**SEASON OF CREATION 2023**

**SEASON OF CREATION**

‘Seasons of Creation’ is an ecumenical response to the environmental crisis impacting the world. A coalition of Christian partners from around the globe have provided activities and worship resources for Christian communities to use. The timing of this is usually between 1st September to 4th October as an alternative to the regular set of lectionary resources on these Sundays after Pentecost. Each year brings is a particular themed focus connected with an aspect to the environment, to raise awareness and inspire responsible environmental action.

The worship resources offered on the Commission on Worship site have been prepared in collaboration with Lutheran Earth Care Australia and New Zealand, endeavouring to point God’s people to the hope that we have in the midst of environmental chaos: Christ as the Redeemer of the world, who sustains all things by his powerful word, and will make all things new.

**The theme for 2023 is “****Let justice and peace flow”. The accompanying symbol is a mighty river. As people created in God’s image, we are co-creatures and part of all that God has made, and share a common call to care for creation, working for justice to those treated unjustly, and for ecological communities treated unjustly by human beings.**

Through the Prophet Amos God cries out “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5: 24). Through Isaiah God says: “Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:19)

As people who share in the new life of Christ, God calls us to join his concern for, and be his agents of, justice and peace throughout his world on behalf of all Creation. He calls for repentance and change of attitudes and actions to be more like Christ, from whom true justice and righteousness come.

**LITURGY**

**SENTENCE**

“Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing, now it will spring forth;

will you not be aware of it?

**I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.”**

(Isaiah 43: 19)

OR

Let justice roll down like waters,

**and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.** *(Amos 5:24 NRSV)*

**INVOCATION**

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the God who is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the Earth and all creatures! **Amen.**

**INVITATION TO CONFESSION**

The following words may be used to introduce the confession of sins.

Friends in Christ:

We know that we live in a broken world

Which is groaning in bondage to decay.

Let us confess our sins before the Creator of the world

And seek his grace and mercy:

**PRAYER OF THE DAY (COLLECT)**

Blessed are you, Creator of all!

To you be praise and glory forever.

As your dawn renews the face of the Earth

bringing light and life to all creation

bring hope to your people.

May we rejoice in this day you have made

open our eyes to behold your presence

and strengthen our hands to work for justice for all of creation,

that the world may rejoice together and give you praise.

*(Adapted from Lancelot Andrewes, 1626 – sourced from the 2023 Season of Creation Celebration Guide)*

**First Reading**

**Amos 5:21-24**

**PSALM 85**

*Antiphon:*

May love and truth meet together

**Let justice and mercy kiss**

**SECOND READING**

**Hebrews 1:8-12**

**GOSPEL**

**John 7:37-39**

**OFFERING PRAYER**

*(You may want to have an offering to collect money for a particular project or ministry that contributes to ecological restoration, or an aspect of climate justice that is significant in your location)*

Lord God, we thank you for your gracious gifts to us

For your world and all creation,

For meeting our daily needs,

For your grace and forgiveness.

Help us to be good stewards of these blessings,

And use us and our lives as your instruments of righteousness and peace,

Sharing the good news of your saving love with all.

**Amen**

**Prayer of the Church**

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise you for sending Jesus to proclaim justice to the nations. Hear our worries and concerns about the world and remember all that you have made, acting in accordance with your justice and mercy for his sake.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Father of all, open our eyes to see your image in every person we encounter, and move us to love one another as you have loved us. Give us a new commitment to care for each other, especially those suffering and dying due to lack of clean water and sanitation. [insert your own prayers for people who are ill, suffering or mourning the loss of loved ones here]

*[brief silence*]

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Jesus, Redeemer of the world by your precious blood, and Sustainer of it by your holy word, create in our hearts a desire to care for your creation and open our mouths to call on your name as we seek to sustain your gift of creation. Grant us the courage to speak up when our environment is polluted or threatened by people’s carelessness and greed. [you may like to insert prayers for current environmental issues]

*[brief silence*]

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Spirit of life, open our hearts to care for all of your creatures, great and small. Give us the passion to protect endangered species, threatened habitats and animals suffering from cruelty. [you may like to insert prayers for current issues or situations related to animal welfare/care]

*[brief silence*]

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Loving God, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. We know that just as you spoke this world into being, one day our lives here will end, and you will bring about a new heaven and a new earth. Even as we care for this planet you have given us, help us not to lose sight of your power and might, and the plan you have for the redemption of the whole world.

