

# *WATER INJUSTICE*



**DIOCESE OF CAPE TOWN**  
*2018 LENT PROGRAMME*

# ON GENEROSITY

On our own, we conclude:  
there is not enough to go around

we are going to run short  
of money  
of love  
of grades  
of publications  
of sex  
of beer  
of members  
of years  
of life

we should seize the day  
seize our goods  
seize our neighbours goods  
because there is not enough to go  
around

and in the midst of our perceived  
deficit  
you come  
you come giving bread in the  
wilderness  
you come giving children at the 11th  
hour  
you come giving homes to exiles  
you come giving futures to the  
shutdown  
you come giving Easter joy to the  
dead  
you come – fleshed in Jesus.

and we watch while  
the blind receive their sight  
the lame walk  
the lepers are cleansed  
the deaf hear  
the dead are raised  
the poor dance and sing

we watch

and we take food we did not grow  
and  
life we did not invent and  
future that is gift and gift and gift and  
families and neighbours who sustain  
us  
when we did not deserve it.

It dawns on us – late rather than soon-  
that you “give food in due season  
you open your hand  
and satisfy the desire of every living  
thing.”

By your giving, break our cycles of  
imagined scarcity  
override our presumed deficits  
quiet our anxieties of lack  
transform our perceptual field to see  
the abundance ... mercy upon mercy  
blessing upon blessing.

Sink your generosity deep into our  
lives  
that your muchness may expose our  
false lack  
that endlessly receiving we may  
endlessly give  
so that the world may be made Easter  
new,  
without greedy lack, but only wonder,  
without coercive need but only love,  
without destructive greed but only  
praise  
without aggression and invasiveness...  
all things Easter new...  
all around us, toward us and  
by us  
all things Easter new.

Finish your creation, in wonder, love  
and praise. Amen.”

— **Walter Brueggemann**

*Cover artwork by Hannah Gilbert, St. Aiden's Lansdowne*

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26 January 2018

**LENT 2018**

My dear Brothers and Sisters

Lent every year offers us the opportunity to set aside 40 days, as Jesus did when he went into the desert, for introspection, repentance and fasting, to consider anew God's purpose for us and his world.

This year we have a unique opportunity to express that desert encounter with God in a way that roots us in the here and now, and to link our Lenten observance to the crisis we face in the Western Cape.

Water plays a central part in the expression of our faith. As Rachel Mash writes in this publication, it was present at the start of Creation, it occupies a prominent place in the Bible and it symbolises many things in scripture: it is used to describe salvation, it is associated with the cleansing of sins and it is a symbol of spiritual life. Water is sacred.

This Lent, we need to withdraw and ask ourselves whether we have not taken for granted the resources – especially the water resources – that God has given us. We need to withdraw and reflect on our use of water. Irrespective of whether Day Zero dawns, we need to resolve to change our behaviour and how we use water in the future.

We should also strengthen our determination to eradicate the inequality of access to water in our region. The fact that we are one of the most unequal countries in the world is seen nowhere as clearly as in the access to water and sanitation in our different communities: whereas some live with swimming pools and big lawns, others share a single tap between many households. It is an extraordinary irony – and a salutary rebuke to those of us with running water in our homes – that if Day Zero comes, the lives of those who have lived without will be less disrupted than those who have used too much.

Congratulations to the contributors to this publication. I encourage you all to use it and hope it will be a tool which helps us transform our lives to live as God would wish us to live.

God bless.

*+ Thabo Cape Town*



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Dear Friends

I trust that the joys of Christmas and the hope of a blessed 2018 are still reverberating with you. St. Paul reminds us that when all is said and done, three things will remain; faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13). Given the primary focus presently of all in the Western Cape, and should 'Day Zero' eventualise and our taps run dry soon, we will need to draw on all three to help us through the challenges that will to have to be faced by all.

It therefore gives me great joy to recommend this resource to you. Diocesan Synod last August passed several resolutions towards living out our mission as a Diocese. This focus on water during Lent is one example of the church engaging with the issues facing our society. I pray that this Lenten theme will help us to engage deeply with the impending crisis with one eye on the problem and the other on God, "our help in ages past, our hope for years to come". I also hope that as we consider the challenges that Day Zero might bring, we will be ever mindful of all those in our city, our country and throughout the world for whom 'Day Zero' is a way of life.

As I write this, I can hear the sounds of people scrambling to collect water from the natural spring in Spring Lane, Newlands within a stone throw of our home. There is chaos caused by the logjam created by cars lining the street virtually 24/7, as folk from near and far jostle to collect this precious resource for stockpiling, in anticipation of the taps running dry. Even though we are still a few months off the estimated date of Day Zero, panic has already set in as we witness water flying off the shelves in shops and protests starting in the streets while politicians 'play politics' trying to pass the blame onto others.

