

starters for Sunday

God, Whose Farm is All Creation

Creation Time: Week 1

7 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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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

[Job 37: 14-24](#)

This passage proclaims God's majesty and greatness. Job's friend Elihu observes the wonders of God's creation, asking questions to try to understand the Divine work in nature, making special reference to the climate. His questions lead to wonder as God cannot be explained. When Job was written human understanding of how the natural world worked was very different to today. Their reaction to being overwhelmed by the might and power of God was to respond with worship.

[Psalm 130](#)

Psalm 130 is a cry for help, made with a sense of hope rather than despair. Hope is found in the patient waiting in the darkness, always confident that hope will come. Waiting is a community rather than a solitary activity. The requests made to God are bold, based on a deep faith that God will hear the supplications made to Him. The person making the request for help is aware of his own shortcomings and failures, but is confident in the forgiveness and acceptance that God has promised.

[Revelation 4](#)

A vision of the worship of God in Heaven. God is in the centre, in the most important position. God gets all the glory because he has created all things and sustains all things by his will.

[Matthew 8: 23-34](#)

The story of Jesus stilling the storm from the boat shows God's power evident by Christ in control of the forces of nature. It is a sign of Jesus' divine nature. God is in control of the weather. Jesus "rebukes" the winds and the waves. Christ's sleep in the storm contrasts with the alarm of the crew. He was too tired to keep awake, or to be disturbed by the tumult. His fatigue is a sign of His true humanity.



Sermon starter thoughts

Climate change is regarded as one of the greatest threats to the well-being of our planet. More than 2,000 scientists contributed to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They predict that by 2100 the average temperature of the earth will rise between 1.5 and 6 degrees Celsius, with consequences for all living creatures. They found that most of the warming in the past fifty years could be attributed to human activities and in particular to burning fossil fuels. We are all aware of the symptoms; the unexpectedly rapid rate of the melting of the polar ice-caps, huge-climate fluctuations, causing drought in some areas, and increased cooling in others, the acidification of the oceans and the erosion of our coral reefs, and rising sea levels which are projected to cause a refugee crisis. Small farmers across the world are suffering as a result of climate change.

God's creation includes humans who have a role of stewardship. Sinfulness, particularly the sins of pride, gluttony and covetousness, have led to gross over-consumption and waste. We have ignored the consequences of our actions. An unregulated market economy dependent upon ever-increasing consumption no longer makes sense. We'd need the equivalent of four planets to continue to live as we are. Western-style agriculture, especially agribusiness, is unsustainable for the earth. Land use has a significant impact on the world's biosphere. Small farmers all over the world have been using land sustainably for hundreds of years and they are feeling the worse effects of climate change.

Example from Christian aid - [Dairy farming is the only way many of the poorest and marginalised people in Bangladesh can make a living, yet extreme weather and a lack of animal care can be detrimental to their produce](#). Climate change will disproportionately affect those least able to cope. Part of our Christian response is our care for our fellow human beings in other parts of the planet. What kind of a legacy will we leave for future generations?

The message of the psalm is apt for this theme. We take responsibility for our actions, repent, changing our ways in a spirit of hope and confidence. God is in control, but the history of the twentieth century shows how human activity can have demonic and devastating consequences (eg the WW2 holocaust or the killing fields of Cambodia). God intervenes most often in the world by inspiring people to do what is right though costly.



Prayers

Collect

God the creator
who made the earth and sustains all that is
guide us in our care for your world
that people everywhere may share in its abundance
through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Or

God of all the earth,
you have given us the heritage
of this good and fertile land;
grant that we may so respect and use it
that others may thank us
for what we leave to them;
through Jesus, the Christ,
Amen.

Approach

Let us consider the wondrous works of God.
You are worthy, our God, to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things and by your will they existed. *(based on Job 37 and Revelation 4)*

Praise

We bring our praises to God
Aware of the vastness of creation and our tiny place in it.
Aware of the hidden power of God that sustains all that is
and the puny efforts of humans in comparison.
We offer praise for the marvellous world God has made:



from the mighty mountains to the deep seas,
from the forests to the deserts, the ice caps and the gardens:
we see in all parts of the creation the marks of the Creator.

