

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost – 2 October 2022

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank members of EcoCongregation Scotland for their thoughts on the seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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Revised Common Lectionary material

Weekly worship material throughout Creation Time is hosted on the EcoCongregation Scotland website and can be found there, along with other resources for the season.

<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/uncategorized/season-of-creation-2022/>

Introduction

EcoCongregation Scotland have for many years offered resources for churches to use, creatively, according to their circumstances, for 'Creation Time' or Season of Creation. The material presented here is original, and from members of EcoCongregation Scotland, unless otherwise indicated.

We have taken care to invite contributions from those in, or just concluding training for Christian leadership: we always welcome conversations with colleges and those providing training.

This special approach to the international and ecumenical celebration and challenge that is the Season of Creation acknowledges the continued use of the Revised Common Lectionary by many local churches, but following Scotland's hosting of the United Nations COP26 Climate Conference last year, we are compelled to assert more firmly than ever, that to follow Christ in the years of crisis that lie ahead, we need to be more open than ever to the creative leading of the Spirit in building our spiritual resilience as people of hope beyond hope, in which the hugely ambitious project of Net Zero is a response of faith, offered in dependence on grace.

In such times, and with such urgency, the gift of the scriptures shines through, inviting playfulness, wonder, and other equally serious aspects of our faith to come into their own, unlocking the green treasures which, like the ancient wisdom of the indigenous peoples of the Earth, and the fellow creatures on whose lives we depend, have so easily been sidelined or despised.

We learn to join the shout of 'Hosanna' – God help us! – echoing throughout Creation, remembering that this is also a joyful shout.

We pray that you will be encouraged to re-read, re-think, recycle and repurpose even the most familiar of scriptures to the glory of God and for Good News for every creature [cf Mark 16:15].

Themes for this week

For this week's resources visit

<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/uncategorized/season-of-creation-2022-week-5-2nd-october/>

Tragedy and violence dominate the lectionary readings: it's a hard batch to swallow, but trust in the goodness of God! All the more as we take in the latest news about the state of the planet! [<https://www.ipcc.ch/>]

If you've read though the still raw and crushing witness of Lamentations 1, you might need a good cup of tea or something stronger to face the accompanying Psalm. Is it possible to read Psalm 137 without – for my generation at least – a fond memory of Boney M's hit setting of 'By the Rivers of Babylon', and then stumble on the uncensored *curse* of verses 4 to 6?

And yet I also recall how that hymn/song became a beautiful informal focus of unity in a global Christian conference I attended for the United Reformed Church in Jamaica, with descendants of those who had known slavery, singing along.

Scripture can always surprise. The frequently marginalised prophet Habakkuk firmly pins blame where it belongs: and for us, this means accepting that climate change is not 'natural', but has human causes. Psalm 37 can better be grasped with an awareness of partnership with the land, and gives sustenance to those inclined just to give up because of the 'prospering' of evil. 2 Timothy offers a personal and intimate encouragement to the community of the Church, and in Luke 17 Jesus delivers a wake-up call to those of His first disciples who expected to sit back and be made 'faithful' without the engagement and commitment that entails.

Probationer Minister Gillean Richmond, who undertook a placement with the EcoChaplaincy as part of her training, contributes the first set of prayers, finding a delightful form of address for the 'Magnificent Mystery' of God.

In the prayer section, we also re-present previously affirmed material from the CTBI Climate Sunday initiative and the 'Framework for prayers', accompanied by the video version filmed in the sacred space of a bird hide; both by EcoChaplain David Coleman, as ECS staff.

As the Season of Creation ends, may we daily join the shout of 'Hosanna' – God help us! – echoing throughout Creation, remembering that this is also a joyful shout, a script and Commission for those who would be Good News for every creature [cf Mark 16:15].

Musical suggestions

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

A suggested playlist of songs from CH4 throughout Creation Time can be found online here: <https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/creation-time>

Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord's Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of 'holy chaos'.
- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.

- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?
Did it function well as a whole?
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/
community?
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

Useful links

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)