

Season of Creation: Forest

Written and compiled by Michelle Cook

How do you think of forests? In your imagination are they places of peace and quiet? Are they places that scare you? Are you more at home in a eucalypt forest than in a mangrove forest? Sometimes forests can be places of fear. Think of all the old stories from Europe, the folk tales some of us may have grown up hearing. Stories like Hansel and Gretel, where children get lost in the forest. Stories like Snow White, where the beautiful young girl gets taken to the forest by the hunter so that he may kill her far away from witnesses. Forests in these stories are seen as places of secrecy, of unknown dangers and mysterious powers.

In Psalm 139 it is our bodies being knit together in our mother's wombs that becomes known. God, the creator of everything, knows our bodies, and hear the Psalmist says to us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Even the workings of the womb, hidden from us, and felt by mothers, are known by God. The story of creation is retold in Genesis 2:4b-22. Adam is created from earth and is set in a garden – a forest of fruit trees – a garden of food. Here is a forest, where again, all is known. The chaos and desperation of the land, where nothing is yet growing, is contrasted with the richness and safety of the garden.

In Acts 17:22-28, Paul shows us that even in an alien place, a place unknown to us, we can still see God. And, lastly, we have the Gospel reading. In John 3:1-17, Nicodemus is a man in confusion. He is not sure who Jesus is. He is unsure of his own mind, for he comes to Jesus at night, seemingly afraid of coming to him in the light. He says that Jesus is from God but is wary of demonstrating this belief to others. Then Jesus confuses him even more. Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born again. Nicodemus is thinking of being born again of his mother. Jesus reminds Nicodemus of the creating power of God's Spirit blowing where it will, creating and re-creating so that all may be brought to new life.

This resource contains

- Call to Worship: Wonderfully Made (Psalm 139:13-16)
- Prayer of Confession: Re-creation (John 3:1-17)
- Prayers of the People: Forest Prayers (Psalm 139:13-16)
 - Lectionary Links: Pentecost 14 (Matthew 16:21-28, Exodus 3:1-15, Romans 12:9-21, Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b)

Wonderfully Made



What this is
A call to worship.



Where it is used
At the beginning of a Service



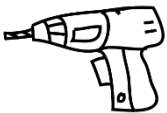
How long do we need
5 mins



Bible Focus/Theme
Psalm 139:13-16



Resource written and compiled by
Michelle Cook



What resources do we need

- Prepared words
- Powerpoint/posters of images of forests

Introduction

The Call to Worship picks up on the theme of creation. It is a great introduction to the Season of Creation for this week and the following three weeks of land, wilderness and river. The Psalm reminds us of the wonderful works of God's creation, including ourselves. The powerpoint reminds us that we too are part of the whole creation.

What to do

Prepare

Prepare a variety of images of forests to use for a powerpoint slide show. Think of forests like mangroves, eucalypts, dry woodland forests, rainforests, fir forests or others that are relevant for your location.

Ask 4 people of different ages to help read the call to worship.

Say & Do

Today we start focusing on God's creation. Everything around us is part of God's creation, and that includes us. We are going to share together in hearing Psalm 139. So get comfortable, look at the pictures and listen for God's word to us today.

Voice 1: You made every part of me

Voice 2: You knit me together in my mother's womb

Voice 3: I praise you. I am wonderfully made.

Voice 4: Your works are wonderful, I know them very well.

Voice 1: I was not hidden from you while I was being made

Voice 2: I was specially woven in the deep earth

Voice 3: You saw me before I was fully made

Voice 4: Your works are wonderful, I know them very well.



Image: pexels.com

Taking it further:

You may like to follow this with a song that praises God's creation. Familiar songs might be 'How Great thou Art' or 'God of creation to you be all praise' or 'God of Wonders' or "The One and Only God" (Colin Buchanan).

If you choose to use "The One and Only God", you might like to begin by inviting people to indicate which of the places mentioned they have visited. If time allows, you could invite them to share a little more about their visit.

Re-Creation

**What this is**

Prayer of Confession and Re-creation

**Where it is used**

Near the beginning of the service, or after the message

**How long we need**

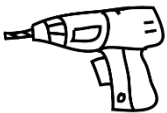
10 mins

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Re-creation – John 3:1-17

**Resource written and compiled by**

Michelle Cook and Uniting In Worship 2 CD Prayers of Confession 07

**Resources we need**

- Large pot– on something with wheels makes it easier to move around
- A bag of soil and trowels
- Fast growing seeds like radishes, basil or others suitable for your area
- Watering can with water in it

Introduction

John 3:1-17 contains probably the most famous verse of the bible – ‘For God so loved the world’. It is important for us to look at the whole story of Nicodemus though. He was a man searching for something. He was looking for God. Jesus told him he must be born again. It is important for all of us to know that we can be re-created each day with God. A prayer of confession is a time to bring our hurts and our failings to God and ask God to re-create us.

Prepare

Get a large pot, make sure it is on a saucer to stop the water from leaking all over the floor. If you want to be able to move the pot plant put it on a piece of board with wheels underneath. Pot plant trolleys can be bought at local plant and hardware stores.

Fill the pot plant halfway up with soil

Get a bag of dirt and some tools to help people move the dirt from the bag to the pot plant.

Have the seeds in a container ready to sow.
Have the watering can filled with water.



Image: adobestock.com

Say & Do

When we gather together we remember that God wants us to be re-created. Today we will hear this prayer and then come together to plant some 'basil'. We will water this plant every week to remind ourselves of God's promise of re-creation. Some of you will fill the pot with dirt and some of you with seeds. Who would like to fill the pot with dirt? Who would like to sprinkle seeds? I will call you forward after we pray.

