heartbreak to the poor;  
Lord, our way of life is greedy— we are always wanting more.

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We confess the way we're living harms the planet in our care;  
Many times our ways of spending hurt the poor and cause despair.  
In a world where millions hunger, we consume without much thought.  
So your land and people suffer; may we hear what Amos taught!

Even here within our churches, we have sometimes failed to be  
Bearers of your love and justice to your world community.  
All our songs and celebrations and the feasting that we do  
Turn to mournful lamentations as we cry, "Lord, where are you?"

Lord, renew in us a vision of the world you're working toward.  
Guide your church to make decisions that acknowledge you as Lord.  
May we seek your ways of justice, care for earth, and gladly give;  
May the words you spoke through Amos guide the way we daily live!

Biblical text: Amos 8:1-12

Tune: *The Sacred Harp*, 1844. Harm. James H. Wood, 1958.

Text: Copyright © Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2010.

Email: [bcgillette@comcast.net](mailto:bcgillette@comcast.net) New Hymns: [www.carolynshymns.com](http://www.carolynshymns.com)

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### PRAYERS

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#### PRAYER OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

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*Inspired by Psalm 113*

The sun has risen on another day.

Let every creature praise the Lord!

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

God is high above the nations of this earth.

Let every creature praise the Lord!

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

Creative power is stretched across the heavens.

Let every creature praise the Lord!

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

Powerful love is extended to the poor and needy.

Let every creature praise the Lord!

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

Divine joy is coming to the sad and struggling.

Let every creature praise the Lord!

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

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From the rising of the sun to its setting,

Let every creature praise the Lord!

**Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

**Amen.**

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#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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*After Luke 16:10-13*

Gracious God,

We don't always make good stewards,

Of your planet, of your Church, of our lives.

Forgive us.

When we consume without thought,

When we travel without care,

When we burn up the resources of this world,

Forgive us.

If our worship forgets that you are Creator,

If our prayers forget that this is your world,

If our songs overlook this place where we are set,

Forgive us.

Help each one of us, we pray,

To care well for what we receive,

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To use well what we have been given,  
That together with others in your world,  
We will care for it and live here as your people.

**Amen.**

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#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

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*"I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." (1 Timothy 2:1, 2)*

God of all creation,  
We give you thanks for good government,  
For those gifted to lead and administer,  
For opportunities to take part in public affairs.

We pray for those who are in position of power and authority,  
That they be wise and caring stewards.  
May those who govern our nation, land, and local communities  
Create places where all flourish and live in peace.

Loving God

**Hear our prayer**

God of all creation,  
We give you thanks for good relationships,  
Between the nations of your world,

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And for agreements that safeguard the environment.

We pray for those who make this a reality,  
Especially for those following up on climate change agreements  
Made in Paris last year.

May their efforts be rewarded with success.

Loving God

**Hear our prayer**

God of all creation,

We give you thanks for those with expertise,  
Especially for agriculturalists, engineers and scientists,  
Applying the power of their knowledge to the care of your earth.

We pray that they will be good guides to others,  
Bringing plentiful crops, clean water and safe homes  
For all your people;  
Providing good care for every creature.

Loving God

**Hear our prayer**

God of all creation,

We give you thanks for leadership in your Church;

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For those who lead in worship,

For those who care for others,

For those who connect churches with wider community.

We pray that we will use your gifts with care,

So that your Church grows and flourishes,

And that we practise love

For other people, other creatures, and your world.

Loving God

**Hear our prayer**

God of all creation,

We remember those who are far from power.

We pray for

Those vulnerable in the face of flood and drought, wind and weather,

Those vulnerable in the face of impersonal global markets,

Those crying out for help and justice in times of distress.

Loving God

**Hear our prayer**

**Amen**