As a faith community, **we however are a people of hope and trust** in a Creator God who is the real source of all we need. So, as we journey through this Lent, let us listen to what God is saying to each one of us. Are there ways in which we need to change as a society? Are there lessons for us to learn as individuals and families? As John of Patmos encourages us, "Let those who have ears hear what is the Spirit is saying to the church?" (Revelation 2:29)

My sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to making this booklet available. May the content of this 2018 Lent Resource offer us credible information for faith building reflection, discussion, prayer AND loving action, especially at a time of confusion and despair.

Grace and Peace

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# 2018 – THE YEAR OF WATER

Diocesan Synod 2017 passed a resolution that 2018 should be kept as “The Year of Water” in the Diocese. This would entail holding a Diocesan Conference on water, encouraging pastoral charges to celebrate World Water Day on 22 March, ensuring that our buildings were examples of good water-use practices and doing a program on water justice during Lent. The resource is compiled to fulfil the latter requirement.

In the recent past water has become a subject at braai fires, water coolers and dinner tables. Will we reach “Day Zero” or will the rains come in time? Should we invest in a short term desalination option or can we reduce our consumption significantly? Should we consider large-scale use of ground water? Coupled with this, we ask ourselves what is the major cause of the crisis, is it the lack of rainfall, poor management from the municipality, a refusal from national government to assist the Western Cape or over-population. The real answer is most likely a combination of all these factors and maybe even a few others that we are yet to consider.

As Christians, how should we engage in these discussions on water? The purpose of this resource is to assist us in having the conversation as congregations and faith-sharing groups by offering relevant information, at a time of conflicting and confusing stories. This resource therefore consists of five themes; (1) Sacredness of Water, (2) Water Scarcity, (3) Sanitation and Hygiene, (4) Water as a habitat and (5) Sustainability. For each theme there is a technical paper, which set out facts and figures on the subject, a theological reflection to help frame our thinking on the subject and a collect, lections, prayers for the Eucharistic Service and a Bible Study for further reflection in small groups.

A big thank you to all the contributors. This resource was conceptualised during the second half of 2017, when most of us were busy with the demands of jobs and studies. Notwithstanding time constraints, their contributions in this resource are well considered and thought provoking. All the contributors are members of the Anglican Church and professionals in their own right, a testimony to the gifts God has blessed His Church with. A big thank you also to all those who offered to proofread material and the efficiency with which it was done.

As the threat of “Day Zero” looms, our focus is not only on the water that might run out but more importantly on the water of baptism and our sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. We hold in our prayers all families who will bring babies to baptism, all adults who will present themselves for baptism and all the baptised who will renew baptismal promises. May God give us living water that we may thirst no more?

Yours in the service of our Lord  
Revd. Shaun Cozett  
Editor

Candlemas 2018

# LECTIONS AND COLLECTS

Week	Theme	Collect	Lections
1	Sacredness of Water	Gracious Father your Son is the source of living water; grant that the gift of his Sprit might inspire us all to value this gift that you have provided for our benefit, to learn to use it efficiently so that it might be shared by all, and to strive to ensure that it is available to all your people through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ <b>Amen.</b>	Genesis 1:1-10 Psalm 133 Revelation 22:1-5 John 4:1-15
2	Water Scarcity		1 Kings 18:1-6 Psalm 124 Acts 11:27-30 Matthew 25:31-46
3	Sanitation and Hygiene	Lord of our lives You sent John the Baptist into the wilderness and called him to wash your people clean of their sins: Give us grace to acknowledge our own need for cleansing, both inside and outside Through Jesus Christ our Lord Who lives and reigns with you One God, now and forever. <b>Amen</b>	2 Kings 5:1-14 Psalm 51 Hebrews 9:1-10 Mark 1:1-8
4	Water as a Habitat	Lord of all the earth Your words gave life to the plants in the field and the creatures of land and sea: As we reflect on our need of water for life and health Make us mindful of all living things, And their dependence on the same water Through Jesus Christ our Lord Who lives and reigns with you One God now and forever. <b>Amen</b>	Genesis 1:20-23 Psalm 8 Romans 8:18-25 Mark 1:16-20
5	Sustainability	O God of the ages You are the same yesterday, today and forever: Move us so to use your gift of life-giving water That it provides for all our needs today and the needs of generations to come Through Jesus Christ our Lord Who lives and reigns with you One God now and forever. <b>Amen</b>	2 Kings 2:9-14 Psalm 90 Acts 20:25-37 Matthew 28:16-20

# 1. THE SACREDNESS OF WATER

## WATER: ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE

Prof. Richard Fuggle<sup>1</sup>,

The maintenance of life, as we know it, on this planet depends critically on an adequate supply of water of an acceptable quality and also on a well-regulated temperature and humidity environment. The oceans satisfy both these requirements, either directly or indirectly. They constitute our most important reservoirs of water and energy. They exert a profound influence on the terrestrial climate and on the levels of precipitation. However, most of this water - 97 percent of it - is undrinkable because of its salt content. Only 3 percent of the world's water supply is fresh water, and 77 percent of that is frozen. Of the 23 percent that is not frozen, 98% occurs as groundwater, only half a percent is available to supply every plant, animal and person on Earth with all the water they need to survive. Water suitable and available to support life is in fact a rare and scarce commodity, little appreciated by most people. Perhaps it is because there is apparently so much water that we have taken available fresh water for granted.