We have failed to love you with all our heart,
and to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have failed to take up the cross of discipleship
and to be good stewards of your gospel:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have failed to be faithful members of your church
and to be good stewards of your spiritual gifts:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

(From Uniting in Worship 2 CD Prayers of Confession 07).

Invite forward those who are going to fill the pot with soil. [*Wait while the pot is filled up*]

Come forward those who are going to sprinkle seeds. [*Wait until the seeds are sprinkled*]

Say...Hear that in God we are a new creation, fed by the Living Water, the One who call us to new birth. [*Pour the water over the seeds*]

Taking it further

Each of the weeks of this season will include a way to use this pot so you can continue watering and watching the re-creation.

Forest of Prayer



What this is
Prayers for the World



Where it is used
Usually after the message



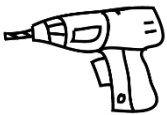
How long we need
10 mins



Bible Focus/Theme
Psalm 139:13-16



Resource written and compiled by
Michelle Cook



What resources do we need

- Different colours of green paper with printed leaf outline
- Pens
- Hole punch and string
- Old branch or something to hang the leaves on
- Scissors

Introduction

Our creation is groaning with suffering. There is war, famine, poverty. And we continue to use the resources of the earth with no thought as to the future. We have been through the hottest days in history. God knows the secret places of our world. The places where the seeds of life are formed and grow into an intricate web of life. Even where God's love, peace and grace are not known, God is still making Godself known. What will our prayers for God's world be?

Prepare

Print out leaves on the coloured bits of paper.

During the service you can invite people to cut out leaves OR you can cut out the leaves beforehand.

You can also hole punch each leaf and tie the string to it before the service or ask people to do this as part of the prayer.

If you are doing the leaf preparation during the you may like to assign people to cutting and giving out leaves, to hole punching and to tying the string.

For ideas on how to make a tree for your leaves go to or search 'prayer tree ideas' on google.

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Prayer+tree+ideas&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>



Image: pexels.com

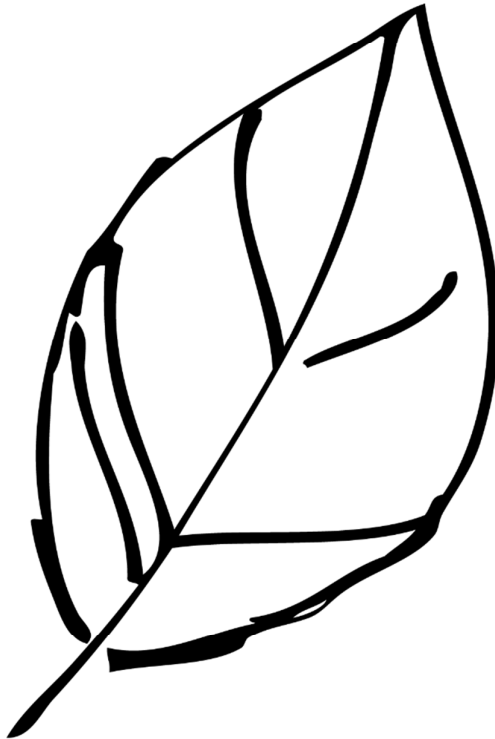
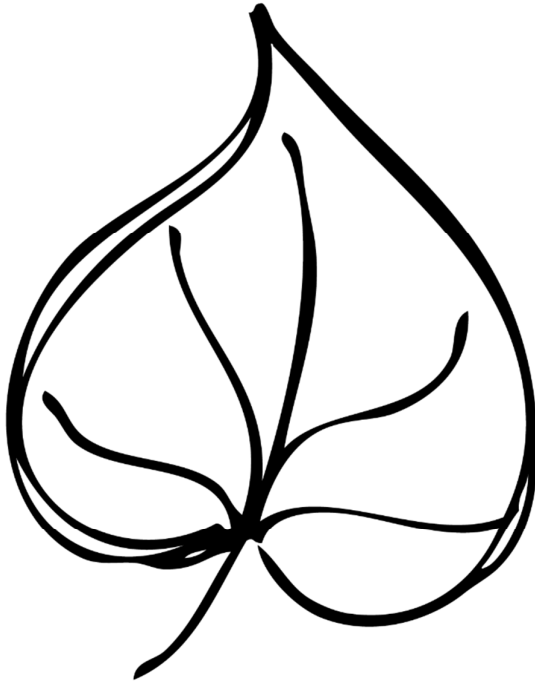
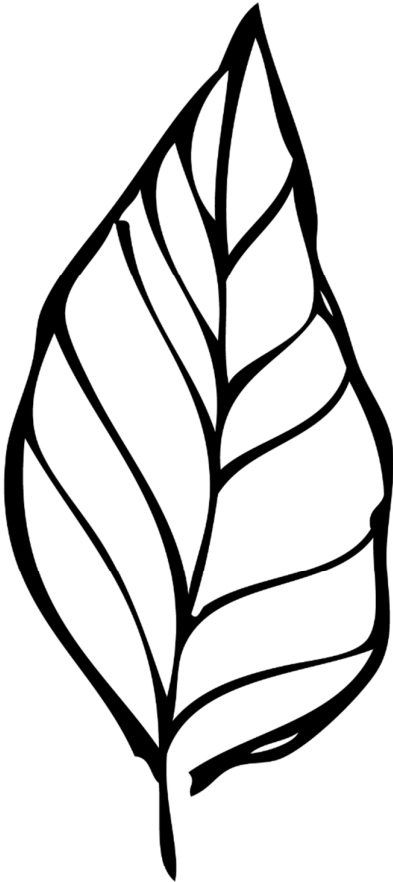
Say & Do

We are coming to our prayers for the whole world. While some music is playing we are going to be given leaves (either cut out during the service or beforehand). On your leaf write or draw your prayers for the world.

