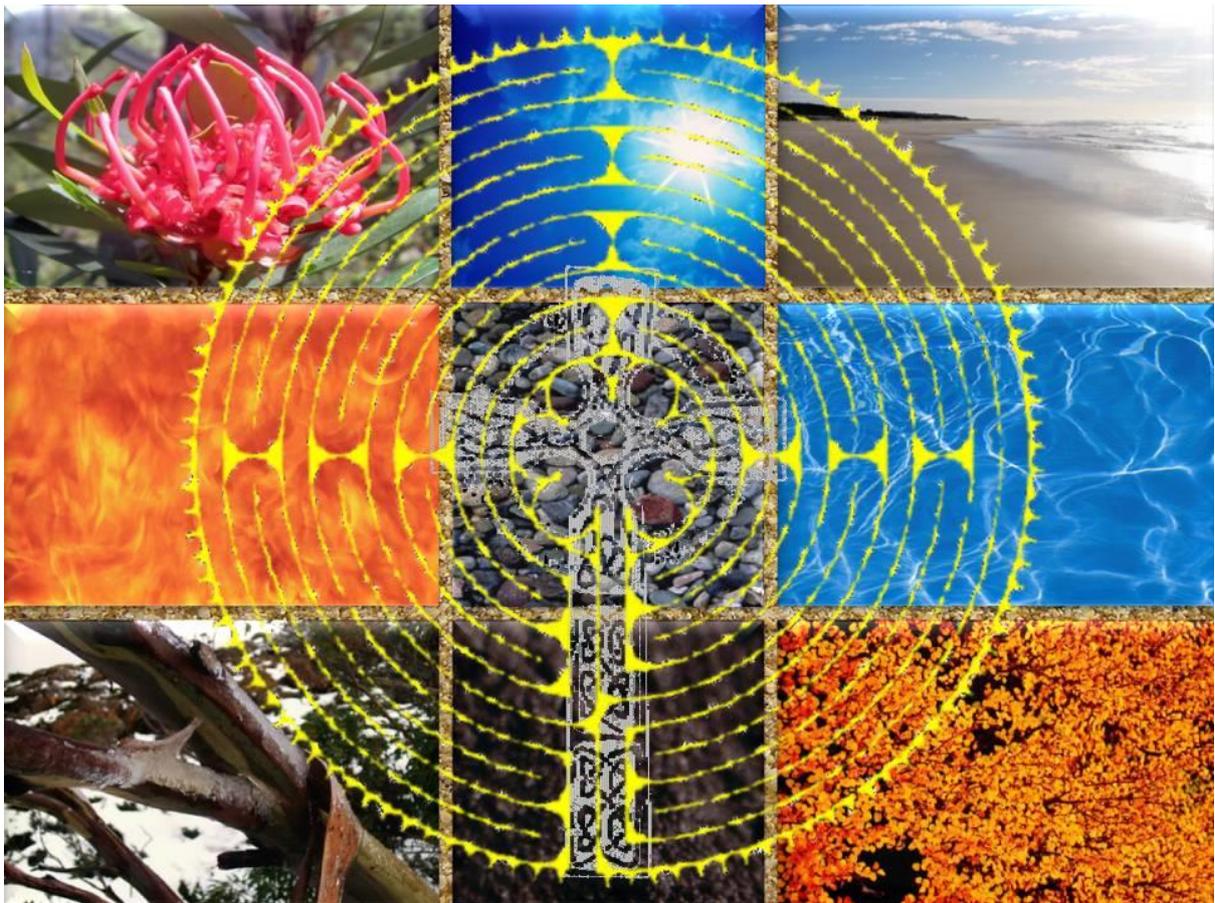


LIVING HUMBLY LIVING HOPEFULLY

Reflections of identity and practice
and what that may mean for a vocation of caring for our planet
as followers of Jesus.

A study series for A Season of Creation



Paul Chalson

A SEASON OF CREATION

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our series of discussions for A Season of Creation

On September 1 in 1989 the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church wrote to the world wide church urging that that date be set aside as a day of prayer giving thanks for creation and also praying for creation's protection and salvation. Since that time September 1 has become established within the calendars of every Orthodox church as the "Day for Protection of All Creation."