Scientists searching for life on other planets regard water as the first and fundamental requirement for life. Without water, there can be no life as we know it. Water is of paramount importance on Earth: we live on a water planet and our bodies are mostly water. Our tissues and membranes, our brains and hearts, our sweat and tears - all made up of the ingredients available on the surface of the earth. We are 23 percent carbon, 2.6 percent nitrogen, 1.4 percent calcium, 1.1 percent phosphorous, with tiny amounts of roughly three dozen other elements. But above all we are oxygen and hydrogen fused together in the unique molecular combination known as water, which makes up approximately 71 percent of the human body. Our blood even contains roughly the same percentage of salt as the oceans.

In its purest form, water is odourless, almost colourless and tasteless. It is in our bodies, in the food we eat and the beverages we drink. We use it to clean ourselves, our clothes, our dishes, our cars and everything else around us. Many of the products that we use every day contain it or were manufactured using it. But by far our greatest demand for water is in the food we eat: for example, it requires 125 litres of water to produce an apple.. (See final table for other examples). All forms of life need water, and if they don't get enough of it, they die. In some places, fresh water is difficult to get and is treasured. In others, it's easy to obtain and is too often squandered.

At its most basic, water is a molecule with one oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms, bonded together by shared electrons. It is V-shaped (with an angle of 105 degrees) and is charged positively near the hydrogen atoms and negatively near the oxygen atom. Water molecules are naturally attracted to and stick to each other because of this polarity, forming a hydrogen bond. This hydrogen bond is the reason behind many of water's special properties. Water is the only inorganic liquid that occurs naturally on earth. Water is also the only substance that occurs naturally on earth as a solid (ice), a liquid and a gas (water vapour).

The unique properties of water have led most, if not all, ancient civilizations to regard water as sacred. Religious and native peoples worldwide use water to purify themselves before beginning religious ceremonies. Many Christians bless themselves with holy water making the sign of the cross as they enter and leave their churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Fuggle is the former Head of the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at UCT, now retired, and a Parishioner at Christ the King, Claremont



**Embedded water:  
Litres of water required to produce:**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Litres</b>
One pair of jeans	8000
One portion of steak (250 grams)	3850
Rice (1 kg)	2500
A cotton shirt	2500
Cheese (250 grams)	1265
Chocolate (100 g)	1,700
Potatoes (1 kg)	290
One mug of coffee (250 ml)	260
One glass of milk (250 ml)	255
Egg (60 grams)	200
One banana	160
One apple	125
Bread (one slice)	60
One tomato	50

## WATER: A GIFT FROM GOD

Revd. Dr. Rachel Mash<sup>2</sup>

Water was present at the start of Creation and the whole history of God's work is framed by rivers. The Garden of Eden was fed by the life giving water of rivers. Water gushes and flows through the pages of Scripture. The last book of the bible reveals the image of the River of God bringing life and healing. Water is mentioned 722 times in Scripture and has many spiritual meanings. Why does water hold such a prominent place in the Bible?

The Biblical lands were dry lands and without water there would be no life. They had no great rivers such as the mighty Nile of Egypt. Apart from the river Jordan, the people of Israel were dependent on rainfall for their water. So these scriptures resonate with us in our water scarce country. The people of Israel knew the pain of thirst and the hunger that comes when the crops fail. So water became for them the symbol of spiritual life.

Water symbolizes many things in Scripture. It is the image used to describe salvation: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3)

Water symbolizes cleansing of sins and purification: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

Water is a symbol of spiritual life: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13)

As Anglicans we become part of the family of God through the sacred waters of baptism. And yet we have lost the sense of sacredness of water by seeing it as something that comes out of a tap. How can we reconnect with water as something holy and precious? Christians know the name of the river that Jesus was baptized in--the Jordan River. And yet where did the water come from that was used for your baptism? Where is your River Jordan? Can you identify it and see if it is clean and free from rubbish?

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<sup>2</sup> Rachel Mash is the ACSA Provincial Coordinator of Green Anglicans

In our weekly Eucharist we partake of water and wine and bread. This is to remember that both water and blood flowed from Jesus side". One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out" (John 19:34).

The challenge for us as Christians is to reclaim the sacredness of water. Can we do this liturgically in our services, by linking the service of baptism with a concern to protect the river from which it flows? Can we help our congregations to understand that we do not only partake of wine, but wine and water by emphasizing that part in the service? Can we use water liturgically for services of healing and sacred moments of absolution? Many churches have holy water at the door of the church but we do not teach about it. Can we re-claim this practice as a living part of our faith – as we are sent out into the world, we are cleansed by water but also sent out into the world to be keepers and stewards of this gift from God?