With one or two people near you, if you are comfortable doing so and it is pastorally appropriate, share a little about what you have written or drawn.

When invited to do so, have one person from your cluster take the leaves and hang them on the tree. Those that remain seated can be invited to pray silently for the items that have been shared.

Forest of Prayer leaves



Lectionary Links Pentecost 14

**What this is**

Lectionary linked resources for Pentecost 14

**Where it is used**

Depends on the ideas chosen

**How long do we need**

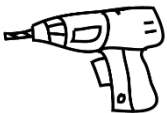
5-10 mins, depending on the ideas chosen

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Matthew 16:21-28, Exodus 3:1-15,
Romans 12:9-21, Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

**Resource compiled by**

Chris Barnett

**What resources do we need**

- Depends on the ideas chosen

Introduction

The focus of this set of resources is on the Season of Creation, this week on the theme of Forest. Season of Creation is a time to renew relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, sisters and brothers throughout the ecumenical family join in prayer and action for our common home.

Whilst many churches embrace the Season of Creation, many others continue in their normal pattern. Thus, this specific resource is for those who will be continuing to follow the Revised Common Lectionary. For these churches, this resource contains links to a collection of different websites that provide weekly lectionary-based ideas for...

Matthew 16:21-28

Exodus 3:1-15

Romans 12:9-21

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

Lectioary Links

Pentecost 14

Matthew 16:21-28 Are we called to the easy life?

<https://www.allageworshipresources.org/are-we-called-to-the-easy-life-lectionary-year-a-2023-the-13th-sunday-after-trinity/>

Matthew 16:21-28 The Cost of Being a Disciple
Exodus 3:1-15 Moses and the Burning Bush

<https://www.bibleexplore.nz/ordinary22a.html>

Matthew 16:21-28

Exodus 3:1-15

Romans 12:9-21

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-rcl-september-3-2017/>

Matthew 16:21-28

Exodus 3:1-15

Romans 12:9-21

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2014/08/year-proper-17-22nd-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Matthew 16:21-28

Exodus 3:1-15

Romans 12:9-21

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2020/08/proper-17-august-30-living-gods-call.html>



Image: Bible Explore – Used with permission

Creation: Land

Written and compiled by Michelle Cook

The word 'land' has many different meanings in the Scripture and in our day to day life. It can mean to arrive or to stick a 'landing' in gymnastics. In the context of creation land takes on other meanings. There are many different Hebrew words that live in the word space of the English word land. Below are the English language transliterations of two of these words.



Image: pexels.com

Adamah – the word for earth is found in the creation story in Genesis chapter 2. Adam is created from this 'adamah'. A play on words that is common in the Hebrew Scriptures. Eretz is a Hebrew word that can be translated as soil but also as territory or country, a more political meaning. The word is used in Genesis 1 and is translated as 'earth'. By the time we get to the promises to Abraham, it is used to denote a particular place – the promised 'land' (Genesis 12:1) In our own cultures to work the 'land' can mean to be a farmer, to live off the 'land' can mean to eat from the natural surroundings. First Peoples around the world have a particular connection to 'land' that the United Nations has recognised in the 2007 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'.

How then shall we speak of land with the readings set for today? The readings from Genesis 3:14-19 and 4:8-16 tell us the familiar stories of the land being a means of punishment for the failure of humanity in the garden. Instead of being able to gather food easily, humanity is condemned to till the earth and to return to dust. The Genesis 4:8-16 reading tells us of the blood of Abel crying out to God from the ground. It reminds us of God's heart for justice and peace. Verses 7-12 of Psalm 139 tell us we can never escape from God, even if we bury ourselves deep in the earth; a timely reminder that no matter what we have done, nothing can separate us from God. Connected to Psalm 139, then, is the Romans 5:12-17 reading reminding us of the free gift of God's grace, no matter what land we belong to. Matthew 12:38-40 also reminds us of the sign of Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to proclaim God's judgement to foreigners, showing us that all can be recipients of God's mercy.

This resource contains

- Prayer of Confession: Re-creation (Romans 5:12-17)
- Reflection: The Belly of the Earth (Psalm 139:7-12, Matthew 12:38-40)
- Prayers for the World: The Land Cries Out (Genesis 4: 8-16)
- Lectionary Links: Pentecost 15 (Matthew 18:15-20, Exodus 12:1-14, Romans 13:8-14, Psalm 149)

Land Re-Creation

**What this is**

Prayer of Confession and Re-creation

**Where it is used**

Near the beginning of the service, or after the message

**How long we need**

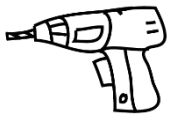
10 mins

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Re-creation – Romans 5:12-17

**Resource written and compiled by**

Michelle Cook

**Resources we need**

- The large pot that is growing basil
- Watering can
- Second large container/pot with soil
- Small pouches/bags with seeds (enough for everyone or enough for one for each household)
- Empty pouches/bags (enough for everyone or enough for one for each household)

Introduction

In the reading from Romans 5:12-17 we are reminded that Jesus is the new Adam. He has taken on our life from the earth and gives us everlasting life. This free gift allows us to have new life.

