



TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)



Prayer Service (the end of the
Season of Creation) October 4th

Opening words

Surrounded as we are with constant devastating news about climate chaos, bio-diversity loss and the ever-growing mountains of pollution it is easy to fall into despair. And yet as people of faith, we have hope - the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance of what we do not yet see (cf. Hebrews 11:1).

In the words of Archbishop Tutu “Hope is being able to see that there is light - despite all the darkness.”

As faith without action is dead (James 2:26) - so hope without action is meaningless and, in this service, we acknowledge and lament our sense of despair, cling to our faith and hope, and commit ourselves to act with Creation for the renewal of life.

We hold our prayer service today as part of the ecumenical Season of Creation, a season of prayer and action for our common home that takes place every year from September 1 to October 4. The theme for the Season of Creation this year is “To hope and act with Creation”, and the symbol is “The first fruits of hope”, inspired by Romans 8:19-25.

PAUSE

Welcome

Blessed be the name of God, God of our ancestors, God of the generations yet to come. Blessed be the Creating God, Redeeming Son and the Sustaining Spirit.

As we gather, we hear the groans of Creation and the cries of our sisters and brothers. As we gather, we bring our seeds of hope, the first fruits of the Spirit
(Rev Sikawu, Central Methodist Church, Cape Town)

Greeting and call to worship

Come, let us worship God, who gifted us with life and Creation to sustain life. We praise God for the wondrous Creation. Come, let us follow Lord Jesus Christ, who inspires us to hope and act for justice and righteousness.

We give glory to God, who restores the groaning Creation and the vulnerable. Come let us move with the Holy Spirit, striving to establish justice and produce the first fruits of hope.

We praise God for the abundant life that is assured to all Creation. Heavenly Triune God and Creator of all, we gather here, made in the image of the Creator, who created in love. We gather in the name of the redeemer, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reconciles all of Creation. We gather in the presence of the life Giver, your Holy Spirit, who inspires new life and instils hope.

(World Council of Churches, Eco-School at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, Greece, 11-18 November 2023)

Psalm 42

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living
God.

When shall I come and behold the face of
God?

My tears have been my food day and
night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”

These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng
and led them in procession to the house
of God,
with glad shouts and songs of
thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.

Thanksgiving for the Earth

God of Holy Dreaming, great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of Creation you have given
your children the good things of our mothering Earth.

You spoke and the gum tree grew. In the vast desert and the dense forest, and in the
cities and at the water's edge, Creation sings your praise.

Your presence endures at the rock, at the heart of our land.

When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people
and became one with your wounded ones: the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.

The sunrise of your Son coloured the Earth anew and bathed it in glorious hope.

In Jesus, we have been reconciled to you, to each other and to your whole Creation.

Lead us on, Great Spirit, as we gather from the four corners of the Earth;

enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and shame of the past into the full day
that has dawned in Jesus Christ. Amen

(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Liturgical Resources)

Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your torrents;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

By day the Lord commands his steadfast
love,

and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God, my rock,

“Why have you forgotten me?”

Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”

As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,

while they say to me continually,

“Where is your God?”

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Glory to you Source of All-being,
Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning,

is now and will be forever, Amen.

Reading - Romans 8:18-25

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole of creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labour, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope, we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Sing: (on sheet) Make a Little Difference - (Michael Mangan)

Gospel Reading - Matthew 9:35-38

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

Pause for silent personal reflection

Share if you feel comfortable

Intercessory Prayers: "To hope and act with Creation"

God of the land, the sea, the sky: Creator of all that is seen and unseen.
Open our hearts to the rhythm of Creation in the swells of the ocean, the movements of air and wind, the breath of all living things.

Resp. May we hope and Act with Creation

Open our eyes to the fragile beauty of the biodiversity of which we are a part. Open our ears to the sounds of life around us. Open our minds to the awareness of our deep relationship with all your Creation.

Resp; May we hope and Act with Creation

God of Light, Life and Love: Help us to seek and find your presence in all Creation. Help us to understand the roots of the ecological crisis and give us the wisdom to live resiliently in harmony with your Creation.

Resp: May we hope and Act with Creation

Keep us firm in the faith that the gift of life in all its fullness is for all Creation. Help us to maintain hope that your reign of love is manifested in our common love for you, for ourselves, and for our neighbour - both human and non-human.

Resp: May we hope and Act with Creation.

God of truth and justice: Fill us with your spirit of compassion so we may live and act with and in solidarity with Creation. Guide us in paths of righteousness that help us to tread softly on the land and sail gently on the sea.

RESP: May we hope and Act with Creation

Give us wisdom and courage to recognise our role in the evil of systemic exploitation and extraction and to speak truth to power. Give us strength of heart and arm to be agents of the ecological conversion the world so desperately needs.

Resp: May we hope and act with Creation.

(Rev. James Bagwan, Pacific Conference of Churches)

The Lord's Prayer

(Lord's Prayer in the language of your choice.)

God who can set Creation free, show us his glory.

Resp: Glory to God.

May God who knows our groaning and crying, bring about new life.

Resp: Now and always.

May God who helps us in our weakness, give us the first fruits of hope.

Resp: The Lord is our hope.

And may the Triune God sprinkle into our hearts the dew of his grace and bless us all.

Amen.

SING: Ave Maria Ave (Liam Lawson) Tape - words on sheet