## SERMON NOTES

### **Genesis 1:1-10 - Before Creation the Spirit hovers over the waters**

The first book, Genesis, starts with a wonderful poetic image of water and creation. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1:1–2). Before creation even took place – the waters were there. Water is a primal element giving birth to life. It is no wonder that when a child is born the waters break to symbolize the start of the journey – a new life coming into the world. From Creation to re-creation, water gives life.

### **Psalm 133 - The Dew of Hermon as source of life**

*"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for ever more."* (Psalm 133:3)

Mount Hermon stands in the buffer zone between Syrian and Israeli occupied territories. In this parched landscape it soars to 2814 meters and is snow-capped. The dews of Syrian nights are heavy, when you wake in the morning it can look as if it has rained overnight. The dews that fall on the snow-capped mountain are particularly copious. So the symbol of dew as a sign of unity is powerful – the Psalmist compares the influence of unity upon the nation to the effect of dew upon parched vegetation in a desert setting. How can we be inspired to become a sacred dew of unity bringing hope and new life to a divided and despairing society?

### **Revelation 22:1-5 - The River of Life**

We seem to be living in apocalyptic times. Will we run out of water? Will we reach Day Zero? Will the army be called in to stop us fighting over water? At such times it is important to remember that Revelation and Apocalypse are the same word. An Apocalyptic nightmare fades as a dream of vision is revealed. John of Patmos gives us a beautiful vision of the River of Life. Firstly it flows from the throne of God. Water is a free gift of God and is sacred. We pay for the delivery but water itself is a gift. Secondly this sacred water of God brings healing and life – where it flows the trees flourish. "And the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations. There shall no longer be any curse." As sacred water flows from the throne of God let us take that healing water into our communities to bring healing.

### **John 4:1-15 - Jesus the Living Water**

In Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, he speaks to someone who is at the very bottom of society's pecking order. She is a woman, a foreigner and considered to be immoral. Yet Jesus asks her to give him water. Jesus identifies himself as the source and giver of living water (John 4:10-24a). In Jewish culture there is living water (moving water) and dead water (stagnant water). The spiritual life he offers is fresh and full of life. But then he goes on to say that the Samaritan woman will herself become - a spring of water gushing up to eternal life (John 4:14). This life giving water began to flow from the believing Samaritan woman as she began to share her story and many came to believe. No matter what may happen with our water situation over the next few months, we are all called to be people who overflow with living water, the kind that gives life to others.

# PRAYERS

Clouds, oceans, seas, rivers, lakes and waterfalls  
are your sacred gifts of life and beauty to us, O God;  
teach us how to use and preserve the waters of our planet.  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

Rain down your Spirit upon the waters of our earth;  
and upon those responsible for decisions concerning their purity and  
availability.  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

Nourishing God, may all the peoples and creatures of this earth  
have the water they need to live their lives fully.  
Help us to solve the problems of drought, flooding, sanitation and  
disease  
so that all may share in the banquet and none be in want.  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

Creator God, you are the source of living water.  
We confess our inadequate ways of dealing with the world's water.  
Free us from our misuse and waste of this precious gift, and forgive us.  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

God of life-giving waters, God of all those who carry water for miles,  
God of those whose only supply is contaminated,  
God of those lacking good sanitation,  
may water, clean and life-giving, be available to every living creature.  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

Compassionate God, forgive your people for their wasting, pollution,  
commodification and privatization of water.  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

Compassionate God, we pray for perseverance and courage  
for individuals, communities, agencies and organizations  
throughout the world working for water justice.  
May we be generous in supporting them,  
Creator God, hear us we pray,  
**Give us your love for the whole of Creation.**

Lord we pray for your Church throughout the world especially in its  
mission to promote justice, peace and the integrity of Creation. May  
we work to transform unjust structures in the provision of clean water  
and good sanitation. Bring churches together to work in unity so that  
clean water will be available to people and all creatures for today and  
for future generations.

**Amen.**

**(Source: [www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime))**

## BIBLE STUDY

The focus for this week is on giving thanks to God for the gift of water. At this time of 'impending crisis' so much of the discussion has been on shifting blame and scare tactics. As Christians we seek to praise God irrespective of our circumstances. Although we face the possibility of running out of water, we focus on the God who is the giver of the gift of water and thank God for His provision in our lives.

### Scripture

Read **Genesis 1:1-10** in as many different versions/translations as available. What are the words or phrases that stand out from this text as we reflect on God's provision?

### Observation

- What are the things you are thankful for at this time?
- Do you have a reason to praise God?
- What can we look at today and say 'it is good'?