PREPARE

Have your large pot ready and a full watering can. Ask a child and an adult to lead the prayers, saying a stanza each. Then the child and adult can pour the water on the plant together.

Place the second large pot containing soil near where people will leave your gathering.

SAY & DO

When we gather together we remember that God wants us to be re-created.. We are watering our plant every week to remind ourselves of God's recreation

(enough for everyone or enough for one for each household)We have failed to love you with all our heart and to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have failed to take up the cross of discipleship and to be good stewards of your gospel:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have failed to be faithful members of your church and to be good stewards of your spiritual gifts:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.



Image: pexels.com

(From Uniting in Worship 2 CD Prayers of Confession 07).

Hear that in God we are a new creation, given new life by the abundance of God's grace in Jesus Christ. [*Pour the water over the seeds*]

TAKING IT FURTHER

Depending on the size of your group, you might like to invite everyone – or a smaller number - to come forward and gather around the pot. Invite them to respond to what they can see. What's there? What's different to the previous week? Even if nothing looks different, what might have been happening?

Distribute the pre-prepared bags of seeds (one per person or one per household). Explain that as people leave there will be an opportunity to collect some soil and place it in a second bag. Encourage people to take home the seeds and plant them in the soil.

The Belly of the Earth



What this is
Quiet Reflection



Where it is used
As reflection or prayer, as part of an Early Word or after a message time



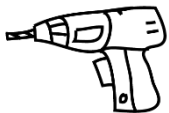
How long we need
10 mins



Bible Focus/Theme
Psalm 139:7-12, Matthew 12:38-40



Resource written and compiled by
Michelle Cook



Resources we need

- Reading over page

Introduction

The Bible reading from Matthew 12:38-40 talks about the sign of Jonah. This activity invites people to imagine being in a dark place, where there is no light, and then to imagine coming into a place of light. Use this imaginative reflection as a way for people to engage in both the Psalm and the Gospel reading. Read slowly, pause after each line, breathe in and out, and then continue.

PREPARE

We are going to close our eyes now and listen to the words. Let them wash over us and enter our hearts.

So get comfortable, breathe slowly and close your eyes.

READING/REFLECTION

The way is dark

I cannot see

I can hear my own breathing

In and out,

up and down.

I can see no light

I know that light is somewhere.

Jonah was three days in darkness

He was in the belly of the sea creature.

Jesus felt the darkness come over him

In the beginning there was darkness

And then there was light.

I can feel there is no light

Is there any place I can go to run away from your Spirit

If I climb to the sky, you're there!

If I go underground, you're there!

If I fly on morning's wings to the far western horizon
You'd find me in a minute - you're already
there waiting!

You see me even in the darkness of the night.

Darkness is not dark to you, the deepest night is clear as the clearest day

(last half is adapted from Psalm 139:7-12, The Message)

Now open your eyes, see clearly and walk with God in the clear light.

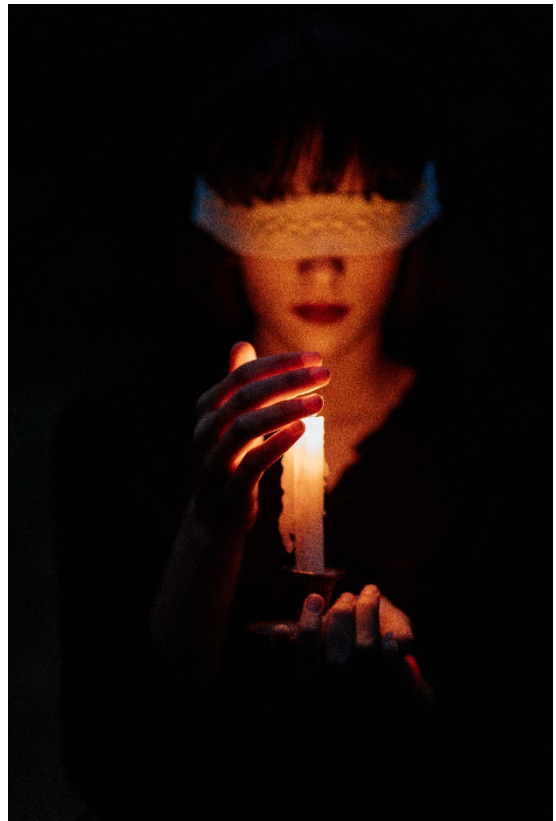


Image: pexels.com

The Land Cries out

**What this is**

Activity and prayers for the world

**Where it is used**

Response to Reflection

**How long we need**

10 mins

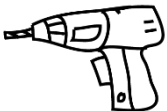
**Bible Focus/Theme**

Genesis 4:8-16

Whose land is it? Whose blood cries out?

**Resource written and compiled by**

Michelle Cook

**Resources do we need**

- A map that shows First Peoples land/languages of the place where you are
- For Australia <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>
- Map of the world
- Sticky dots or markers

Introduction

When we reflect on the Bible story from Genesis 4, we hear of the land crying out to God to alert God to the murder of Abel by Cain. There are many places in the world today where we can hear the land crying out against injustice, violence and war. This includes acknowledging the First Peoples of the land we may be on now and recognising that this land was taken forcibly, and has resulted in disconnection, cultural distress and physical injury to the First Peoples.

PREPARE

Either project maps or have large, printed versions of maps on the floor or wall.

SAY AND DO

Invite people to place dots on different areas of the map and pray for God's justice and peace to reign in that place.