Help us to hand over all our cares and concerns to you, confident that you will empower us with your strength, your wisdom and your love. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, hear our prayers, and continue to live and remain with us, now and forevermore.

**Amen.**

**CLOSING SENTENCES** *(for use before the regular blessing)*

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, 13th Century – sourced from the 2023 Season of Creation Celebration Guide)*

**OR**

The peace of God be with you all.

**In God’s justice is our peace.**

Brothers and sisters,

Christ calls us to live in unity with each other and with the whole of Creation

**We seek to live in the Spirit of Christ.**

(*sourced from the 2023 Season of Creation Celebration Guide)*

**BENEDICTION**

May we be blessed to open our hearts to receive “the living waters of God’s justice and peace” within us:

**Amen.**

May we be blessed to share “the living waters of God’s justice and peace” with our suffering brothers and sisters and all creatures around us:

**Amen.**

May we be blessed to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of “the living waters of God’s justice and peace” may become a mighty river all over the Earth:

**Amen.**

And may God bless us on this journey, + the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

*(Fr Joshtrom Kureethadam, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development - sourced from the 2023 Season of Creation Celebration Guide)*

**SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS**

**LHS**

21 Of the Father's love begotten

152 Fairest Lord Jesus

379 Lord of Creation, to Thee be all praise

394 God is love, let heaven adore him

429 All creatures of our God and King

433 All people that of Earth do dwell

442 Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation

467 For the beauty of the earth

598 I sing the almighty power of God

790 O Lord of light, who made the stars

810 Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving

880 How shall I call you

881 How great Thou art

**AT**

2 This is the day

70 Peace like a river

313 Christ, be our light

325 Sing to God with joy

326 Shout for joy

332 We are sorry

333 You are our God

359 Holy Spirit, living water

400 Deep Peace

422 Canticle of Daniel

433 You were in this place

494 For you deep stillness

530 Healing is flowing (Song of Healing)

586 Touch the earth lightly

606 Nothing is lost on the breath of God

644 Thank God you’re here

**TIS**

135 All things bright and beautiful

156 Morning has broken

166 Creation sings a new song

690 Beauty for Brokenness

**psaLm 85:8-13**

For musical settings of Psalm 85:8-13, see Music Packages 4, 6 and 9. TIS 45, I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, is a version of Psalm 85:7-13.

Below is a metrical version by David Schütz of Psalm 85:8-13, which may be sung to the tune Ave Virgo (LH 469. TIS 391). If reproducing this version, please put 'Words (c) David Schütz' at the beginning or the end of the psalm.

Let me hear what God will say -

say to all his faithful.

He will speak his peace to us -

peace to all who trust him.

His salvation now is near -

near to all who fear him.

He in glory comes to us -

comes and makes his dwelling.

Love and faithfulness will meet -

meet in peace and justice.

Faithfulness will spring from earth,

righteousness from heaven.

God will give us what is good

and our land will prosper.

Righteousness will pave his way

as he comes to save us.

**VISUAL ARTS AND CHILDREN**

There are some excellent suggestions for visual displays and activities for people of all ages in the 2023 Season of Creation Celebration Guide (Addendum 2).

The Children’s Address could focus on the idea of living water. Prepare a glass of dirty water, a jug of clean water, some smaller empty jugs and a large bowl. It’s better if they are clear so everyone can see the water.

Show the children a glass of dirty water. Would they like to drink it? Why not? Share that many people around the world don’t have clean water to drink, or enough water. This means they get sick or even die. Animals and plants also suffer if the water is polluted. We all need clean water to live.

