

The Church of England's Environment Task Group is commending a set of liturgical resources to encourage churches who wish to celebrate and cherish God's gift to humanity in creation.

The resources, curated by Canon Vicky Johnson of Ely Cathedral, will allow churches to take part in a Creationtide season, running from 1 September until 4 October every year. Creationtide is originally an Eastern Orthodox initiative, but has now spread widely among Anglican, Roman Catholic and Protestant congregations, bringing Christians together to pray and work for the protection of the environment that sustains everyone.

Pope Francis gave a major boost to the profile of Creationtide when, speaking before nearly 2 million people at the World Youth Day in Krakow, he declared 1 September an annual 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation'.

The Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury and the Church of England's lead bishop on the environment, said:

"These liturgical resources provide richly for churches celebrating Creationtide.

"Celebrating Creationtide marks a shift in the Christian understanding of our relationship to creation under God. The consequences of teaching over recent centuries that humanity has been given domination over creation are clear in the complex environmental crisis we now face. It is important that Christians rediscover older traditions of a godly relationship of humanity to the wider created order.

"Creationtide is important ecumenically too. The concept was introduced by the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1989, and is spreading widely in Western Christianity. The Pope's declaration of an annual day of prayer on 1 September will give the profile of Creationtide a significant boost. Creationtide therefore represents an important Orthodox contribution to the deepening of common Christian values across historic denominational divisions."

Canon Vicky Johnson, Residentiary Canon at Ely Cathedral, added:

"For Christians, the earth does not belong to us - it belongs to God, and therefore deserves our respect and care. This is an ancient understanding - reading Psalm 24, for example, it is clear that it goes right back to the worship in the Temple in Jerusalem almost 3000 years ago.

"The growing concern about creation and the environment has made the Church aware that it needs to garner its liturgical resources to give full expression to this in worship and prayer. The care of our environment, and attentiveness to the created order, are central to the Church's mission, which calls us to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

"The resources include material that works in the context of both traditional Anglican liturgy and more informal worship, as well as material for all-age worship, and more general material for prayer, biblical study and reflection."

Notes

The **worship resources** include:

- Material for Seasons and Festivals of the Agricultural Year from Common Worship: Times and Seasons, commended by the House of Bishops for use at the discretion of the minister
- Resources for worship and prayer produced by the Environment Task Group
- A series of liturgical resources, including collects, post-communion prayers, forms of intercession and additional material for the Eucharistic Prayer, produced for trial use by the Diocese of Guildford
- A liturgy for All-Age Worship, produced by Canon Johnson while an incumbent in the Diocese of Manchester

Status of Liturgies

The material for Creation in Common Worship: Times and Seasons (2006), produced by the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England, has been commended for use by the House of Bishops. The Commission writes, in Times and Seasons, that "these services offer an opportunity to come with 'proper humility before God as source of all things, [to offer] gratitude for his goodness, and [pray for] responsibility in stewarding the resources of the earth". (Times and Seasons, p.596).

The Liturgical Commission expressed renewed support for services reflecting on Creation in 2014.'

Background to Creationtide

Creationtide is a concept introduced by the late Ecumenical Patriarch, Demetrios I, 1989.

Since then, September 1 (chosen because it is first day of the Orthodox ecclesiastical year) has been adopted as the start of Creationtide. This is the season, running to St Francis day on October 4, when churches and congregations are called to pay special attention to the responsibility of humanity for the Earth and for all that lives upon it. Its start and end dates reflect that it is a shared idea between Western and Eastern Christianity.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland adopted the concept in 2008. In 2016, Pope Francis declared 1 September an annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creationtide.

While its adoption was in part driven by the complex environmental crises the human race faces, Creationtide draws on much deeper roots in Scripture and in older Christian traditions of the relationship between God, humanity and the created order.

The timing of Creationtide means it is an excellent way of rooting traditional harvest festivals in wider issues and firm theological ground.

Creationtide at Ely Cathedral

Ely Cathedral is in the heart of rural Cambridgeshire and is preparing to celebrate Creationtide with a variety of events relating to the environment. There will be a special evening service on **18 September** praying for the environment, in song, silence and reflection, with prayer stations around the Cathedral.

On **25 September** the annual 'Animal Service' welcomes all creatures great and small into the cathedral, and after St Francis, literally encourages all creation to sing together in praise of God.

The traditional Harvest Festival follows on **9 October**, with a Harvest Supper and Festival Eucharist to appeal to all ages. Worshippers will be encouraged to think about food and sustainability, whilst supporting the local food bank. For Harvest, the Cathedral is always decked with wonderful displays giving insights into the reality of farming today and celebrating the wonder of creation.

Canon Vicky Johnson, said 'in this part of the country we feel very close to the earth, surrounded by farm and fenland. It's so important to help people connect with the environment, and bring creation into our worshipping life, it is an issue which Christians cannot ignore'.

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