As people to come forward. Ask them to say the name of the place where they are putting their dots. If people are unable to come forward, ask some children, teenagers, or others more mobile, to take their dot prayers to the map.

Conclude with a short, spoken prayer.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Pre-prepare a collection of A4 size maps (enough for each person or enough for one per household), some of your local area, some of your state/region, some of your country and some of the world. Place them near where people will leave your gathering and/or in the space people might gather after your service. Place strips of four or five sticky dots near the maps.

After the prayer time, explain that there will be the opportunity to choose a map, and collect some sticky dots, to take home. Encourage people to use the maps and dots in a time of prayer, as a household, during the week.



Image: pexels.com

Lectionary Links

Pentecost 15

**What this is**

Lectionary linked resources for Pentecost 15

**Where it is used**

Depends on the ideas chosen

**How long we need**

5-10 mins, depending on the ideas chosen

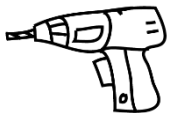
**Bible Focus/Theme**

Matthew 18:15-20, Exodus 12:1-14

Romans 13:8-14, Psalm 149

**Resource compiled by**

Chris Barnett

**Resources we need**

- Depends on the ideas chosen

Introduction

The focus of this set of resources is on the Season of Creation, this week on the theme of Land. Season of Creation starts 1 September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations. Throughout the month-long celebration, many of the world's 2.2 billion Christians come together to care for our common home.

Whilst many churches embrace the Season of Creation, many others continue in their normal pattern. Thus, this specific resource is for those who will be continuing to follow the Revised Common Lectionary. For these churches, this resource contains links to a collection of different websites that provide weekly lectionary-based ideas re...

Matthew 18:15-20

Exodus 12:1-14

Romans 13:8-14

Psalm 149

Lectionary Links

Matthew 18:15-20 What can we throw away?

<https://www.allageworshipresources.org/what-can-we-throw-away-lectionary-year-a-2023-the-14th-sunday-after-trinity/>

Matthew 18:15-20 Building Bridges

Exodus 12:1-14 The Passover

Romans 13:8-14 Love One Another

<https://www.bibleexplore.nz/ordinary23a.html>

Matthew 18:15-20

Exodus 12:1-14

Romans 13:8-14

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-rcl-september-10-2017/>

Matthew 18:15-20

Exodus 12:1-14

Romans 13:8-14

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2014/08/year-proper-18-23rd-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Matthew 18:15-20

Exodus 12:1-14

Romans 13:8-14

Psalms 149

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2020/08/proper-18-september-06-extravagant.html>



Image: Bible Explore – used with permission

Searching the wilderness

Written and compiled by Michelle Cook

Wilderness conjures up many different feelings for people. It may be a time of sparseness and desperation. It may be a time of reclamation and refreshment. In the Scriptures, wilderness is usually portrayed as a time of desperation and testing. When we look at the readings set for today we see the same.

The Hebrew Scriptures reading from Joel 1:8-10 and 17-20 speaks of the desolation of dryness being experienced by the people. All the fertility of the land has gone, no hope can be found. The prophet cries out to God in the midst of despair. Joel asks the people to come to God, to cry out to God and to ask God for mercy. There may be people in worship today who are in this place of dryness, who are asking for relief from despair.

Psalm 18:6-19 answers a cry of despair, but in truly military and violent actions. Whilst these actions please the writer of the Psalm, they can feel foreign and vengeful to our ears. It causes us to ask the question, 'Should I rejoice in the suffering and anguish of those who have hurt me?'

Romans 8:18-27 reminds us that the whole creation groans waiting for redemption. We too may groan. We too do not have the right words to raise our voices to God.

And then heaven breaks in and we hear the story of Jesus' baptism. A baptism from a man who lives in the wilderness, and a baptism that happens in the wilderness.

Where do we find God in the wilderness?

This resource contains

- Prayer of Confession: Wilderness Re-creation (Mark 1:9-13)
- Bible Engagement: Wilderness Imagining (Mark 1:9-13)
- Reflection/Craft Activity: Wilderness Seeing (Mark 1:9-13)
- Lectionary Links: Pentecost 16 (Joel 1:8-10, 17-20, Psalm 18:6-19, Romans 8:18-27, Mark 1:9-13)

Wilderness Re-Creation

**What this is**

Prayer of confession and re-creation

**Where it is used**

Near the beginning of the service, or after the message

**How long we need**

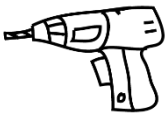
5-10 mins

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Re-creation – Mark 1:9-13

**Resource written and compiled by**

Michelle Cook

**Resources we need**

- The Large pot that is growing Basil
- Watering Can

Introduction

In the reading from Mark on Jesus's Baptism we hear about the heavens opening as John baptises Jesus. We bring to God our confession – and God calls us the beloved.

PREPARE

Have your large pot ready and a full watering can. You could ask the oldest person and the youngest person in your congregation to lead the prayers and water the plant.

SAY AND DO

When we gather together we remember that God wants us to be re-created. We are watering our plant every week to remind ourselves of God's recreation.

We have failed to love you with all our heart and to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have failed to take up the cross of discipleship and to be good stewards of your gospel:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have failed to be faithful members of your church and to be good stewards of your spiritual gifts:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

(From Uniting in Worship 2 CD Prayers of Confession 07)

Hear that in God we are a new creation, we are called those loved by God.

[Pour the water over the seeds]

TAKING IT FURTHER

Each of the weeks of this season will include a way to use this pot so you can continue watering and watching the re-creation. You may also like to sprinkle water over the whole congregation to remind them of their Baptism.