Jesus says that he is the living water – pure, clean water. Show the children the jug of clean water. When we are baptised, this living water makes us part of God’s family. When we hear God’s word, we can grow and flourish like a plant that has been watered. When we say sorry for our sins, God washes us clean and helps us start over.

The cool thing is that when we drink Jesus’ living water by hearing his Word (reading the Bible and hearing pastor preach), we not only grow strong in our faith, but the Holy Spirit works in us so that we can share the living water of God’s love and forgiveness with other people. Hand small jugs to a few children, and then pour a little water into each small jug.

Today you might have noticed that the words ‘Let justice and peace flow’ are being used and that we can see pictures of a big river. God’s living water is at work in all of us. Imagine that the spirit of God is flowing from you like a little stream. Ask one child to pour their water into the bowl.

Now imagine if all our streams joined together. Ask the rest of the children the to pour their water into the bowl at the same time.

And then imagine that our living water joined together with the streams of all God’s people all over the world: it would make a mighty river, wouldn’t it? And that river could bring hope and peace to a lot of people. It could make us brave to stand up for people who are being treated badly, and for our environment when people are disrespecting God’s creation.

Finish with a prayer thanking God for his living water, Jesus, and asking God to work through us to love and care for all his creation.

**NOTES ON THE READINGS**

**Amos 5:21-24**

This passage shows God’s heart for justice and righteousness from his people. It comes in the wider context of God’s exposing the sinful motives of his people and showing how far away from his will they are—despite their outward religious performance, their hearts are far from him. This reading, then, is a dire warning: only God is truly just and righteous, and his justice and righteousness will rage against his people. Their empty religious performance will not help them.

The desecration of creation reflects the same attitudes and behaviours of our sinful nature. This is a heart issue.

But read in the light of the Gospel, this text points us to Christ. It is only in Christ that true justice and righteousness are found. It was on the Cross that Christ received the full brunt of God’s righteousness and justice—exchanging his righteousness for our unrighteousness, his justice for our injustice. From him streams of living water flow—a picture of life in the Spirit who transforms us to be God’s agents of bringing wholeness to the world.

**Hebrews 1:8-12**

This reading from Hebrews gives us the wonderful assurance that in all the tumult of the world—of nations rising and falling, of ravaging and being ravaged in war—God is in control. It is the Son himself who created all there is, laying the foundations of the earth and upholding the heavens. God’s rule will not be thwarted. His Kingdom reigns in the Person of Christ. It is a kingdom that is like no other, for Jesus will rule with justice and righteousness. Long after the heavens and earth will perish, he will remain, and bring about a new creation. His years will never end and his throne will endure eternally!

**John 7:37-39**

Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, or booths, which was ordained by God in Leviticus 23. It was a festival in which the Israelites lived in booths to re-enact their wandering in the wilderness, reminding them that though they were living in a land of plenty they were never to forget that the Lord had brought them out of bondage in Egypt.

Each morning during this festival, at the time of the sacrifice, a priest proceeded to the fountain of Shiloh with a golden pitcher, filled it with water and took it to the altar of burnt sacrifice, pouring the water, together with the contents of a pitcher of wine from the drink offering, into two perforated flat bowls. The trumpets sounded, and the people sang Isaiah 12:3 “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” It commemorated the water that gushed out of the rock at Meribah and that was intended to quench the thirst of the multitude in the desert during their wilderness wandering.

On the last day of this festival Jesus stands and calls out: “If anyone is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, just as the Scriptures say, streams of living water will flow from within them." In the Old Testament prophecies to which Jesus refers, it is mentioned that the living water will flow from Jerusalem, and the Lord’s house. In both cases this means the Temple in Jerusalem, the real presence of God with his people. Here Jesus is proclaiming himself to be the new Temple in whom God is present to his people and the thirsty soul will find supplied in him that which will not be found elsewhere. He will graciously give the life-giving water of the Holy Spirit, giving us new life, striving for righteousness and justice.