During the first decade of this century under the guidance of Rev Prof Norman Habel and members of the Lutheran Church in both Australia and the USA and the Uniting Church in Australia the idea of A Season of Creation was developed. This season would follow on from the "Day for Protection of All Creation" and conclude with the feast day of St Francis. The season would be a period in which the church would reflect upon issues of faith and care of creation over a time, thus enabling deeper engagement and formation.

Today many churches set aside four or five Sundays, usually but not always over September, as A Season of Creation, either using the resources made available by the one of several dedicated websites (UCA congregations usually access <https://seasonofcreation.com/> but there are other websites worldwide) or material of their own devising.

This series of studies reflects on themes of identity and lifestyle. How do we understand ourselves as creatures of God's creation within the broader context of creation and what does that mean for how we live? The themes of our three sessions will be

WEEK ONE - Placing ourselves within Creation

WEEK TWO – Living humbly

WEEK THREE – Living hopefully

These sessions were designed to complement services held over the Season of Creation at Canberra City Uniting Church. The series does not relate the service themes and resources provided on the Season of Creation website. The study material can be used at any time and not necessarily tied to A Season of Creation.

Please note that these sessions engage with questions of faith and the teachings of scripture. Therefore, while it is crucial that we appreciate the scientific understandings of our world and issues that are before us in this time of ecological crisis, these studies are intended as a complementary view which shapes our understanding of identity and lifestyle and how we might respond to the data presented to us through science.

I pray that these studies and the Sunday morning services will be a time of delight, learning, inspiration and encouragement.



Paul Chalson 21 August 2018

THE EARTH BIBLE PROJECT – Reading scripture and listening for Earth’s “voice”

The Earth Bible Project was an activity of a number of biblical scholars from around the world under the patronage of Bishop Desmond Tutu. The project sought engaged with the scriptures from the prospective of Earth. This model of study was based upon the work of earlier feminist scholars who read the scripture as women asking the questions of each passage as to whether it was positive or negative towards women and whether the hidden voice of women could be discerned as emerging from any of the passages which were largely written by men in a patriarchal society. Obviously to engage in such an activity from the prospective of Earth involves an act of imagination and yet to do so opens our minds to attempt to understand how another, in this case, creatures other than humans, might hear and react to passages of our scripture.

To engage deeply in the techniques of the Earth Bible Project would require much more time and detail than is possible here. At a basic level we are invited to view each passage with a prospective of¹

Suspicion that the passage has been written from an anthropocentric point of view. I.E. with an inherent attitude of the superiority and preferentiality of human beings and that their story is the essential story in the scripture and only story that really matters.

Identification with all of the creatures of Earth. To develop an empathy that recognizes the kinship we bear with Earth as creatures born of Earth and are part of its interconnected and interdependent ecosystem. Identification with Earth and the members of the Earth community raises our consciousness to injustices against Earth as they are portrayed in the text.

Retrieval is the act of discerning the place and voice of non-human creatures (including Earth as a whole) within the text. Often when we encounter these creatures in scripture we tend to dismiss them as devices or symbols or poetic language within the text. Retrieval allows the presence of these creatures and their voice an integrity and an impact.

As we encounter the scripture through these studies, I invite you to be open for the “voice” of Earth throughout.

PREPARATION NOTES

The sessions are fairly well self-explanatory though some implements are needed for participants. Leaders will be helped to have read through the session before gathering and all participants will be helped to have read the introductory notes prior to the first session

Week 1 – each participant will need an A5 sized sheet of light card and a writing implement

Week 2 – each participant will need the card from week 1 and a writing implement

Week 3 – each participant will need an A4 sized sheet of paper and access to coloured crayons or pencils

¹ There are a number of publications discussing the idea of listening for the voice of Earth. *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*; Habel, N.C. and Trudinger, P. The Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2008 is a good primer.

A SEASON OF CREATION 2018

Week 1 – Placing ourselves within creation

Our understanding of ourselves will in many ways shape the way in which we act, react and treat others. In the not too distant past people of a European heritage understood themselves to be technologically and morally superior to any other race of humanity. This understanding enabled Europeans to occupy the countries of other peoples, enslave others and to take their resources. Today we rightly regard such attitudes as aberrant and lament the wrongs carried out in the European colonial era.

