

starters for Sunday

God, Whose Farm is All Creation

Creation Time: Week 3

21 September 2014

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank [Eco Congregation Scotland](#)'s writing group for their thoughts on Creation Time.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

God, Whose Farm is All Creation

For Creation Time 2014 an ecumenical group brought together by Eco Congregation Scotland, has prepared material to support worship leaders, responding to the UN International year of Family Farming, and using a lectionary produced by the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Creation Time

Creation Time started in the Orthodox Church in 1989 and has been supported by a growing number of churches across Europe since then. The European Christian Environmental Network has urged churches to adopt a Time for Creation stretching from 1 September to the feast of St Francis on 4 October. This was endorsed at the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania in 2007, when it was agreed that Creation Time "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change".

Family farming

Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities, and it is linked to several areas of rural development. Family farming is a means of organising agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's.

Both in developing and developed countries, family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in the food production sector.



The International Year of Family Farming

The 2014 International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) aims to raise the profile of family farming and smallholder farming by focusing world attention on its significant role in eradicating hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, protecting the environment, and achieving sustainable development, in particular in rural areas. The goal of the 2014 IYFF is to reposition family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies in the national agendas by identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards a more equal and balanced development.

Taken from: <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/what-is-family-farming/en/>

For information on the main messages of IYFF go to: <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/about/main-messages/en/>

Additional Resources – articles, information and resources

United Nations 2014 International Year of Family Farming

[UN website](#)

[Main messages of the International Year:](#)

Scottish-based material and UK-based material

[Short article from the Scottish Tenant farmers Association](#)

Guardian article: [Corporate stranglehold of farmland a risk to world food security, study says](#)

Article from The Scotsman [Family farms can fight global food crisis](#)

Drumness Farm, Perthshire: one example of family farming in Scotland today

Drumness Farm is owned by Sandy and Helen-May Bayne and family and is situated between the villages of Muthill and Auchterarder in Perthshire. The Bayne family have farmed in the area for well over a hundred years and Sandy and Helen-May's son Andrew is now managing the business so continuing the family tradition.

In the past century the size of the operation has increased both through the purchase of additional land and leasing from other landowners and is now over 700 acres.



The farm produces both livestock and crops. There is a herd of seventy suckler cows, and there are also 400 sheep. Crops grown include barley, wheat, potatoes, swedes and carrots.

Productivity and Compliance

Sandy stresses the need for the farm to be run productively in the current business environment. In this process the supermarkets play a huge role. Tesco's programme of farm compliance, called 'Nature's Choice' requires the farmer to draw up policies and provide supporting evidence on a range of issues including use of fertilisers and plant protection products; pollution prevention; wildlife and landscape conservation; energy use and recycling; and health and safety. The fat file of paperwork Helen-May must keep up to date demonstrates the paper trail that this compliance demands. At the same time the supermarkets keep a firm lid on prices with the consequence, according to Sandy, that supermarket shoppers in Britain continue to get vegetables at a relatively low price.

Growing potatoes for supermarkets

The potato crop at Drumness illustrates the scale at which farmers supplying supermarkets now operate. There are four large storage sheds on site each holding up to 2000 tonnes of spuds. Potatoes are entirely planted and picked by machine. 'Tattie howking', the back breaking work that once gave seasonal work to a small army of casual labourers including children, was replaced by machinery over twenty years ago, reducing the need for labour on the farm but increasing its carbon footprint. The farm now has a self-propelled potato harvester, which although expensive, goes a long way in inclement weather to protect the soil structure of the fields in which it works.

On the farm potatoes are graded by size on a long conveyor, then stored in one tonne wooden pallets boxes and, when they are needed, shipped by truck to packers such as Albert Bartlett for packing and onward delivery to supermarkets – some of Sandy's spuds may end up on your local supermarket shelves. Sandy noted that supermarkets are now using more produce from Britain and that imports of produce including potatoes from European countries such as Portugal had declined.

The farm is not organic and spraying, which is carefully applied using a sophisticated GPS system, is carried out with fungicides to control disease (e.g. potato blight) and for weed control. At the



same time other techniques of pest control such as swede nets, rolled out over the growing crop, preventing the attack by turnip flea beetle and cabbage white butterfly, are employed on the farm to reduce the need for spraying. Recent years have also seen the introduction of GPS controlled fertilizer application to improve accuracy and reduce waste.

A family farm in a time of change

Sandy is clearly proud of the operation of the farm, which has been able to thrive at a time of great uncertainty and when some other local producers have faced serious financial difficulties. He employs five staff including two seasonal workers from Slovakia. The quality of farm produce has met the high quality standards required by the supermarkets but at the same time this is no agricultural desert. The farm is set in beautiful rolling well wooded countryside and was alive with wildlife on the March day we visited: we saw hares, buzzards and roe deer. But there is large carbon footprint associated with this form of agriculture. Storing the spuds to keep them in shelf condition requires refrigeration units to keep four large barns at two degrees Celsius. However a 50KW array of solar panels has been installed on a shed roof. A large proportion of the electricity generated is used by the farm for refrigeration and running the potato grading line.

