



# **SEASON OF CREATION**

## **CELEBRATION GUIDE**

**2019 Theme: Web of Life**



**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 stewards 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 biodiversity, God’s web of life. We invite you to consider the unique value of each creature in God’s wondrously complex web of life.

This guide will help you learn about the Season and plan how to celebrate it. More resources, including webinars and prayer services, a Facebook group, and photos, are available online. Please visit [SeasonOfCreation.org](http://SeasonOfCreation.org) to access all of the materials.

## Season of Creation Steering Committee



# Faith leaders' invitation to join the Season of Creation

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

*"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature ... on Earth." (Genesis 9:9-10)*

We are part of a single, wondrously complex web of life that is woven by God. Each year 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 more sustainably, and lifting our voices in the public sphere.

This Season of Creation, we offer our reflections on the web of life itself, in the hope that they might provoke richer contemplation and deeper responses among us, brothers and sisters. We do it in ecumenical spirit and in acknowledging that Creation is given as a gift to all of us and that we are called to shared responsibility for its protection.

The scriptures begin with God's affirmation that all of creation is "very good," and as the stewards of God's creation, we are called to protect and nurture its goodness (Genesis 1:30, Genesis 1:28, Jeremiah 29:5-7). Every species, indeed all creation, is precious because it is made by God. All reflect an aspect of God. "How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures" (Psalm 104:24).

This is why we lament that God's creatures are disappearing from the Earth at a rate we can scarcely comprehend. From humble insects to majestic mammals, from microscopic plankton to towering trees, plants and creatures from across God's dominion are becoming extinct, and may never be seen again.



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This devastation is, in itself, a tragic loss. We contemplate this loss and pray that it ends. We also pray for justice, as the most vulnerable among us suffer most deeply as the web of life begins to unravel. Our faith calls us to respond to this crisis with the urgency born of moral clarity.

We encourage the whole Christian family to join us in this special time to pray, reflect, and take bold action to preserve creation in all its complexity and specificity. This year in particular will bring the opportunity to lift a united voice on such occasions as the World Conservation Congress in June, the UN climate summit in September, the Catholic synod on the Amazon in October, and the UN climate change conference in November.

As the psalmist sings, “The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1-2). 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,



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## 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, UK*

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

*Ms Josianne Gauthier, Secretary General, CIDSE*

*Rev. Norm Habel, Season of Creation Project, Adelaide*

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

*Fr Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary, Conference of European Churches*

*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*

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

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



# 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's 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, and convey to your pastor/priest and congregation 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 time to speak with your pastor/priest. To prepare him/her for the meeting, send the letter from faith leaders, information about the Season, and a link to the website. All are available at [SeasonOfCreation.org](http://SeasonOfCreation.org).
- In the meeting, start by thanking your pastor/priest for the good work he/she already does to protect creation. Say that you and your committee would like to volunteer for the church by leading a Season of Creation event. Get your pastor's/priest's feedback, and write notes to record his/her comments.
- Update your plan in response to the pastor's/priest's comments. Clear the event date, time, and location with your church administrator.
- Register your event at [SeasonOfCreation.org](http://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](http://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](http://SeasonOfCreation.org). These may be shared publicly, and will inspire and educate people around the world.
- | Complete the event report form at [SeasonOfCreation.org](http://SeasonOfCreation.org).





# 2019 Season of Creation Theme: Web of Life

Each year, the ecumenical steering committee that provides resources to celebrate the Season of Creation suggests a theme. The suggested theme for this year is “the web of life: biodiversity as God’s blessing.” We suggest this theme because it helps us meditate on two essential facts about creation: it comes from God, and we play a part in it.

*Genesis 9:12-13 “God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the Earth.”*

The book of Genesis begins with God’s affirmation that all of creation is ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:30). We are part of a complex, delicate and interdependent web of life which is valuable because it is created, sustained and redeemed by God. Humanity is called to reflect God’s image through godly leadership within the community of fellow creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). The story of Noah includes God’s redemptive purposes for, and covenant with, not only humanity but the earth and all its creatures (Genesis 9:8-17). In the New Testament we learn that all things were created by and for Christ, giving particular value to each creature (Colossians 1:15-20). God’s ultimate purposes from creation to re-creation encompass all that we today call biodiversity.