Korean post-colonial ecotheologians such as Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Jea Sophia Oh postulate that humans behave very much like colonials on Earth rather than members of the Earth community. A confronting thought given that a central affirmation of the scriptures held dear by Jews, Christians and Muslims is that we were brought forth by God from the very dust of Earth (Genesis 2:7). Yet the accusation is that human behaviour is shaped more by the early verses concerning the creation of humanity in which humanity is told to fill and subdue the Earth and given dominion over all other creatures (Genesis 1:28).

Who are we within the broader context of Earth and how should that shape our attitudes and behaviour? This will be the focus of our discussion this session.

A STORY

Probably a bit of an urban myth but the story is that the chief of a Native American nation needed to meet with two lawyers to discuss matter of business for his tribe.

The two lawyers met the native American chief in Times Square in New York city. As they approached him they noticed he appeared to be listening attentively.

“What are you listening to?” one asked.

“The birds” the chief replied.

The two lawyers looked around in wonder at the intensely busy traffic of Times Square.

“How can you possibly hear birds above this racket?” the first lawyer exclaimed.

The two then turned to lead the chief into the building. Instead of following he drew some coins from his pocket and dropped them onto the pavement. Both lawyers stopped at the sound of the coins hitting the pavement and looked back.

“It all depends on what you are listening for,” the chief replied.

What do you listen for, what grabs your attention? Take a moment of silence to ponder this question.

A PRAYER

Creator God

In you all things have their beginning and their end

In you all things have their being

And in you all things are held together in the unity of the web of creation woven by you

Help us to listen and to learn from your word, from your world, and from each other,
how to live as followers of Jesus on this precious planet.

Amen

CREATING A NAMETAG

Each person shall need a card A5 in size plus a writing implement

- In the middle, print your name
- Under your name, name or draw the place which you consider to be the most beautiful place on the planet
- On upper back of nametag, write some words which express your feelings about the place you represented on the front – why is this place so special? Is there a bible verse evoked for you by this place or the feelings it evokes
- On the lower back write 3 “-ing” words that define your relationship with the planet

Either in pairs or as a group take time to introduce yourself in terms of the name tag.

Please note, you will need your name tag again next session.

ENGAGING WITH THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS

When we look at a chair, we see the wood, but we fail to observe the tree, the forest, the carpenter, or our own mind. When we meditate on it, we can see the entire universe in all its interwoven and interdependent relations in the chair. The presence of the wood reveals the presence of the tree. The presence of the leaf reveals the presence of the sun. The presence of the apple blossoms reveals the presence of the apple. Meditators can see the one in the many and the many in the one . . . The chair is not separate. It exists only in its interdependent relations with everything in the universe. It is because all other things are.

Thich Nhat Hanh - 1988

1. What are your initial thoughts as you read this quote? Do you agree or disagree?

2. Can you think of examples of the connectedness of all things?

3. How does the idea of all things are interdependent both in origin and continued existence shape
 - Your understanding of yourself?

 - Your understanding of, and attitudes towards, the world and everything in it?

 - Your behaviour towards other creatures?

ENGAGING WITH THE BIBLE

Read Mark 4:26-33, there are two parables so perhaps a different member of the group could read one each. Following the reading, sit in reflective silence for a short while.

Invite members of the group to offer any initial thoughts or questions evoked by the passage.

A REFLECTION

This passage encompasses two of the four seed parables of Jesus. Both these parables are presented as parables of the Kingdom. Traditionally these parables are intended to inspire reflection of what it means to live according to God's purpose and the nature of the people who live under God's rule of love.

And yet, when we are attentive to the parables from the perspective of Earth, do they perhaps have more to say to us? After all, Earth plays a significant role in each of the seed parables.

Both of these parables seem to have a subtle subversive message that seeks to dethrone humanity as the centrepiece of the biblical story. The first parable acknowledges the human action in planting the seed and yet the growth which comes is presented as being something of a mystery in which there is no human involvement. Earth is acclaimed here as the agent of growth and fruitfulness which people then reap the benefit of. In the second of the parables, the story of the mustard seed, humans play no role at all. That the plant has grown so large and birds find roost in this overgrown herb bush also undermines any use of it agriculturally.