Lectionary used for Creation Time 2014 materials

[Bath and Wells Creation Time Lectionary](#)

Material from Christian Aid

[Christian Aid's harvest materials](#)

Details of Agribusiness and the commodification of food on world markets can be found in the [Hungry for Justice report](#).

Report advocating for [small scale farming as a solution to world hunger](#)

[Hunger for Justice](#): Hymns and songs to change the world.



The Writing Group

This material has been written by an ecumenical group:

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Richard Murray is a Lay Reader in the Scottish Episcopal Church with a responsibility for a small rural church at All Saints, Whiterashes, a member of the Aberdeen & Orkney diocesan Mission and Ministry Board and SEC provincial Church in Society Committee, where he has a focus on environmental issues.

Wendy Young co-ordinates the Christian Aid worship and theology collective, the group responsible for the worship material for the seasons and moments of the Christian year on the Christian Aid's website. From Northern Ireland, attends Kelvinside Hillhead Church of Scotland church in the West End of Glasgow, brought up in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.



Bible Readings

[Deuteronomy 28: 1 – 14](#)

Moses speaks to the assembled people of Israel as they prepare to enter the Land of Canaan. He has reminded them of their past (ch 1-4) and is now preparing them for their future (ch 5 - 28).

The many anticipated blessings of abundance outlined in this passage are framed in the commandments to be obedient. These are the blessings which come from a life orientated towards God. However conditional blessings run the risk of misinterpretation and can further the affliction of those for whom the rains do not come, the land is not fruitful and the barns are not full; conditional blessings make the suggestion that these are deserved afflictions of disobedience.

However these are not individual promises of blessing, these are the words of a community rule. Moses is reminding the listener that the love of God and the love of one's neighbour are interconnected. If anyone's barn or kneading bowl is empty then none of us are truly blessed. The blessing of abundance for some is to be a blessing of enough for all.

[Psalm 65](#)

It is believed that the original use of this Psalm was for thanksgiving celebrations at harvest time. Verses 6 - 13 certainly overflow with sentiments of abundance and the participation of God's creative energy bringing to bear a harvest of grain and livestock. This is a world alive with the glory of God at work in creation. Psalm 65 is an appropriate psalm for a harvest celebration where the harvest has been plentiful and abundant. It is appropriate also as a vision of how things can be in the world where the harvest has failed. The psalm celebrates the life-giving rain that God provides (9 -10). Without the water there would be no grain and no flocks clothing the meadows. The onset of the effects of climate change deny some the rain they need and give others so much rain it destroys the harvest. May it offer hope and motivation to us all as we work towards a time when all have enough.



[2 Corinthians 9: 6 – 15](#)

The opening verses of the chapter suggest that Paul does not need to make this point (vs 1.) but is making it just to make sure the Gentiles in Achaia live up to their reputation. These are words of both affirmation and motivation. According to Paul they had been ready for a year to give to the “saints”, the poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem (cf. Romans 15: 25 - 32, 1 Corinthians 16: 1-4) and he had even used them as a shining example to motivate others to give in a similar generous way (vs 2).

Paul is particularly keen that this anticipated gift is not given reluctantly, through coercion, but given in the knowledge that generosity reaps generosity (vs. 6). He reminds them that their own abundance comes from the generosity of God who loves a cheerful giver and will ensure they will always have enough(vs. 8). He emphasises their interconnectedness with the community to which they are giving and the praise God will be given as a result; their giving will result in many thanksgivings to God by the receiving community (11-12). Their giving will model the gospel of indescribable generosity.(vs. 13-15) This passage, full of harvest and creation time language: sowing and reaping, harvest and abundance, bread and food, encourages us to consider the abundance out of which we both live and give.

[Luke 12: 16 – 30](#)

In Luke's gospel a rich farmer enjoys a bumper harvest - one that will make him even wealthier than he already is. But he has a problem. His difficulty is not what to do with so much produce, but where to put it. It never occurs to him to do anything but keep it all. The solution is not to share his cornucopia in a world where many people lived perilously close to hunger.

Like the farmer, it is not wealth but our greed that becomes idolatrous. Behind the greed is our need for security and our desire to keep control of life. Jesus makes this point before he tells this parable when he says: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (12:15).

The fragility of the farmer's life is easily exposed. Control can vanish in a heartbeat. God demands not just our wealth but our lives.



Sermon Starter Thoughts

The farmer in Luke has forgotten the truths of the Psalm that it is 'God who cares for the land and its waters, it is God who enriches it with abundance, providing the corn, crowning the year with bounty.' Whatever efforts this farmer has made to control his life he forgets that ultimately it is God who provides the harvest.

At the same time the Farmer also neglects the responsibilities of blessing established in our other reading from the Hebrew scriptures today, Deuteronomy 28. Clearly if God opens the storehouses of bounty and grants prosperity to some then it is so that they might lend generously to others and borrow from none. They are to be a witness to the open-handedness of God.