To do this, have some water already in your baptismal bowl or in a bowl on your communion table. Cut some small, light tree branches (more like twigs really) with leaves on them. Ask some children or a variety of ages of people to dip their branches in the water and walk around the congregation sprinkling them. The leader would say "Remember you are loved by God" or "Remember you are baptised and be thankful".



Image: pexels.com

Wilderness Imagining

**What this is**

Bible engagement and reflection

**Where it is used**

Bible reading of Mark 1:9-13

**How long do we need**

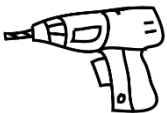
5 – 10 mins

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Mark 1:9-13

**Resource written and compiled by**

Michelle Cook

**What resources do we need**

- Picture of wilderness on powerpoint

Introduction

In all of the readings today we are reminded of devastation and drought. These are usually what we think about when we imagine wilderness. However, there are ecosystems that are built around dry and desolate environments. Here, too, is God.

PREPARE

Find a picture of wilderness – desert or such landscape. Make a poster or show it on the screen. Ask a family, or a variety of people of different ages, to read out the reading.

SAY

We are going to hear the reading of Jesus' Baptism by John the Baptist – a man who lives in the wilderness. Look at this image of wilderness...What do you see? What do you feel?

As we listen to the reading, continue to look at the image and imagine the story taking place...

READ MARK 1:9-13

Voice 1: In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Voice 2: And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

Voice 1: And a voice came from heaven,

Voice 3: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Voice 2: And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

Voice 1: He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.



Image: pexels.com

TAKING IT FURTHER

- Option: Discussion

Invite people to consider the questions...What did you "see"/"notice" as you imagined the story? What did you feel? Provide an opportunity for a few people to respond.

- Option: Creative Reflection

Provide markers and paper. Invite people to take a few moments to draw their own picture of the story (or, if they prefer, jot down a few words that emerge for them as they reflect on the story). Depending on your community, invite one or two people to come forward with their picture/words and have a discussion with them about what they have drawn/written OR invite people to share their picture/words with one or two others near them.

Wilderness Seeing



What this is
Reflection/Craft activity



Where it is used
During or after the message



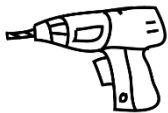
How long we need
10 mins



Bible Focus/Theme
Mark 1:9-13



Resource written and compiled by
Michelle Cook



What resources do we need

- Plasticine – yellow and grey colour
- Flower arranging stem wire
- Sturdy cardboard around 10x10 cm square for each person
- Tray to place the arrangements on

Introduction

We usually understand wilderness as places of desolation and despair. It is easy in the wilderness, to miss signs of hope. The landscape may be unfamiliar to us, we do not notice the wonder of God's creation around us. This activity encourages us to feel and see God's creation and hope in even the most desolate of spaces.

PREPARE

Have grey/black plasticine and yellow plasticine with some flower stem wire cut into 5-8 cm lengths and a piece of sturdy cardboard (5 lengths per person) ready for each person. People may want to help each other in groups.

If you are wanting a shrub or plant, to help people go to <https://alicespringsdesertpark.com.au/> and check out the different plants that thrive in the wilderness.

SAY AND DO

As we listen to the message today, take your yellow plasticine and roll it into many small balls.

[After the message, for response time]

Use your plasticine balls, flower wire and black plasticine to create a wilderness bush. When you are ready, bring it forward and place around the table, the basil pot plant or another place.



Image: Michelle Cook

TAKING IT FURTHER

Option: Song

You may like to sing a song about the wilderness here like *Cross the Desert* by Robin Mann or *For You Deep Stillness* by Robin Mann and Julie Perrin or *She Comes Sailing on the Wind* by Gordon Light. All of these have themes of desert, wilderness and looking for God. It is also fun for the congregation to beat time with tambourines or shakers for the Gordon Light song or do the actions that go with *Deep Stillness*.

Option: Craft/Activity Stations

In addition to providing the needed resources for each table, include a copy of the reading and some wondering questions for reflection/discussion as people make their wilderness bushes (either individually or as a group).

FOR YOU – DEEP STILLNESS

Movements by Ian Ferguson

"For you", Each time these words are sung we extend our arms and hands forward and out in a sweeping gesture of openness and offering

"deep stillness of the silent inland" We gently bring our hands in to cradle our belly feeling space and stillness in that place — the heart of our land resounds in the centre of our bodies. We offer that feeling.

"For you, deep blue of the desert skies" With our extended arms we trace the arch of the sky and lift our faces to the sky, bathing ourselves in the depth and immensity of it — and we offer that feeling.

"For you, flame red of the rocks and stones" We clap on 'red', then form one fist on 'rocks', followed by another on 'stones'. We hold our fists together close in front of us, feeling the bite of the flame and the strength of the rock —and we offer that.

"For you, sweet water from hidden springs." We form a cup with our hands, scoop that water in front of us, then, with a pouring/flowing/circling action we bring our hands to our chest and then to our sides, letting the water flood into our hearts and out to wash over those around us.

"From the edges seek the heartlands" We join our hands with those on either side of us and bring our right hand holding our neighbour's left up to our hearts. [*if comfortable doing so*]

PDF files of lyrics from Robin's songs are available for downloading from his website: Go to <http://www.robinmann.com/discography.html>

from <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/covenanting/2007/Worship-Resources-Reconciliation-Sunday-2007.pdf>

"and when you're burnt by the journey"

Still holding hands we swing our arms down and let our heads hang in a relaxed motion.