As noted, these parables have some specific teachings regarding the nature of the community of God's people following in the way of Jesus. However, in using the imagery of the parables in the way that he does, Jesus is also appealing to a thread of teachings found through the Hebrew scriptures that aim to undermine themes of the human centrality and superiority found in passages such as Genesis 1:28ff and Psalm 8. An example of this theme could be found in the latter chapters of the book of Job in which God challenges Job's complaint with a catalogue of the wonders of creation and

just how much was beyond humanity's understanding or control. As one scholar once summarized the speech, "it's not all about you Job."

Indeed these parables of Jesus communicate a vision of a world in which humanity is not central and yet the passages also speak of a community which works together to nurture others, whether that be the Earth bringing forth grain for human consumption to the mustard seed growing into a bush which can provide shelter for other creatures.

FOR DISCUSSION

How do you respond to the idea that the bible may contain alternative voices/opinions that seek to challenge one another?

Do you perceive that Earth's "voice" emerges in these parables or possibly a voice wishing to speak in support of Earth? What do you think that this voice is saying?

In considering these parables with an ecological sensitivity, what may they be saying regarding humanity's relationship with the broader ecosystem?

How might our behaviour as humans towards Earth be different if we understand our identity as integrally part of Earth's community/ecosystem rather than being, in some ways superior and separate?

FINAL REFLECTION

The following is often attributed to the Native American Chief Seattle. Sadly, they are words put into his mouth by the screenwriter of a movie in the 1970s. That said, they are still great words.

"The earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all.

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect."

To finish, spend a moment naming the things in nature for which we are grateful and give thanks to God.

A SEASON OF CREATION 2018

Week 2 – Living humbly

Writer Sally McFague, in her book *Super, Natural Christians* writes of the *arrogant* and the *loving* eye. McFague argues that the former of these two ways of seeing the world regards everything in an acquisitive manner, seeing all things in relation to itself and, therefore, unable to appreciate the independent integrity of anything else. By contrast the loving eye “acknowledges complexity, mystery and difference”². Through acknowledgement of the subjective independence of that which is other than ourselves we open ourselves to all that the other may have to communicate to us; be that teaching, encouragement or plea.

McFague’s contrasting ways of viewing the world can also be applied to the discussion of how we might live upon the planet. In our previous discussion we explored the idea of two contrasting understandings of humanity’s place within creation. One view saw humanity as separate and dominant whilst the other wished to express humanity as one member of a far broader community. In the teachings of Jesus we discovered a leaning towards this latter understanding.

In this session we will begin to explore what acceptance of such an understanding may mean for how we live within this world. McFague’s loving eye acknowledging “complexity, mystery and difference” will act as one of our guiding ideas alongside the call of the prophet Micah to “walk humbly with our God.” As a people of faith regarding Earth with the loving eye of kinship, what does it mean to walk humbly upon this planet?

A STORY

Tom Hayden relates a story which illustrates how a place may seem to communicate very clearly and in a transformative way. At the time of the story he was a member of the Californian Senate and chair of that senate’s Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee. In August 1993, Hayden was camping with his son in the Alaskan National Wildlife Reserve. By chance, the then U.S. Secretary for the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, was camping with a party of officials and reporters in a cabin less than a kilometre from his tent. Babbitt was investigating whether the reserve should be opened for oil drilling.

Hayden tells of being awoken at dawn by the presence of a large animal outside his tent. On emerging from the tent he found a lone 270kg musk ox bull. Hayden reported that the bull seemed to wait until he was awake and then set off towards the cabin where Babbitt and his party were sleeping. While he recognized that the bull was probably going about the business of investigating grazing grounds for his herd that day, Hayden relates that the bull seemed to be acting with great deliberateness and that this intrigued him enough to follow. Hayden then relates that

² McFague, S. *Super, Natural Christians*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, pp. 33-34.

The musk ox was taking one deliberate step after another towards the Babbitt party. When the musk ox arrived at a rocky point just above the Babbitt cabin, the animal stopped, just as he had by our tent. Then the cabin doors opened and the secretary and associates stepped out in the early morning light to stare at their ancient visitor.