### Application

How do we communicate a message of hope to:

- Our families
- Our congregation
- The community

### Prayer

Creator God, you created the earth as the perfect habitat for human life and then created us to till the land and care for it. Open our eyes to see the goodness of your creation and our minds to understand our calling to care for what you have created. Help us to reflect on our use of water and to use it in such a way that all of creation may be refreshed and renewed by it. Amen

## 2. WATER SCARCITY

### WATER SCARCITY: UNDERSTANDING THE WATER CRISIS

Dr. Kevin Winter<sup>3</sup>

Cape Town has experienced four droughts over the last 100 years resulting in water scarcity in which there is an insufficient supply to meet human needs over a short period. This is a way of describing the effects of a drought on water scarcity, but it is not the only way.

A traditional textbook approach to defining drought often refers to a prolonged dry period with well below average rainfall and the absence of rainfall. It assumes that everyone already has access to water and that the drought forces people to adjust their water demand until the drought has passed. The result is often a temporary disruption to lives, health, damages the economy and impacts the environment, often with severe and painful consequences.

Worldwide, droughts and floods are more frequent and the interval between successive droughts is shorter. The last significant drought in the Western Cape was in 2005 whereas the previous drought was in the early 1970s. We are living in a time when the effects of human induced climate change are disrupting normal wet and dry cycles. There is increasing scientific evidence and personal experience to show that climate change is responsible for changing rainfall patterns and that temperatures are rising steadily as a result of global warming. Climate scientists predict that

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Winter is Senior Lecturer in Environmental and Geographical Sciences at UCT, Lead Researcher at Future Water Institute (UCT) and a member of Christchurch, Kenilworth

the long term outlook for the Western Cape will be drier, warmer and more drought-prone. For the third consecutive year, from 2015 to 2017, the Western Cape has received well below average rainfall.

Drought is not the only factor responsible for water scarcity. People live with water scarcity in many places in South Africa and in the Western Cape. It is not surprising for many in these dire circumstances to feel distant from the call to avert Day Zero because they already live with limited supplies and with contaminated water in their homes and surrounds. There are new lessons emerging: it is not right that suffering and hardships should come from drought; it is also not right that people suffer from limited water supplies, dysfunctional sanitation systems and where poor drainage poses a health risk. Reasons that are given for water scarcity include population growth, urbanisation, economic development, and rising standards of living. What are the less obvious factors? New thinking suggests that water scarcity is a social issue. It results from poor governance, limited public participation, ignorance of the injustice that others suffer as a result of being compromised by a lack of water services, and a separation of lifestyles from natural systems of water, soil and air. Millions of South Africans are living with limited access to clean water and sanitation where water scarcity is a factor of socio-political conditions that appear to be difficult to shift. Access to reliable water quality is also deeply embedded in power and privilege.

Water scarcity is also driven by socio-economic systems and consumer choices. We need to make informed choices by finding out more about where our food comes from and the amount of water resources that are embedded in crop and animal production. We become more informed and make better choices when we know more about the water footprint of crop and animal products that we wish to purchase. Some might be grown or raised in water deficit regions where the water required is excessive and is responsible for establishing the water balances of the catchment resulting in water scarcity for others who are affected by this type of food production.

It will take an incredible effort to transform a water poor environment into a water liveable environment that is able to support people and all creatures of God's creative handiwork. In South Africa the vision for a water-secure nation must be one in which water for some becomes adequate water for all. It starts in our homes and in the places where we live. Here we are best placed to reduce our water demand and take better control over what can be re-used, recycled and take care in what kinds of chemicals and fats we finally dispose into drains and storm water systems. Changing behaviour starts with us. We are quick to blame others, but slow to improve our own water practice. Once we learn new ways of doing things in our homes we are better equipped to share this learning with our church communities, in our workplaces and at educational institutions. We are stewards of God's creation, in which water supports and connects all life systems, and He holds us accountable in our care for His handiwork. We can no longer remain silent as we watch the destruction of the earth through climate change, actions that destroy the quality of water resources, and accept the social injustice faced by many who live daily with scarcity.

We have to confess that we are placing enormous strain on our water resources. All of God's Creation is under threat and the signs of dwindling water supplies and deteriorating water quality are evident right across the country. Natural systems are struggling to process contaminated water, to maintain the flow of water, and to recharge underground and surface waters. The destruction of natural systems hurts a loving Creator God who entrusted us with the role of being responsible stewards of the Earth. It is extraordinary that God might forgive us for our poor response to the injustices that are carried out on His creation and people, but He won't necessarily spare us from the consequences of our sins where we have neglected, abused and stolen from the earth's resources and compromised the needs of the present generation, future generations and all other living systems.

# A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SCARCITY

*"I was ... Thirsty but you would not give me a drink" (Matt. 25:42)*

Revd. Karl Groepe<sup>4</sup>

## Introduction

The concept of scarcity implies that is less available of a commodity than is required. It may result from a lack of capacity in terms of production or the limitation of resources. Value is placed on the commodity and decisions must be taken as to the appropriation or distribution of the commodity.