"may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit"

We raise our heads and swing our arms high above our heads, releasing hands as we reach the top.

"soothe and replenish you." We lower our arms slowly down in front of us with a wavelike motion in a gesture of peace.

"In the name of Christ," We cross one arm over our chest. "

In the name of Christ" We bring the other arm to join the first and bow our heads with arms crossed over our chests before beginning again on 'for you' with a sweeping gesture of open offering.

(Words: Julie Perrin. Movements: Ian Ferguson. Music: Robin Mann © 1997)

For you, deep stillness of the silent inland
for you, deep blue of the desert skies
for you, flame red of the rocks and stones
for you, sweet water from hidden springs.
From the edges seek the heartlands

and when you're burnt by the journey
may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit
soothe and replenish you.

In the name of Christ,
in the name of Christ

(repeat - last time, add 'in the name of Christ' once more)

Lectionary Links Pentecost 16

**What this is**

Lectionary linked resources for Pentecost 16

**Where it is used**

Depends on the ideas chosen

**How long do we need**

5-10 mins, depending on the ideas chosen

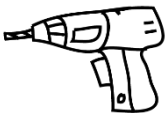
**Bible Focus/Theme**

Matthew 18:21-35, Exodus 14:19-31

Romans 14:1-12, Psalm 114

**Resource compiled by**

Chris Barnett

**What resources do we need**

- Depends on the ideas chosen

Introduction

The focus of this set of resources is on the Season of Creation, this week on the theme of Wilderness. Season of Creation activities are coordinated by an ecumenical steering committee, which was formed to help Christians around the world fulfill the purpose of the season. As the urgent need to solve the environmental crisis continues to grow, Christian churches have been called to strengthen their united response.

Whilst many churches embrace the Season of Creation, many others continue in their normal pattern. Thus, this specific resource is for those who will be continuing to follow the Revised Common Lectionary. For these churches, this resource contains links to a collection of different websites that provide weekly lectionary-based ideas for...

Matthew 18:21-35

Exodus 14:19-31

Romans 14:1-12

Psalm 114

Lectionary Links

Matthew 18:21-35 The gift for everyone

<https://www.allageworshipresources.org/the-gift-for-everyone-lectionary-year-a-2023-the-15th-sunday-after-trinity/>

Matthew 18:21-35 The Unforgiving Servant

Exodus 14:19-31 The Exodus

<https://www.bibleexplore.nz/ordinary24a.html>

Matthew 18:21-35

Exodus 14:19-31

Romans 14:1-12

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-rcl-september-17-2017/>

Matthew 18:21-35

Exodus 14:19-31

Romans 14:1-12

Psalm 114

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2014/08/year-proper-19-24th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Matthew 18:21-35

Exodus 14:19-31

Romans 14:1-12

Psalm 114

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2020/09/proper-19-september-13.html>



Image: Bible Explore – used with permission

Creation: River

Written and compiled by Michelle Cook

Water and rivers of life are strong images in the Scriptures. The ocean and large bodies of water are signs of chaos and fear. The Red Sea is an obstacle for the Israelites to cross. It is tamed by Moses' staff and kills Pharaoh's charioteers. Also think of Jonah being cast into the ocean to appease the gods or Paul being shipwrecked, and even Jesus calming the storm and walking on the water. Rivers and water can be destructive. The story of Noah reminds us that the rising water not only cleansed the earth but also killed and destroyed many living things, many parts of God's creation. God does not want to do such a thing again. The rainbow reminds us of this promise.

Water and rivers of life are strong images in the Scriptures. The necessity of fresh water for life is emphasised again and again. Moses brings water out of the stone. The deer pants for the water in Psalm 42. In Psalm 23 the LORD leads us to still water and restores our souls. From Jesus, we see streams of life-giving water. Jesus promises the Samaritan woman, an enemy of his people, access to such water. And in the reading from Revelation 22:1-5, coming from Jesus, we see streams of life-giving water flowing on to the fertile plains.

This resource contains

- Prayer of Confession: River Re-creation (Psalm 104:27-33)
- Bible engagement: River of Life (Revelation 22:1-3)
- Reflection/Creative response: Fear and Hope (Genesis 8:20-22; 9:12-17)
- Lectionary Links: Pentecost 17 (Matthew 20:1-16, Exodus 16:2-15, Philippians 1:21-30, Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45)

River Re-Creation

**What this is**

Prayer of confession and re-creation

**Where it is used**

Near the beginning of the service, or after the message

**How we need**

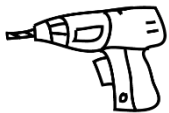
10 mins

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Re-creation – Psalm 104:27-33

**Resource written and compiled by**

Michelle Cook

**Resources we need**

- The large pot that is growing Basil
- Watering Can

Introduction

In the reading from the Psalm 104:27-33 we hear of the fruit that comes from life giving water. We too need to drink of that life giving water to grow fruit. If you have been watering your pot plant, you should be starting to see green shoots.

Prepare

Have your large pot reading and a full watering can. Ask two people of varying ages to lead the prayer and pour the water.

Say & Do

When we gather together we remember that God wants us to be re-created. We are watering our plant every week to remind ourselves of God's recreation

We have failed to love you with all our heart and to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have failed to take up the cross of discipleship and to be good stewards of your gospel:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have failed to be faithful members of your church and to be good stewards of your spiritual gifts:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

(From Uniting in Worship 2 CD Prayers of Confession 07)

Image: pexels.com

Hear that in God we are a new creation, God sends God's Spirit on us and the whole creation is renewed.