The animal delivered a message, all witnesses later agreed. He did not need to speak. His presence alone communicated that this land was a necessary home for living beings that have evolved for millions of years, and we were no more than his guests³

Hayden concludes his story with the comment that Babbitt continued to resist attempts to exploit the region for its resources and that “apparently he got the message”⁴. Hayden’s story has a particularity about it that may not be common to most encounters with a place, yet it does illustrate how a place can communicate with humans if only we are prepared and open to listen.

If we were to stop and “listen” to what the plants or animals or rocks around us. What do you think they might have to say?

CREATING A NAME TAG

Revisit the name tags you created last session

- In the top left-hand corner, write a word, name or phrase that identifies the person/incident/whatever that first brought to your attention that there were threats to planet Earth
- In the top right-hand corner, write a word or phrase that identifies something that concerns you about how the planet is being treated by people
- In the bottom left-hand corner, write a word or phrase that identifies one way you seek to care for the planet
- In the bottom right-hand corner, note a bad environmental habit that you are reluctant to give up

Take a few minutes to discuss what you have written with a neighbour

ENGAGING WITH THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS

In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other.

That time is now

Wangari Maathai
2004 Nobel Prize Winner
Environmental Activist
Founder of the Green Belt Movement – Kenya (planting trees)

³ Hayden, T., 1996, *The Lost Gospel of the Earth: A Call for Renewing Nature, Spirit and Politics*. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, p. 30.

⁴ *ibid.*

1. What are your initial thoughts as you read this quote? Do you agree or disagree?

2. Wangari Maathai is the first African woman to have received a Nobel Prize. She is known both for her advocacy for women's rights and for founding the Green Belt movement which undertook a program of planting trees throughout Kenya. It is for this latter work that she received the Nobel Prize. What might be the change in consciousness that you think Ms Maathai is calling for?

3. How do you think such a change in consciousness might change
 - Your understanding of, and attitudes towards, the world and everything in it?

 - Our behaviour towards other creatures

ENGAGING WITH THE BIBLE

Have one member of the group read Micah 6:6-8 then, after a short silence have a second member read Mark 8:34-38. Following the readings, sit in reflective silence for a short while.

Invite members of the group to offer any initial thoughts or questions evoked by the passages.

A REFLECTION

In 2001 I attended the National Christian Youth Convention held that year in Brisbane. The convention had taken the passage from Micah "love justice, seek mercy, walk humbly with your God" as a key passage for the convention. During an elective session I was leading on environmental issues one of the participants posed the question to the group as to what it might mean to apply the question of walking humbly to the way we lived upon Earth. In other words – what would it mean to walk humbly upon Earth.

Often when we hear the words "walk with your God" we hear a spiritual calling. To walk with God is to be a person of prayer and attentiveness to scripture and as such to live a life following the teachings of the bible. The question posed by the group member helped ground the meaning of walking with God by shifting focus from a spiritual practice to a way of living upon Earth expressing the ways of compassion and service we learn from Jesus.

To me this passage therefore holds together very well with the words of Jesus in Mark 8:34-38. The invitation to putting yourself aside and rather than taking up the sword, the symbol of conflict, take up the cross, the symbol of loving, self-sacrificing service.

In our time of ecological crisis I believe the bible has no clearer message for us than these passages. We can know all the science there is but if we continue to cling to our "rights" to lifestyle built upon unsustainable exploitation of the planet's resources, unchecked wastage and the disregard of the rights and needs of the other creatures (including many humans) with which we share this world then the outlook for our planet and ourselves is grim. The call to lay aside our own selfishness and our warfare upon the world and to seek the ways of service, of walking humbly with God upon the Earth calls us to a radically different way of being. But as Jesus said, it will be in the willingness to lose our life that we may well save it.

FOR DISCUSSION

Thinking back to the discussion from last week of reading a passage with an ecological sensitivity, what do you imagine Earth might suggest these passages have to say to us? It may be easier to imagine this from the perspective of a particular creature. For example, what might the wild birds that live near our homes or the trees in the forest say that these passages have to say?