The biblical witness is that the web of life - biodiversity - matters not only because human well-being depends on stable and thriving ecosystems and the services they give to us, from clean water and food, to oxygen, clothing and climate regulation, and all the ‘resources’ we use from nature. Biodiversity matters firstly because God gives value to every creature that is created. As the Papal Encyclical Laudato Si states, “It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. ... Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right” (Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home, 33).

Today, human behaviour is destroying the fabric of God’s creation at an unprecedented rate. According to the Living Planet Report 2018, there has been a 60% decline in global wildlife populations between 1970 and 2014. There are



multiple causes, from deforestation, habitat destruction, climate change, and pollution of soil, water and air, including the tide of plastic pollution filling the oceans.

Biodiversity loss matters both because all God's creatures have value in themselves and also as an issue of justice. It is the poor and marginalised who depend most immediately on the health of ecosystems and are affected most severely by the collapse of the natural systems that sustain all life. Billions of people today face the loss of productive soils, clean water, forests, fish and coral reefs, and biodiversity loss is a major driver of human migration. As Kenyan botanist and Christian Dr Stella Simiyu states: "The rural poor depend directly on the natural resource base. This is where their pharmacy is, this is where their supermarket is, this is in fact their fuel station, their power company, their water company. What would happen to you if these things were removed from your local neighbourhood? Therefore, we really cannot afford not to invest in environmental conservation."

Under the theme of 'The Web of Life: Biodiversity as God's blessing', Season of Creation 2019 encourages participation of churches and Christians worldwide through:

- Celebrating the goodness of God's gift of creation in worship, drawing on the Psalms and other scriptures to rejoice in the Creator's glory
- Reflecting on our mistreatment of creation, repent of the decisions we've made, and commit to new practices and habits.
- Learning more about the wildlife and ecology of our communities
- Teaching our communities about God's web of life, and convey the truth that we can protect both people and our planet
- Practicing nature conservation in our homes, schools, churchyards and community spaces
- Giving voice to the voiceless by advocating for nature in our home communities and beyond
- Preparing for global events that protect nature, such as the World Conservation Congress in June, the UN climate summit in September, the Catholic synod on the Amazon in October, and the UN climate change conference in November



# Season of Creation 2019 Prayer

Creator of Life,

The Earth is full of Your creatures, and by Your wisdom you made them all. At Your word, the Earth brought forth plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit, the waters teemed with swarms of living creatures of every kind, and world was filled with every kind of winged bird, walking animal, and creatures that creep upon the ground.

Mountains, plains, rocks, and rivers shelter diverse communities, and through the changing seasons Your Spirit renews cycles of life.

During this Season of Creation, open our eyes to see the precious diversity that is all around us. Enlighten our minds to appreciate the delicate balance maintained by each creature. Inspire us to conserve the precious habitats that nurture this web of life.

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](https://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](https://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. Please upload your photos at [SeasonOfCreation.org](https://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. More information on how to write a blog post is available [here](#).

## 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).*

*The following suggestions will help you shape a prayer or worship service for 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 also 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. This 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.



# ECUMENICAL PRAYER SERVICE FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

## Opening prayer

(Begin your service by lighting a candle, and setting the space with other natural items that represent the biodiversity 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, 13<sup>th</sup> 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. Click [here](#) for a list of creation-themed hymns.



## Psalm 104

*One* Bless the Lord, O my Soul!

**Many O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures.**

*One* You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild beasts quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.

**Many O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures.**

*One* From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the Earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the Earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.

**Many O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures.**

*One* The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that God planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coney.

**Many O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures.**

*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. These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

**Many O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures.**

*One* when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. May the glory of the Lord endure forever;

**Many O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the Earth is full of your creatures.**



## Confession

*One* We praise you God, for the diversity of your creation. With the psalmist we are amazed at the manifold diversity of your work. The Earth is full of your creatures and in your holy wisdom you have made them all. But in our self-centeredness, we have neglected to serve our fellow creatures. We have polluted the land and the waters, destroying delicate habitats and accelerating the loss of your precious species. We know that creation waits with eager longing in the hope of being set free from this bondage to our decay (Romans 8:19-22). And so we confess. God of mercy and justice,

**Many We confess our overuse of transportation,**

*One* the need for speed overriding the healing of the Earth's fever.

**Many We confess our hyper-consumption of food and energy,**

*One* producing meat and electronics on demand, but too often exhausting and poisoning the backyards of the poorest.