[Pour the water over the seeds]

Taking it further

This is the final week of this series. You might choose to take the opportunity as a community to reflect on what you have seen/noticed/experienced over the preceding weeks – in relation to the pot, the planted seeds and maybe even yourselves (individually and collectively).



River of Life



What this is
Bible engagement



Where it is used
For Bible reading or message



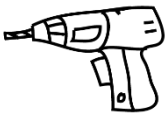
How long we need
10 mins



Bible Focus/Theme
Revelation 22:1-3



Resource written and compiled by
Michelle Cook



Resources we need

- Webpage and video resource from Troy Mardigan
- <https://www.nungalinya.edu.au/creation-day-7>
- Video resource from Aunty Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, 2021 Senior Australian of the Year
- <https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/dadirri/>

Introduction

Rivers and water courses are important sources of life. Hearing from those who care for these watercourses are important for us and enrich our understanding of passages like Revelation 22:1-3.

Use the Aunty Miriam Rose video, and Troy's painting and reflection, to think about Revelation 22:1-3.

Consider making a donation to Miriam Rose Foundation and/or purchasing art from Nungalinya College to support Troy and Miriam.

What to do

For your message, or as part of worship, play *Dadirri* from Aunty Miriam Rose. This introduces the idea of *Dadirri* and locates Aunty Miriam and her nephew Troy as river people.

Next play the video on Troy's Art journey. Then show the painting 'Jesus the Living Water'.

Ask people to reflect in small groups on what Troy and Miriam's insights bring to them about Living Water

OR

Provide people with coloured pens/crayons and paper to spend some time drawing on what brings them life. Then ask some people to share their drawings with the whole congregation. Try to ask people from a variety of ages.



Image: pexels.com

Fear and Hope

**What this is**

Reflection/Response, Creative activity

**Where it is used**

Part of an Early Word, After the message for reflection/prayer

**How long we need**

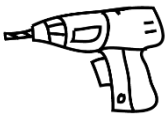
5-15 minutes

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Genesis 8:20-22, 9:12-17

**Resource written and compiled by**

Compiled by Michelle Cook with adaption of resources by Jo Cuttabut Stuurmann *Faith in Art* 2022 Mediacom.

**Resources we need**

- Different paint colours or pens
- paper
- paintbrushes

Introduction

The story of the flood can be overwhelming. Many of us have experienced flooding, when rivers rise and destroy. The Genesis story finishes this destruction with the rainbow of hope. It is tempting for us to quickly go to the hope. Sometimes it is important for us to stay with the feeling of being overwhelmed.



Image: pexels.com

Prepare

Prepare tables and paints and paper for people to use during the service.

Say & Do

This is taken from Jo Cuttabut Stuurman's book *'Faith in Art'*, available through www.Mediacomeducation.org.au. Jo is a Noongar man from Western Australia.

Invite people to reflect...

Have you ever been in a flood? What sounds can you remember? What images come to mind?

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by events happening beyond your control? What were your feelings?

What has helped you through overwhelming times?

Invite people to respond...

Choose some colours that speak to you of being overwhelmed. Spend some time with these colours. Use them in any way you wish – paint, draw or just look at them.

Choose some colours that speak to you of support and strength. Use them in any way you wish – paint, draw or just look at them.

After people have finished painting encourage people to put them around the worship space. Encourage people to walk around the worship space looking at different people's paintings.

Taking it Further

Invite people to move to a painting that particularly engaged them or prompted them to think/wonder. Depending on your community, either invite responses from a few people OR invite people to chat with one or two people near them.

Conclude with a short prayer, drawing on the themes that have arisen.

Lectionary Links

Pentecost 17

**What this is**

Lectionary linked resources for Pentecost 17

**Where it is used**

Depends on the ideas chosen

**How long do we need**

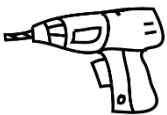
5-10 mins, depending on the ideas chosen

**Bible Focus/Theme**

Matthew 20:1-16, Exodus 16:2-15
Philippians 1:21-30, Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45

**Resource compiled by**

Chris Barnett

**What resources do we need**

- Depends on the ideas chosen

Introduction

The focus of this set of resources is on the Season of Creation, this week on the theme of River. The Prophet Amos cries out: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5: 24) and so we are called to join the river of justice and peace, to take up climate and ecological justice, and to speak out with and for communities most impacted by climate injustice and the loss of biodiversity.

Whilst many churches embrace the Season of Creation, many others continue in their normal pattern. Thus, this specific resource is for those who will be continuing to follow the Revised Common Lectionary. For these churches, this resource contains links to a collection of different websites that provide weekly lectionary-based ideas for...

Matthew 20:1-16

Exodus 16:2-15

Philippians 1:21-30

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45

Lectioary Links

Pentecost 17

Matthew 20:1-16 Is it fair?

<https://www.allageworshipresources.org/is-it-fair-lectionary-year-a-2023-the-16th-sunday-after-trinity/>

Matthew 20:1-16 The Workers in the Vineyard

Exodus 16:2-15 Manna and Quail

<https://www.bibleexplore.nz/ordinary22a.html>

Matthew 20:1-16

Exodus 16:2-15

Philippians 1:21-30

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-rcl-september-24-2017/>

Matthew 20:1-16

Exodus 16:2-15

Philippians 1:21-30

Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2014/09/year-proper-20-25th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Matthew 20:1-16

Exodus 16:2-15

Philippians 1:21-30

Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2020/09/proper-20-september-20-generosity-of.html>



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