As we consider the UN year of family farming this Creation and Harvest time the farmer and his barns presents a challenge to intensive agribusiness focussing on ever increasing yields but at great cost to the environment and the livelihoods of small scale farmers. There is a growing call for the many barns of agribusiness to be replaced with sustainable small-scale farming solutions where the economic, environmental and social are in balance.

Where conflict has got in the way of harvest and where hunger is an all too present reality the plight of this farmer serves as a challenge to the globally affluent who may secret their vulnerability behind savings and insurance policies. Those truly living on the edge of life, like those trying to rebuild their lives in war struck South Sudan illustrate only too well social unrest, violence and war are never far from the thin veneer of our managed lives. 'Eat, drink and be merry' we might say, but not without remembering that anything we have is there through the providence of God. Find out more www.christianaid.org.uk/harvest.



Prayers

Collect

Almighty God,
you created the heavens and the earth,
and made us in your image.
Teach us to discern your hand
in all your works
and to serve you
with reverence and thanksgiving;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Call to Worship

O God, you are the one we come to with praise

You are the one who hears our prayer

People everywhere come to you weighed down with sin

Our faults defeat us, but you forgive them

You have blessed us with your hospitality

May we be filled with the blessings of your house

Prayer of Approach

God, Giver of all life and of our lives,
Blessed are you in the fruits of the earth
Blessed are you in the work of human hands
Blessed are you in the harvest of human creativity.

God of the poor and hungry,
Blessed are you in the striving for justice
Blessed are you in the fragility of peace-making
Blessed are you in the grace of hospitality.



God of the great feast and the simple meal,
 Blessed are you in the sowing of seed
 Blessed are you in the breaking of bread
 Blessed are you in the sharing of bread
 Blessed are you in our daily bread.

Prayers of Confession

Gracious God, because we believe that your mark is abundance, and your love is overflowing, we come before you not in fear, but in the knowledge that we can be redeemed, and ask for a breaking down of all the barriers we create that block your life and love. And so we pray: For the times we lose sight of your blessings and forget to give thanks for our daily bread, and the simple pleasures of sharing food; when we are inspired only by competition and celebrity chefs: Forgive us.

For the ways we build ever bigger barns, and store up our wealth, and worry about tomorrow without heeding the needs of the world today: Forgive us.

For the things that dull our reactions so that we can read stories of hardship and poverty, without feeling moved, inspired, or anything very much at all: Forgive us.

And in the knowledge that in Jesus our sins are forgiven, inspire us with your kindly and generous love, to build a world where all will have enough.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

An Acrostic Prayer of Thanksgiving

Happy are those who have bread to eat!

As grain grows in the fields and

Rains bring the water of life we share

Visions of all your people united in

Eternal praise and kneaded together to

Share good news of justice and peace.

Taste and see that the Lord is good!



Prayers of intercession

We pray for those who have not been able to gather the harvest because of adverse weather conditions, for those who bear the brunt of a changing climate, where rains have become unreliable and the harvest unpredictable.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who struggle to get land or have been forced off the land they need to be able to plant and grow enough food, for those who have had to abandon land because of conflict, leaving crops un-harvested .

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray the communities of South Sudan as they continue to rebuild their lives after and in the midst of conflict. We pray for your blessing on communities across the world who offer hospitality to refugees and to those who are returning home.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who still do not get a fair price for the food they grow and sell and so struggle to make ends meet. We pray for the many women who do so much of the work of harvesting but realise so little of the income and own so little of the land.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our community and the communities we represent.

We ask that through prayer and action we might be agents of change, the yeast of justice at work in our society and our world.

God of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

Christian Aid Harvest prayer

The earth is fruitful

May we be generous

The earth is fragile

May we be gentle



The earth is fractured
 May we be just
 Creating God
 Harvest in us joy and generosity
 As we together share in thanks and giving.

Closing Responses

With awesome deeds, with saving justice
You have answered us, O God our Saviour,
 People all over the world, and across the distant seas

Trust and hope in you

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;
You make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

May the God who gathers and scatters us as seed
 Give us a harvest of peace sown in justice
 That everyone may have daily bread.

Time with Children



You might find the [Reader's Reactions](#) review of Bob Hartman's '[Bible stories through the year: lectionary readings for year A, retold for maximum effect](#)' useful for your Time with Children.

This week the material makes use of and interacts with Christian Aid harvest 2014 resources which focus on South Sudan.

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/harvest/childrens-resources.aspx>



Musical suggestions

Psalm 65

CH4 140	Lord, your hands have formed this world
CH4 227	The earth is yours, O God
CH4 229	We plough the fields and scatter
CH4 230	Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field
CH4 231	For the fruits of all creation

2 Corinthians 9: 6 – 15

CH4 505	All that I am, all that I do
CH4 182	Now thank we all our God
CH4 378	Praise to the Holiest in the height
CH4 559	There is a Redeemer
CH4 231	For the fruits of all Creation

Luke 12: 16 – 30

CH4 229	We plough the fields and scatter
CH4 253	Inspired by love and anger

[Carolyns Hymns](#)

Bigger barns are all we need

General Harvest

CH4 259	Beauty for Brokenness
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Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Revealing Love](#) is available now from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to Eco Congregation Scotland for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