**Many We confess our soaps, our cosmetics, our synthetic clothes,**

*One* ignoring that their unseen, plastic microbeads run into our streams and oceans, now residing in fish, and probably in some of us.

**Many We confess our junk, the piles of what we throw away,**

*One* the sewage smelling of our lack of concern.

**Many We confess our mind-set,**

*One* too often concentrating on our ability to buy rather than asking what we really need, what our world needs.

**Many We confess our unfaithfulness, not loving you with our whole heart and strength and mind,**

*One* not loving our human and non-human neighbours as ourselves,

**Many not caring for the creation you have given us as a gift.**

*One* Turn us from our cursed practices

**Many to life that is really living, giving ourselves away, following Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

*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. Click [here](#) for a list of creation-themed hymns, thanks to Interfaith Power and Light.

## **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, or you may want to showcase local plants, animals, or other materials from your area as a way offer thanks for the biodiversity of your area and to raise awareness of the protection 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. "All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that 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 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)*



## 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)*

## 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/>



Old Testament A	Old Testament B	Psalms A	Psalms B	New Testament	Gospel
<b>Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> (Pentecost 12, Trinity 11)</b>					
<p>Jeremiah 2:4-13</p> <p>- The passage speaks of God protecting Israel during their wandering in the desert and how they forgot God and put their trust in 'cracked cisterns that can hold no water'.</p> <p>- Parallel with today's global idolatry of materialism and economic growth and how we are reaping what we have sown through climate change, biodiversity loss, soil pollution etc.</p>	<p>Proverbs 25:6-7</p>	<p>Psalms 81:1, 10-16</p> <p>- Parallel to Jer. 2. Note how God's blessing is seen in creation's bounty v.16 'finest wheat ... honey from the rock'</p>	<p>Psalms 112</p> <p>- Note how those who delight in God are generous, happy to lend, seek justice, and distribute to the poor (vs.5,9)</p> <p>- Obvious parallel to today and climate justice</p>	<p>Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16</p> <p>- 'Mutual love' includes: - hospitality to the stranger (v.2) such as migrants and climate refugees. - keeping our lives free of the love of money (v.5) in a world where inequality is growing and materialism is a root cause of many of the ecological problems we face - v.16 the sacrifice God wants is sharing what we have!!</p>	<p>Luke 14: 1, 7-14</p> <p>- This parable is about generosity to the outsider and stranger, not just looking after our own but seeking to love those on the margins. These include the victims of climate injustice and food insecurity.</p>
<b>Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> (Pentecost 13, Trinity 12)</b>					
<p>Jeremiah 18:1-11</p> <p>God as the potter can break down and rebuild nations.</p> <p>- What is God doing today in a world of human-caused ecological chaos? Where do our nations need to be broken and remoulded?</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 30:15-end</p> <p>Choose life! (v.19) - Note how nature, heaven and earth, are called as witnesses.</p> <p>- Also, note how relationship with God is intimately tied to how we live in the land (v.16,20) – walking in God's ways has a profoundly ecological dimension to it.</p>	<p>Psalms 139:1-5, 12-18</p> <p>God's personal care and knowledge for each of us are described using the vivid language of knitting and weaving.</p> <p>- We need to take this truth for ourselves but also apply it to all who are the victims of climate change, water and food scarcity etc.</p>	<p>Psalms 1</p> <p>- The beautiful image of a fruitful tree planted by water is applied to being rooted in God's word, but it's an example of how scripture habitually uses nature to show how God works. Imagery like this (and Jesus' parables) only connect with us if we are deeply and daily rooted in the patterns and rhythms of creation (NB Matthew 6 – observe the flowers and birds)</p>	<p>Philemon 1-21</p>	<p>Luke 14:25-33</p> <p>- To follow Jesus means 'carrying the cross' (v.27) and 'giving up all our possessions' (v.33).</p> <p>- What does it mean to us living in consumer cultures where worth is measured in possessions to give up all this to Jesus? Is it to be taken literally, or is it about changing our relationship with material things and learning to live lightly, simply and generously, recognising that all we have is God's gift, to be shared with others, and not to be acquired in ways that damage creation's thriving?</p>