We praise God for the human world that seeks to investigate and understand
all the parts of the cosmos.

We praise God for sending Jesus into the world to show us how to live and love without limit
Amen

Confession

We confess that we have not cared for the earth so that
children starve, rivers are polluted, forests are destroyed
farmers displaced and the climate is messed up.

We confess that we have not always spoken out as we should
nor have we shown care for those suffering or in need.

We repent for our part in causing the current environmental crisis that has led to climate change.

We are sorry for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly, and acted ungratefully.

Forgive us we pray and help us so to love our neighbours as ourselves
that we may respond with deep love to those in need
in a way that mirrors the love shown by Christ himself.

Father, in your mercy:

forgive us and help us

Amen

Thanksgiving and Intercession

Creator God, We thank you for the beauty of your Creation, and for the privilege of caring for it.
For the colour and forms of your creation and our place within it,

We give thanks for family farms and farmers that have nurtured the land for generations

For our daily food, and for those whose work and skill bring our food to us,



We give thanks for those who campaign for the well-being of others and of the earth
For the changing seasons, their variety and dependability and for new life springing forth
annually from barrenness and decay;

We give thanks for the blessings we have received and the life we have been given, and for all
those whom you have given us to share it. Amen.

Today we pray for

people whose lives and livelihoods are affected by climate change

We pray for farmers especially on small family farms all over the world

We ask that you help those who work on the land.

We pray for all who suffer from lack of water through drought, or selfish exploitation and those
who suffer the ravages of storm and flood;

For all who depend on the earth for their daily food and fuel, whose forests are under threat or
being destroyed

We pray for the courage to change our habits that are accelerating climate change

We pray for those who do not have enough food or the means to support their families

We pray for initiatives that reduce degradation of fertile land and promote a fairer distribution of
the earth's resources.

We pray for those who are so burdened that they cannot see beauty in God's creation.

We pray that we may never cease to wonder and to praise, and to be good stewards of all that
God has given into our hands. Amen



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.

If you have a glass kettle you can watch water as it gets hotter. What happens to water as it is heated? It bubbles slowly at first and then faster and faster until at boiling point there are continuous fast moving bubbled producing lots of steam.

A scientist would tell you that part of this is because molecules move about faster when they get hotter. The earth's atmosphere is like that. Every little fraction of a degree that the atmosphere is warmed, the air moves a fraction faster. As it moves faster, it becomes less predictable. Therefore when we talk about global warming we don't mean that earth will just slowly get hotter. We mean that things will become more chaotic with more extreme variations and more unexpected events. We have seen big storms. There have been heavy snowfalls followed by a hot day. The jet stream moves because of the movement of other parts of the atmosphere and brings weather that should have gone to the Arctic or to Africa to Europe instead! People tend to talk about climate chaos because we don't know what may happen next! Remember the bubbles in water as it boils getting faster and faster as more heat is added and you will get a picture of the atmosphere of the earth.

This is God's world. The bible gives people the job of being stewards of creation. This means that as well as looking after each other, we should also look after planet earth. We need to be reminded of the effect of what we do on people all round the world.



Musical Suggestions

CH4 142	A small thing like a hazelnut
CH4 259	Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair
CH4 231	For the fruits of all creation
CH4 706	For the healing of the nations, Lord we pray with one accord
CH4 240	God in such love for us lent us this planet
CH4 226	God, whose farm is all creation
CH4 149	Let all creation dance in energies sublime
CH4 238	Lord, bring the day to pass when forest, rock and hill
CH4 159	Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided
CH4 500	Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
CH4 140	Lord, your hands have formed this world
CH4 417	Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain
CH4 230	Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field
CH4 18	The earth belongs to God alone and all that it contains
CH4 227	The earth is yours, O God, you nourish it with rain
CH4 155	Think of a world without any flowers
CH4 229	We plough the fields and scatter



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.