How do you think the concepts of walking humbly, dying to self and taking up the cross might be realized in your ways of living?

- What harmful practices may need to be laid aside?
- What might you need to give up in service of others/the planet?
- What actions of service may you need to participate in?

FINAL REFLECTION

This prayer is a translation of a Gaelic prayer for the Carmina Gadelica, a collection of prayers, poems and folklore gathered from across the Scottish Highlands and Islands by Alasdair Gilleasbaig MacGilleMhichei (often known by the English name Alexander Carmichael) in the late 19th century.

There is no plant in the ground
But tells of your beauty, O Christ.

There is no life in the sea
But proclaims your goodness.

There is no bird on the wing
There is no star in the sky
There is nothing beneath the sun
But is full of your blessing.

Lighten my understanding
of your presence all around, O Christ.

Kindle my will to be caring for creation.

Amen

A SEASON OF CREATION

Week 3 – Living Hopefully

I once heard a quote on hope which has remained with me. Sadly, I cannot recall who said this to me nor have I been able to find the source for the quote but for me these words say something distinct regarding the Christian value of hope.

Hope is a conspiracy that the way things are, are not the way they have to be:
And we are invited to join.

I think we often underestimate the importance of hope as a Christian value. When Jesus proclaimed that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” he was speaking a word of hope and proclaiming a vision for how the world could be. In his call to us to follow he is calling us to become people of this vision, people in and through whose lives the vision of God’s realm, God’s purpose for justice, healing, peace and the reconciliation of all things in love becomes reality. This promise of Jesus, this vision and hope he proclaims calls and inspires us, shapes and sustains us and is the basis of our action as followers of Jesus.

As we grapple with the issues we are confronted with in the ecological crisis a variety of responses are possible.

For the follower of Jesus our response is to be hope. Not just a vague wistful hope but a hope inspired and shaped within the vision of God’s inbreaking purpose which Jesus proclaimed. A hope sustained by the promise that God is with us and working with and through us for the liberating reconciliation and healing of all creation. A hope which will guide our actions and shape who we are in this planet at this time.

Christians are a people of hope and in a time of ecological crisis we are to be a people who live hopefully.

A STORY

Late in 1992 Bruce Mullan, the then youth ministry consultant for the Uniting Church Synod of Tasmania, invited me to his place for a meal. I was, at the time, the convenor of the Synod’s ministry with young people committee. During the meal Bruce unveiled his vision for Tasmania to host a National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC).

This was not the first time that the idea of Tasmania hosting an NCYC had been proposed. On every previous occasion the idea had been squashed. Tasmania didn’t have a hope of hosting an NCYC. The expense for young people to get there was too great. The resources, both momentary and in terms of people too few. Yet Bruce believed we could do it and do it in such a way that was viable and unique and which would significantly enrich the lives and faith development of all who took part. It would mean working differently and require the active participation of EVERY congregation in Tasmania. In addition, a number of roles would need to outsource to other Synods. However, Bruce believed in his vision, he had hope.

In January 1997 NCYC was held in Tasmania with over 2,300 delegates in attendance. Every congregation in Tasmania was involved with delegates being hosted in congregations over the weekend in the middle of convention. On the Sunday evening many people from these congregations travelled to Launceston to share in the NCYC communion service with the delegates they had gotten to know so well. The Synod of Victoria organized chaplaincy, the Synod of NSW organized multicultural concerns and hosting international delegates and other Synods also contributed in different ways.

NCYC '97 is remembered fondly as one of the great NCYCs. Innovations and resources created at this NCYC would be employed in future NCYCs and other youth events for the next decade. And we had money to spare at the end!

The “hopeless” idea of Tasmania hosting an NCYC happened because Bruce had a vision which gave him hope. It was a vision and a hope by which others were captured and it inspired us in Tasmania to fight for hosting NCYC, even when there were many opposed to the idea. It was a hope which gave birth to a great event.

- Have you ever had the experience of being captured by a hope or vision or do you know a story of others who have been? If so, tell your story.
- How do you think the idea of being captured by hope relates to Jesus proclaiming “the Kingdom of God is at hand?”