Old Testament A	Old Testament B	Psalms A	Psalms B	New Testament	Gospel
<b>Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> (Pentecost 14, Trinity 13)</b>					
<p>Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- God's judgement on human sin, seen now in creation's groaning (Rom. 8.22), causing biodiversity loss and desertification (v.23-26)</li> <li>- Should we see today's crises as God's judgment, or simply as the Earth reaping what we have sown in over-consumption, waste and greed?</li> <li>- Note v.27 promises hope beyond judgment, as always in scripture. This is important today when many have lost hope for the Earth.</li> </ul>	<p>Exodus 32:7-14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In the context of practical atheism, where people live as if there is no God (v.1) – which we can apply to today's idols of hedonism and consumer materialism, note how God's heart is towards the poor (v.6). How can we show the reality of God in how we care for those on the margins?</li> </ul>	<p>Psalms 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- David's powerful prayer of repentance after murdering Uriah and adultery with Bathsheba can also be used as a lament for our greed, waste and pursuit of false idols leading to creation's worship being silenced.</li> </ul>	<p>Psalms 51:1-11</p>	<p>1 Timothy 1:12-17</p>	<p>Luke 15:1-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jesus' joy and heaven's joy over one sinner who repents. The celebration (especially for the lost coin) is out of all proportion to what's been recovered, but reflects the theme of God's Kingdom as a feast or party.</li> <li>- in our rightful passion for the poor and the planet, we must not lose sight of the heart of the Gospel, that we each need the transforming acceptance and forgiveness that God in Christ offers us.</li> </ul>
<b>Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> (Pentecost 15, Trinity 14)</b>					
<p>Jeremiah 8:18-9.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A heartfelt lament on behalf of God's people.</li> <li>- v.20 sums up how many victims of climate change might feel: 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.'</li> <li>- if we are to be moved to change our ways in response to God's call and today's crises, we need to recover how to lament, to feel godly sorrow and to experience the Spirit's groaning through creation's groaning (Rom. 8,22,26)</li> </ul>	<p>Amos 8:4-7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong words against those who oppress the needy and poor. We may want to apply this today at various levels – nations who export their waste and polluting industries, large companies who exploit workers and destroy creation's goodness, ourselves when we act thoughtlessly, selfishly, greedily and wastefully.</li> </ul>	<p>Psalms 79:1-9</p>	<p>Psalms 113</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a psalm of praise to God who rules over the rhythms and patterns of nature (vs.3-6) and who looks with special care on the poor and barren (vs. 7-9)</li> </ul>	<p>1 Timothy 2:1-7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in the context of summing up the centrality of Christ in God's purposes (vs.4-7) we are called to pray especially for rulers and authorities (although next week's Psalm 146.3-4 tells us not to trust our rulers!)</li> <li>- in the context of massive injustice, inequality and continuing destruction of God's creation, how should this affect <u>how we pray</u> for our leaders?</li> <li>- if we can vote to choose our leaders, what kinds of priorities does the Gospel suggest we should base that choice upon?</li> </ul>	<p>Luke 16:1-13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the parable of the shrewd (or dishonest!) steward is a difficult one and commentators differ on the details of interpretation.</li> <li>- what is much clearer is Jesus' application in vs.9-13:</li> <li>- 'You cannot serve God and wealth' (v.13) is a huge challenge to a world where the richest 20% consume 16 times as much of the Earth's resources as the poorest 20%.</li> <li>- Being faithful stewards of what belongs to another (v.12) surely applies to our use of natural resources, because the whole Earth belongs to God (Ps. 24.1).</li> </ul>