Scarcity can result from the manipulation of resources or a decline in resources. It can be controlled by humanity or can be outside the control of humanity.

## Our Christian Question

In the Matthean passage (Matthew 25:31-46), the all-powerful and infinite God asks for assistance from a finite and limited being. In this instance, the limited being faces the issue of capacity to produce the limitation of resources. As co-creator, we cannot bring to life out of nothing nor bring forth resources.

The first Biblical creation narrative (Genesis 1) tells of God who provides abundantly. Our understanding of this generous God makes the concept of scarcity an embarrassment. Faced with a natural event as drought, the Christian is inclined to turn to God in prayer and implore God to reverse the situation. The quest is to return to a perceived normality.

Our challenge in the present context is that the world is constantly changing, at a rapid pace, and vanishing. The new world promises to be vastly different. In the story of the feeding of the five thousand, the question of scarcity is posed. The disciples bring finite objects (two fish and five loaves) to Jesus and declare a scarcity of food in the face of the large, hungry crowd. Jesus responds in prayer and the food is distributed. The remains are collected for distribution. What had begun as a hopeless situation for the disciples had been turned around by Jesus. This story demands that the disciples change their view of scarcity. The abundance of God is made manifest in the ordinary things of life. It echoes the account of the manna from God in Exodus 16: "Some gathered a large and some a small amount ... They gathered that everyone had enough to share." (Exodus 16:17-18)

In all the accounts of abundance, there is the spectre of limitation. In the Garden of Eden, humans are forbidden to eat from the tree of life. The second Biblical creation narrative is not an ongoing story of abundance but stops for reflection. In the same way extreme natural events in the Bible signal the direct intervention of God in the world order and call us to stop and take stock of our situation.

## Challenges

1. Recognise the abundance of God in the world and how we deal with the extreme natural events (in this case drought) that confront us.
2. Our ability to resolve the crisis involves more than a think tank of experts but must be viewed as a universal issue: in the present crisis of drought, service delivery issues in the townships must form part of the narrative. All present solutions focus on how the economically abled are to survive. The passage Matt. 25:31ff, begins by referring to all nations, hence the inclusion of all the communities in the resolution of the crisis.
3. Our Lenten program invites us to experience our spiritual drought, which is refreshed at the renewal of our baptismal promises at Easter. How do we deal with scarcity in the face of the abundant provision of God on the cross? Water is the essence of this victory. We are empowered to use our gift of water to renew society and our world-view

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<sup>4</sup> Karl Groepe is the Diocese of Cape Town Synod Manager, formerly Dean of Studies and Canon Theologian

# SERMON NOTES

## **1 Kings 18:1-6 - The Drought over the Land**

Elijah, the prophet of Israel, prophesied that there would be no rain in Israel, until he prayed to God for rain. God heard his prayer, for a drought, and the heavens were shut. This meant that the once fruitful land was barren and the people faced with a famine, leading to hunger amongst people and animals alike. The land remained without water until the prophet's prayer for relief was heard. At this time of drought we are reminded of the power of prayer and that God is still able to act on our behalf.

## **Psalm 124 – Our help is in the name of the Lord**

The Psalmist here gives thanks to God for a great victory. We are not told what the battle is, only that victory came from the hand of the Lord. The Psalmist calls us to trust in God, who is able to give us the victory.

## **Acts 11:27-30 - A Famine is prophesied**

The aim of this story in the context of the Book of Acts is to show the events that drove Paul and his companions to take the word of God to new areas. In this particular case it was a famine over the land that caused Paul and Barnabas to take the gifts collected in Antioch to the church in Judea, where it was needed. Historical records show that many died of hunger during the famine. Since sixty percent of the water used in South Africa (the largest percentage) is allocated to agriculture, a drought always brings with it the possibility of food insecurity. As we pray for rain, let us also remember all farmers, farm workers and all others who work to ensure our food security during these trying times. Like Paul and Barnabas, may the crisis we face open our eyes to new opportunities for the church's mission and ministry?

## **Matthew 25:31-46 - I was Thirsty and you gave me a drink**

Jesus calls on us to reflect on how we treat those in need. He reminds us to act for those who are unable to act on their own behalf. The looming threat of Day Zero, the day the City of Cape Town runs out of fresh water, should help us think not only of ourselves and how we can prepare but also of all who will be unable to access the limited water that will be available. We are reminded also of those for whom inadequate access to safe drinking water and appropriate sanitation is a way of life. How can we act on their behalf?

# PRAYERS

Creator God, when you formed the earth you said that it was good. You created a place for us to live, here on earth, 75% of which is made up of water. In your great wisdom you created the perfect habitat in which all people could have sufficient resources to survive and grow.

