

SEASON OF CREATION

1 SEPTEMBER – 4 OCTOBER 2023



**Let Justice
and Peace Flow**

Season of Creation 2023

A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

Primary

PRAYER SERVICE

Season of Creation Primary Prayer Service

PREPARATION

We invite you to use this resource to celebrate the Season of Creation (1st Sept to 4th Oct) with your students. This Prayer Service may be freely adapted for your setting.

Prepare a prayer space by creating a river scene installation. Alternatively, if your school is located near a river or creek, consider holding your prayer service on the banks. Take inspiration from Amos 5:24: 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.'

Before the service, have students find out all they can about a local river or creek. Where does it start and stop? Which creatures live in and around it? What does it mean for the local people, including First Nations Peoples?

Then, have students create painted, drawn or collaged paper cut-outs of local plants or creatures that depend on the river. At two different points during the prayer service (during the Opening Song and during the Act of Commitment), invite two different groups of students to add their cut-out plant or creature to the river scene installation. If you are gathering outside, the cut-outs could be pegged to a stringline, to create a bunting-like installation beside the river or creek.

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Opening Song

*Suggestion: "I am the River" (Andrew Chinn, *Many Roads, One Journey*).*

(As a song is played, first group of students add their cut-out plant or creature to the river scene installation.)

Acknowledgement of Country

Reader One: As we gather together on the lands of the [*insert name of Australian First Nations Peoples here*], we acknowledge the traditional owners and pay respect to Elders past and present. We thank them for their care of the land, sky and waters, and all living things that thrive on and within them.

Opening Prayer

Leader: We begin in the name of the +Father, and of the +Son, and of the +Holy Spirit. Amen

Creator God,

You made us and all creation to share your life: all the birds and bugs of the air, the animals of the land, the creatures of the rivers and seas; all the trees and flowers and plants; and all the people everywhere. Open our minds to your way of life and teach us how to live together with hearts full of love and justice.

We ask this in your name,

Amen.

Call of Repentance

Leader: From deep waters and first light to living creatures of every kind: the Earth is good! Yet, we see how our planet is not being taken care of. In many places, water is no longer safe to drink, forests are being cut down and there is not enough food to eat.

Shaniella's story tells of how a lack of water for drinking and washing can even keep people (especially women and girls) from gaining education and work.

Reader Two: Shaniella grew up in a village in the Solomon Islands with her father, mother and three brothers. She went to a local school until Grade 11 but was unable to complete her final year. Shaniella knew that without the right job skills, she would find it hard to earn money for the things she needed.

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Reader Three: In 2020, Shaniella decided to move away from home to study at a rural training centre. She is interested in learning how to work with visitors to the Solomon Islands, for example in restaurants and hotels. (This is called hospitality and tourism.) Shaniella also started learning how to grow food, cook and sew.

Reader Two: Not long after Shaniella started, the school was hit by a landslide, flooding and a cyclone, one after the other! The school's water system was destroyed. Its buildings and food garden were also damaged.

Reader Three: Caritas helped the school install eight water tanks. This meant students and the local community had access to clean drinking water and toilets again!

Reader Two: Caritas also provided planting materials to restore the vegetable garden. Two hundred chickens were provided along with training on how to look after them. Caritas also ran some Disaster Risk Reduction workshops to help Shaniella and her community learn about risks and what to do in an emergency.

Reader Three: Now that there's enough food to eat and water for drinking and washing, Shaniella can complete her job skills training. Life is full of hope for Shaniella, for her school community and for all future generations!

Reader Two: With our support, Caritas Australia is working with partners all over the world to address water shortages, including in places like the Solomon Islands that are being closely impacted by climate change.

Reader Four: In Pope Francis's message for the *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*, he describes the rhythms and cycles of creation as a heartbeat. We can hear the 'heartbeat of the Earth' when we slow down and pay attention. Pope Francis explains, 'Just as the hearts of babies beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life.'¹

Leader: But we know that we have not always listened to 'those heartbeats: our own and those of our mothers and grandmothers, the heartbeat of creation and the heartbeat of God.' And this has played a part in harming the Earth and our neighbours.

So, as we think about some of the ways we haven't listened to or cared for others, including the planet, we ask for God's forgiveness.