Old Testament A	Old Testament B	Psalms A	Psalms B	New Testament	Gospel
<b>Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> (Pentecost 16, Trinity 15)</b>					
<p>Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15</p> <p>Jeremiah buys a field as a prophetic act that, despite a chaotic context, there would be a hopeful future (Jer. 29.11) where land would be bought and sold again.</p> <p>- This challenges those other-worldly spiritualities that suggest we should focus on heaven and forget all the problems affecting Earth.</p> <p>- We are called to invest our time, work and money in the land (the social and ecological context) where God has planted us – to seek the shalom – the peace and wellbeing of the city / town / village (Jer. 29.7)</p>	<p>Amos 6:1a, 4-7</p> <p>Amos speaks judgment to the rich, not only because of their material excesses, but because they forget those who are suffering.</p> <p>- What are the dangers of being 'at ease' and 'feeling secure' v.1 if our security is in our houses, pensions and insurance rather than in God?</p>	<p>Psalms 91:1-6, 14-end</p> <p>A psalm of hope written in the context of despair. - How might these words fit our current situation of climate refugees, biodiversity loss and injustice?</p> <p>- v.4 describes God as a protective bird hiding us under its wings. If God made the incredible diversity of wildlife we see, what creatures speak to you of God's character, and how?</p>	<p>Psalms 146</p> <p>A confident psalm of praise to God who we can trust (unlike our rulers vs.3-4), because he is the creator and faithful sustainer of the whole earth (v.6), and because of his justice for the oppressed, hungry, prisoners, blind, bowed down, strangers, orphans and widows (vs.7-9).</p> <p>- Note how this psalm is the opposite of the individualistic, 'Jesus and me' spirituality. We trust God chiefly because of God's creation and justice, not for how he makes us feel!</p>	<p>1 Timothy 6:6-19</p> <p>Powerful reminders not to place our security in money and possessions (vs.6-10), but in godly virtues (v.11) reflected in our core relationships – with God, each other, and creation – and in the gift of eternal life (v.12).</p> <p>- note it is the <u>love</u> of money and the <u>desire</u> to be rich that are root of the problem (vs.9-10), but today's media and the politics of endless economic growth feed us with lies that money and wealth will solve our needs.</p> <p>- Can we, as churches, learn to be counter-cultural in cultivating content with enough (v.8) rather than always wanting more?</p> <p>- Can the perspective that we bring nothing into the world and can take nothing out (v.7), and that it is God (not our work or the economy) that provides us with what we need (v.17) help us live more sustainably?</p>	<p>Luke 16:19-end</p> <p>The story of the rich man and Lazarus is another powerful warning that ignoring injustice and poverty is a form of practical atheism. Our faith in God has to be reflected in generosity and justice or it is meaningless.</p> <p>- How does this parable come alive in today's situation of a globalised world where the poorest are on our doorstep, and the lifestyles of rich nations are exacerbating the impacts of climate change, deforestation, food and water stress and waste upon the world's poorest?</p>

## 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.

- 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 Psalm 104, Psalm 150, or Matthew 6:25-33 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.
- Use the following Tanzanian Benedicite, or invite the young people in your community to adapt it to suit the creatures that live in your ecological niche. It would be a great project for children and young people to work on and present.

### TANZANIAN BENEDICITE

Tanzania, bless the Lord  
And all your tribes and districts, bless the Lord  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you big things, bless the Lord  
Mount Kilimanjaro and Lake Victoria  
The Rift valley and the Serengeti plain  
Fat baobabs and shady mango trees, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you tiny things, bless the Lord  
Busy black ants and hopping fleas, wiggling tadpoles and mosquito larvae  
Flying locusts and water drops, pollen dust and tsetse flies  
Millet seeds and dried dagaa, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*



All you sharp things, bless the Lord  
Sisal plant tips and tall lake reeds,  
Masai spears and hunting arrows,  
A rhino's horn and crocodile teeth, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you soft things, bless the Lord  
Sawdust and ashes and kapok wool,  
Sponges and porridge and golden-ripe mango, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you sweet things, bless the Lord  
Wild honey and pawpaws and coconut milk,  
Pineapple and sugar-cane and sun-dried dates  
Slow-roasted yams and banana juice, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you bitter things, bless the Lord  
Quinine and blue soap,  
Sour milk and maize beer, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you swift things, bless the Lord  
Wild goats and honking lorries,  
Frightened centipedes and lightning flashes, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you slow things, bless the Lord  
Curious giraffes and old bony cows  
Long-tailed chameleons and slow-munching sheep, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you loud things, bless the Lord  
Monsoon rains on aluminium roofs, midnight hyenas and feast-day drums  
Train stations and carpenter's shops, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you quiet things, bless the Lord  
Candle-flames and just-sown furrows, heaps of clouds and sunny libraries  
Our Uluguru mountains and sleeping pupas, land snails and crawling  
turtles!  
Grazing zebras and stalking lions, bless the Lord,  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

All you creatures that never talk, still bless the Lord  
*Praise and extol Him for ever and ever.*

\* Source unknown





## 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.*

### 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 cleanup protects the web of life, and it honors 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 cleanup 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](#).

## Create a buffer zone

One way to support local biodiversity is to cultivate micro-niches, or small pockets of land where different kinds of plants and animals can shelter. Even on a small property (your home garden or churchyard) it is possible to create diverse habitats by creating buffer zones. For example, leave a border of land along the edge of your garden, walkways or car park that you do not mow or landscape so that wild grasses, local plants and wild flowers can grow. Or, conserve a natural area around existing trees or bushes where you allow undergrowth to develop, and let leaves and tree limbs fall and decompose naturally.