Teach us so to use your gifts that all may prosper and live according to your will.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Forgive us, Lord, for misusing your gift of water, so that today 844 million people lack access to safe drinking water and 2,3 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation. Forgive us for the many children who die each year as a result of cholera, diarrhea and all other water-borne diseases. Forgive us for squandering your gifts to the point that climate change is a reality and is affecting the availability and quality of our water.

As we reflect on our need for forgiveness and restoration during this Season of Lent, give us the assurance of your love and confidence in your grace.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We thank you for all organizations around the world who work for water justice; for churches who are committed to safeguarding the integrity of creation, for governments focused on serving your people and for companies who put people before profits.

Deepen in us a sense of vocation and use us to work for justice and mercy, with humility.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We ask, Lord, for your hand of provision over our city and province during this water crisis. At this time of drought, provide rain. At this time of confusion, give us a new vision. At this time of worry, bless us with your peace. At this time of uncertainty, be for us a rock and a fortress. At this time of need, show yourself as Jehovah Jireh, our great Provider.

**Amen.**

## **BIBLE STUDY**

The focus for this week is on scarcity. By now most if not all of us in the Western Cape are aware of the water crisis and the causes of the crisis. We have heard of the looming 'Day Zero' and the need to prepare ourselves. In midst of scarcity throughout the Western Cape and in the light of our own needs for water, can we find a way to care for others?

### **Scripture**

Read **Matthew 25:31-46** in as many different versions/translations as available. What are the words or phrases that stand out from this text as we reflect on water scarcity?

### **Observation**

Have you made preparations for 'Day Zero'? Share some ideas. What might the potential gaps in our preparation be?

If/when 'Day Zero' comes who would we identify as...

- Poor
- Thirsty
- Hungry
- Naked

### **Application**

How can we assist the poor, thirsty, hungry and naked as a:

- Family
- Congregation
- Community

### **Prayer**

Giving and forgiving God, you provided us with water that we may live and flourish. Where we have misused your gift, forgive us. Where we can do better, teach us. Where we can assist others, use us. **Amen.**



# 3. SANITATION AND HYGIENE

## “IF WATER IS LIFE, SANITATION IS DIGNITY”

Rev. Shaun Cozett<sup>5</sup>

As Cape Town prepares itself for “Day Zero” there are several potential crises that could accompany the lack of running water, not least of which is posed by sanitation. The bulk of urban domestic water (33%) is used for sewage, thus literally being flushed down the toilet. Over the past year we have become accustomed to the saying, “if it’s yellow let it mellow, it’s brown let it drown”, a rule of thumb in determining what to do in the smallest room in the house. In as much as sanitation has been highlighted as a means of saving water in the home, it is also an ongoing, major service delivery problem throughout South Africa and the world and a lack of service delivery has dire consequences for many.

The World Health Organization<sup>6</sup> estimates that as many as 2,3 billion people around the world, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, do not have access to adequate sanitation. This includes 892 million people who practice open defecation. In 34 African countries (for which data is available) at least 50% of the population do not have access to soap and water. The lack of proper sanitation and hygiene increases the risk of illness particularly in children, due to water-borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery and diarrhoea. The latter is one of the leading causes of death in children under the age of five, in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>7</sup>. The provision of safely managed sanitation could reduce infant mortality in the region by as much as 37%. The benefits of sanitation are also social and economic, and include privacy, convenience and reduced risk of danger from the bush. For women and girls there are also the additional benefits of reduced risk of sexual assault and improved school attendance.

In South Africa, one of the greatest service delivery challenges for the post-1994 government has been the eradication of the bucket system; using a bucket indoors for night soil. In a response to a parliamentary question in 2017, the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Nomvula Mokonyane, indicated that there are 25 400 bucket toilets still in use across the country, a figure which excluding informal settlements<sup>8</sup>. Several targets have been set since 1994, but lack of service delivery, inadequate budgets and increased population growth are some of the reasons these deadlines have not been met. This lack adequate provision of sanitation has been the subject of several service delivery protests around the country, most notably the infamous 2013 ‘poo protests’ in the Western Cape.

With Day Zero looming we face the reality of water collection and a limit of 25 litres per person per day. Because there will be no water flowing to private properties we will have no flush toilets in homes, schools, places of work or churches. The water that is made available would have to be spread across the various uses including drinking, cooking, ablutions and laundry. Parents and schools in particular would have to ensure that learners are made aware of the risks associated with not washing hands as well as methods for manual ‘flushing’ of toilets, to prevent outbreaks of water-borne diseases. All households also need to ensure that adequate provision is made for manual flushing of toilets and washing hands. There is a high risk that sewage pipes could block and/or be damaged as they dry out causing further infrastructure damage and risks to personal health. Several options that could be considered as short and long term alternatives including bio-digester toilets, dry loos, waterless urinals and gray-water systems. Likewise, churches would have to plan adequately to ensure that water is made available for the flushing of toilets and provision is made for washing of hands, so that the church does not become a vector for disease.