Silent Reflection

*Quiet, reflective music plays. Suggestions: "Prayer of St Francis" (Sarah McLachlan, *Rarities, B-Sides and Other Stuff, Volume 2*), "Spirit, Open My Heart" (Ruth Duck).*

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Gospel Reading: John 4:6b–14 *NRSVCE*

Leader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink”, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’

The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’

Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Leader: Today, as we mark the Season of Creation, we gather by a river to pray. Rivers are special places. They are places full of movement; places where different plants and creatures and people meet; places where, all year or at just the right time of year, water flows and lifeforms flourish!

Did you know Jesus was baptised in a river? In fact, Jesus spent a lot of time near water. He met his fisherman friends beside a lake. He calmed a storm on the sea. He cooked breakfast for his friends on the beach. He even walked on water!

Today’s Gospel story tells us how Jesus was tired and resting beside a deep well. While he was there, a woman came to collect water and he asked her for a drink. As they talked, Jesus described God’s life and love as ‘living water’, saying that those who drink of it ‘will never be thirsty.’

When he said this, he meant that the God who made the life-giving waters in the beginning *still* offers us the life of love and justice we and all creation need to thrive.

So, today and any time you come to a river, notice its rhythm, its ‘heartbeat’. As you watch its flow, remember the living water Jesus talked about. And let yourself be moved to action, sharing God’s life of love and justice with all the people, plants and creatures you meet.

*Quiet, reflective music plays. Suggestions: "Prayer of St Francis" (Sarah McLachlan, *Rarities, B-Sides and Other Stuff, Volume 2*), "Spirit, Open My Heart" (Ruth Duck)..*

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Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: In Pope Francis's letter *Laudato Si'*, he urges us all to love and take care of the Earth and each other. To help us do this, seven *Laudato Si'* Goals have been set. Let us reflect on these goals together as we listen to the prayers of the faithful.

Reader Five: Goal 1: Respond to the cry of the Earth. Help us listen to the cry of the earth. Show us how we are one part of your big, beautiful creation. Inspire us to act with care for the environment around us. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader Six: Goal 2: Respond to the cry of the poor. Help us listen to the cry of the poor. Show us how our choices affect others, including Shaniella and her community. Inspire us to act with compassion so that everyone can thrive. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader Seven: Goal 3: Ecological economics. Help businesses everywhere to be sustainable, ethical and fair in all that they do. Show us how we can encourage them to do that. Inspire us all to make the world better. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader Eight: Goal 4: Adoption of sustainable lifestyles. Help us not waste the Earth's precious resources. Show us how to take greater care of the things we have access to. Inspire us to live simply. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader Nine: Goal 5: Ecological education. Help us learn how best to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters around the world. Show us new ways and remind us of ancient ways of better tending to the Earth and each other. Inspire us with creativity and courage. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader Ten: Goal 6: Ecological spirituality. Help us remember to live in wonder and awe of creation. Show us how to love the Earth and each other as you do. Inspire us to say thank you every day. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader Eleven: Goal 7: Community resilience and empowerment. Help us work together to make the world a healthy and fair place for all. Show us and our community how we can act for justice at local, regional, national and international levels. Inspire us to be brave and generous. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: In Jesus's name we pray,

All: Amen.

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Act of Commitment

Leader: Today, as we meet by the river to pray, we remember Jesus's 'living water': God's life of love and justice for all. We tune in to hear 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor'.² We continue to think about all those in our world who are facing the effects of climate change and lack of safe water.

Today, as we meet by the river to pray, let this installation of plants and animals be for us a sign of our commitment to care for our common home, so that we and all of creation can experience its life and goodness.

(At this point, invite the second group of students to add their cut-out plant or creature to the river scene installation.)

Final Prayer and Blessing

Leader:

God who made the world and saw that it was good,
God who speaks in flows of living water,
God who breathes life and love into us all—
May that God meet you by the river,
settle you to hear creation's heartbeat,
move you to care for the Earth
and give you all the compassion and courage
you need to act for justice.

All: Amen.

Leader: With the blessing of the +Father, the +Son and the +Holy Spirit, let us go from here to joyfully care for creation.

All: Amen.

Closing Song

Suggestions: "Raise Your Voice for Justice" (John Burland, *Move! Pray! Celebrate!*) or "Make a Little Difference" (Michael Mangan, *Setting Hearts on Fire*)

Notes

¹ *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1st September 2023.*

² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n. 49