Natural buffer-zones promote the diversity of flora, which hold topsoil, and water. Wild plants and flowers will attract a variety of pollinators such as butterflies or bees, which increases the health and fruitfulness of the plants, which attract local birds. The roots, leaves, and fallen limbs of undisturbed plants provide shelter for insects and small mammals. The animal waste, along with fallen and decomposing limbs and leaves return nutrients to the soil, which nourishes the health of the entire ecosystem beyond the buffer zone. You can even create shelters (such as a frog hut, bug hotel, bat or bird house) to multiply the diversity within even small buffer zones.

Consult with your local plant, bird or wildlife conservation organizations for helpful tips on conserving areas that benefit plants and animals indigenous to your local ecology. In addition to the ecological benefit that your buffer zone will offer to the ecosystem around your home or church, setting aside natural areas reduces the need for property maintenance, while creating aesthetically beautiful areas where you can observe and learn about local biodiversity at home!



## Plant a tree

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

Consider having a tree planting event during Season of Creation that incorporates 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](http://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](http://www.livingthechange.net) or at [info@livingthechange.net](mailto:info@livingthechange.net)

## Eliminate single-use plastics

Plastic items are deeply woven into our everyday life. Although plastics have made life-saving advances in medicine and clean energy possible, their overuse is a symptom of our culture of disposability. As Christians, plastics confront us with the question of our commitment to creation in our day-to-day lives.

Humans now produce nearly 300 million tons of plastic every year, according to the Worldwatch Institute, with much of it used only once. Many of these plastics will take decades or centuries to disappear. In the meantime, they break up into ever smaller pieces, which end up in the digestive tracts of marine animals, and they leach petrochemicals into the soil and water.

Take a plastics-free pledge to give up using one single-use plastic item for 40 days (or more!). Every single-use plastic item we save is one less thing in a landfill site, ocean or incinerator—or one less thing shipped overseas for another country to dispose of.

Single-use plastics are plastic items that are only intended to be used once, such as soft-drink bottles. The most common items include disposable cups, bottles, non-recyclable packaging, wipes, and female hygiene products. Finding alternatives to these plastics is easier than you might think, and it can be very satisfying to know that you are walking that little bit lighter on the Earth.

*Seven ways to cut down on your plastic waste:*

- Switch to using a reusable coffee cup (stainless steel or bamboo cups are best).



- Carry a reusable water bottle with you and refill it at home or work (the most long-lasting and easily recyclable types are made from stainless steel or glass).
- Cut down on plastic packaging by buying fruit and vegetables loose.
- Refuse the use of straws in restaurants.
- Use soap and shampoo bars instead of liquid products in plastic bottles.
- If you have young children, think about switching to reusable nappies—even switching for daytime wear will make a big difference.
- For women, consider whether you can switch to more sustainable period products, such as menstrual cups, reusable sanitary pads, or period-proof pants.

More information on taking a plastics-free pledge is available from [TearFund](#).

## Participate in a campaign

*As Christians, we have a strong tradition of prophetic witness. From Nathan's words to King David to Jesus' words to the Pharisees, speaking truth to power is a way to live out the call of our faith in a world that sorely needs redemption. By speaking together, we grow in love and strength.*

*The following suggestions will help you witness to the threats faced by our common home and encourage better care of it.*

## Advocate against unsustainable palm oil

The production of palm oil poses a threat to creation. Palm oil is an ingredient in many things we buy, and is present in everything from biofuels to cosmetics to chocolate. In places like Indonesia, Borneo, and Sumatra, native forests are being razed to make room for lucrative palm oil plantations. These lands, which once hummed with birdsong and bristled with the scurrying of insects, have been reduced to rows upon rows of palm trees in order to meet the great and growing demand for palm oil as a food additive.

Among the many species that are losing their homes in this part of the world, orangutans are particularly vulnerable. The loss of forest habitat and the specific threat to orangutans inspired a 13-year-old Swiss girl named Anouk Walliser Keel to launch a campaign against unsustainable palm oil



plantations. She writes, “I came across an article on palm oil and orangutans.... And slowly, I began to understand the larger connections. I got angry because some people thought they could just cut down the woods. They thought only of money and of themselves. I wanted to do something. So I designed a flyer that should call people around me not to buy palm oil. I distributed the flyer in the parish, in the school and among neighbors.”