A PRAYER

God of amazing diversity
God of community
In the embrace of creation
We know your love
Teach us to live well
As members of the Earth community
Open to its ministry to us
And may we share generously and gratefully
The life we all have in you
Amen

INTERACTION

Members of the group will each require a sheet of A4 paper and access to coloured pencils or crayons

What is your hope for creation? Take a few minutes to represent your hope either in drawing, poetry or prose. Share your thoughts with each other.

ENGAGING WITH THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS

If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.

— John F. Kennedy, June 10 1963

1. What are your initial thoughts as you read this quote? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Thinking on a broader ecological scale, what might making “the world safe for diversity” entail?
3. What might your quote on hopeful possibilities for the future of our planet be?

ENGAGING WITH THE BIBLE

Have one member of the group read Isaiah 11:1-9 then, after a short silence have a second member read Mark 12:28-34. Following the readings, sit in reflective silence for a short while.

Invite members of the group to offer any initial thoughts or questions evoked by the passages.

A REFLECTION

When hearing the statements of the “wolf lying with the lamb” or of a small child playing safely next to the lair of a venomous snake listeners can be derisive. The idea of animals of prey coexisting peacefully with creatures normally considered their prey can seem ludicrous. Even more so is the idea of a carnivore eating hay. It all seems to go against the natural order.

Yet these issues only really exist w the passage is often approached from a literal perspective. I have actually heard sermons on God changing the digestive systems of lions to enable fulfilment of the prophet’s words.

In reality the prophet was more likely to be speaking metaphorically. The verses opening and concluding our passage from Isaiah speak of the rule of God’s anointed king and the nature of life on God’s holy hill, in other words, in the city of Jerusalem.

We often use non-human animal metaphors to describe a person. In this context it can also be assumed that just as a real lion could not change its nature so too is the case with humans. Indeed, some would justify their actions in these terms as seen in the final words of the villain in the recent remake of the movie *The Magnificent Seven*.

If God didn't want them to be sheared, he wouldn't have made them sheep

When we view these words metaphorically and as applicable to us as human beings they take on a new significance. We, human beings, are the devouring predator who, in God's rule, are to learn that we can coexist peacefully with those whom we might previously have devoured. Indeed, we will learn new ways of living so that our survival will not be at the cost of the survival of other creatures. To be a little provocative, is the prophet perhaps suggesting that we should become vegetarians?

For if, as we have learnt in previous weeks, all creatures are our kin, are our neighbours, and we are to love our neighbours as ourselves, how can we do anything other than learn to value our planet's diversity and live at peace for all creatures?

FOR DISCUSSION

How do you respond to the suggestion that from the perspective of the others creatures, human beings would be considered the wolves, lions and snake in the Isaiah reading?

Isaiah paints an idealistic picture of life on "God's peaceful mountain." Within the context of this image and the call to seek to live peacefully with all the creatures of earth; what does it mean for you to hear the Gospel call to "love your neighbour?"

"The lion will eat straw like the ox." What is a change in practice that you could implement to live at peace with earth?

FINAL REFLECTION

Review your “hope for creation” drawing, poem or statement from earlier in this session. Where do you fit within this hope? Take a moment to draw and write yourself into your earlier work if you were not already present.

As a group, have each member explain how s/he can be part of a hope for creation.

Finish by joining in this ecological affirmation

We acclaim that in love God called the universe into being, teeming with stars, planets, dark matter and much, much more.

We celebrate the beauty of our planet and the diversity of its life of which we are a part. We affirm that in God’s graciousness we have a capacity and a calling to give voice to creation’s praise of its creator. We are also called to care for our world and all its creatures.

We receive the vision of God’s peaceful world spoken by the prophets and announced by Jesus.

We believe that in Jesus, God has become one with creation and that through the living, dying and rising of Jesus God has acted for the reconciliation of all things.

We hear the call of Jesus to follow him and take part in his ministry of reconciliation. And we answer this call

We commit ourselves as followers of Jesus to a vocation to care for creation, to be agents of reconciliation and healing and to seek in and through our lives the realization of God’s peaceful world. As part of this I will ... *each person is invited to make a statement of an action they will take to care for creation.*

This we affirm and this we will do. Amen