You and your parish might consider following Anouk’s example to launch a campaign to advocate for sustainably produced palm oil that does not contribute to deforestation. Given that palm oil production is a politically and economically complex issue, you may begin by raising awareness about the farming of palm oil and its use in popular food products. For more information on the issues surrounding palm oil production, you may want to research more about the relationship between palm oil and the food industry at <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/palm-oil-scorecard-are-brands-doing-enough-for-indonesias-rainforests/> and <https://greenpalm.org/about-palm-oil/sustainable-palm-oil>.

## Advocate to protect creation

God intended creation to exist as a lively tapestry, with a rich variety of colors—millions of species, each in its own niche, contributing to the whole. Unfortunately, a UN report in May 2019 revealed that 1 million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction due to human activity. In the coming months, several major international biodiversity summits will be convened to discuss how the global community can protect these species. One big idea being considered is a 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 and Shareholder Engagement

The Season of Creation is an opportunity to reflect on all the ways our actions protect the web of life, from our liturgy and worship services, to our advocacy, to the products, like palm oil, that we use in our lives. Choosing sustainable investments has an impact as well.

Continuing to invest in fossil fuels will make it impossible to keep global warming at or below 1.5C, the limit that science tells us is the threshold of



catastrophe. A warmer world is not a safe world for species that are vulnerable to bigger deserts and hotter summers. What's more, fossil fuel projects destroy habitats around the world. From Yasuni in Ecuador's Amazon region to the Adani mine in Australia to Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico, fossil fuel extraction destroys the delicate balance of life in God's creation.

We can be part of the solution. Help your faith community make the commitment to divest from fossil fuels this Season of Creation. If you are not the decision maker, work with others in your community to make a presentation and offer support to the person who does make the decision.

Resources and help are available from [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](#)

## Join a mobilization

Young people and their supporters from all generations are coming together in global strikes to call for urgent action on climate change. Their movement, known as Fridays for the Future, is organizing climate strikes every Friday to call governments to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy. Speaking up for creation is a crucial part of Season of Creation, and slowing and reversing global climate change is one step towards protecting biodiversity.

The weekly Friday strikes are complemented by massive global moments that take place every few months. From September 23 to 29 the UN Secretary General will be holding a climate summit, and strikes are expected to take up to call to action throughout the world. You can urge action on climate change and protect biodiversity by holding a strike in your community or joining a strike that is already planned. Visit [Fridays for the Future](#) or [Laudato Si' Generation](#), the movement of young Catholics, for more



# Global calendar of events

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 it. Globally, Christians are invited to join services to come together in a joyful celebration of our common cause. More information can be found at [SeasonofCreation.org](http://SeasonofCreation.org).

## September 21: International Coastal Cleanup Day

For over 30 years, communities have come together to remove trash 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](http://OceanConservancy.org).





## September 23-29: United Nations Climate Action Summit

The UN Secretary General is hosting a summit devoted to climate change, with the aim of calling the world's attention to the urgent need to implement the Paris Agreement. The Paris pact has been agreed to by every country—only the United States has said it intends to leave it. But countries have not made policies to meet its goals. Of the 197 countries in the agreement, only seven are on track to keep warming below 2 degrees celsius, and only two are on track to keep warming below 1.5 degrees celsius. Science tells us that every fraction of a degree in warming means more hunger, more sickness, more conflict. The UN Secretary General's summit is a chance for the people of the world to rally around real, ambitious policies to solve this crisis.

## 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. Faith leaders from around the world will come together to reflect on how St. Francis has informed their spiritual journey and to celebrate our month-long journey together.



# 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 may appear on the [Season of Creation website](#).

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

## 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 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



# Contributors

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

Arnold Ambundo, Act Alliance

Louk Andrianos, World Council of Churches

Dave Bookless, A Rocha

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

Cecilia Dall'Oglio, Global Catholic Climate Movement

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

Hefin Jones, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Christina Leano, Global Catholic Climate Movement

Rachel Mash, Green Anglicans/Anglican Communion for Environmental Network

Peter Pavlovic, European Christian Environmental Network

Philip Peacock, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Chad Rimmer, The Lutheran World Federation

Abigail Scarlett, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Paulo Ueti, Anglican Alliance

Ruth Valerio, Director, Tearfund