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<sup>6</sup> WHO, UNICEF. Progress on Sanitation and drinking water – 2017 update. Geneva: World Health Organization

<sup>7</sup> Mara. D., Lane J., Scott B. “Sanitation and Health” PLoS Med. 2010 Nov; 7(11):e1000363

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.parliament.gov.za/news/government-must-quickly-eradicate-bucket-toilet-system-tarnia-baker>

# WATER, GRACE, AND LITURGY

Rev. Dr. Isaias Chachine<sup>9</sup>

## Water

Water is life, without water nothing is possible. The Anglican liturgical position on water, justice, and scarcity is biocentric, hence, life centred and socially grounded. It builds on its conviction about the world as a sacrament, God incarnate. Christian liturgy is an expression of God's incarnational process in the created order. The Anglican liturgical position to environmental justice is sacramental. Christian faith seeks to be incarnate in the created order to transform the very order. Authentic liturgy should be deeply rooted in the lived experience of God's presence in history. Anglican faith places a heavy value on the *material and the historical*. It follows the Christian ethical convictions that the 'values that a society places on the natural world can be seen both in the decisions that are made by the agencies charged with managing its public resources and in the processes used in reaching these decisions. It maintains that 'agencies charged with serving the public interest should balance competing and conflicting claims concerning the proper use of public resources.'<sup>10</sup> In the African context water holds both social and religious value and is critical to the African understanding of spirituality. In the African context, it is said that 'a person who brings water brings life.' When water is received, its meaning is deeply reinforced by the person who brings and receives it. At reception, we are no longer receiving water in isolation as a vulnerable natural substance subject to our human use and manipulation but together we receive the person who brings it and the story behind it. Water imparts on social and religious meaning, one cannot misuse water without deeply undermining the dignity of the person who brings it. Hence to use water with diligence is to respect the dignity of the person who brings it and the story behind. In this way, water plays an important spiritual component as a source of fellowship and solidarity. It horizontalizes the cosmic order and locates human beings at the same level with the rest of creation and maintains that humanity should care for the cosmic order as a way of caring for itself. We cannot talk about water, justice, and scarcity without evoking the demands for social justice. Hence, in our liturgical reflection, we are challenged to reconsider our environmental liturgy in the light of both *Khoi and San* stories and spiritualities, the cradle of humanity in Southern Africa. Khoi's and San's understanding, use, and management of water can teach us something of how we ought to take care of our scarce resources such as water.

## Grace

The Christian story begins and revolves around water. In the Christian faith, water and grace are intertwined. As a divine gift, we should look after water as a way of looking after ourselves. Water ought to be grace, in the same way that grace is unconditional redemption is life. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus' baptism by John in the river Jordan, and the graceful encounter between Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well, sanctifies water as the source of a Christian reconciliatory story and woman as a channel that makes that reconciliatory story possible (John 4:10). Still, the story behind Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, and her expressed predicament on the possibility of drawing the living water from so deep a well, teases our contemporary imagination on the understanding, use and management of water as both social and religious good. The gradual deepening of the well by human greed that causes water scarcity is far reaching, not only harming the ecological order (including humanity), but also affecting the religious significance of the redemptive power of the Christian gospel. As an instrument of grace, water holds a key religious value that anchors human solidarity and should be handled with justice and dignity.

## Liturgy

In Latin *Liturgy* means communion, fellowship or solidarity and without water such communion and solidarity are not possible. At the core, the aphorism of *water, grace, and liturgy* represents the trinity. In each celebration and through baptism, liturgy points to the Christian story as a memorial story that brings to our memory that day in which God liberated his people from bondage in Egypt and led them through the waters of the Red Sea bringing them to the promised land of Canaan. In

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<sup>10</sup> See Des Jardins, Joseph: *Environmental Ethics. An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy, Fourth edition*. Wardsworth, New York, 2006, p. 45

the African story, the web of community is extended to include animals and the rest of the cosmic order. Liturgy reminds us that any environmental harm or ill-treatment has consequences on human harmony and survival. Harm to nature is harm to humanity. Liturgy reminds us that we should care for the environment, including water, as a way of caring for ourselves; any injustice inflicted against the environment is an injustice to humanity itself. The way humanity relates to itself has a bearing on how the rest of the cosmic order and the universe are viewed.

## SERMON NOTES

### **2 Kings 5:1-14 - The cleansing of Naaman**

Naaman, a commander in the army of the King of Syria, suffered from leprosy. Naaman was advised by a little girl to present himself to the prophet Elisha who told him to wash himself in the seven times in the Jordan River, after which he would be cured. For many in the world today the story is the exact opposite, while water for Naaman lead to cleaning and health, unfortunately for many inadequate access to clean water and proper sanitation means that the water they drink and wash in leads to the development and spread of water-borne diseases like cholera, diarrhea and dysentery. In many places throughout the world it is not only Naaman that needs to be cleansed and healed but also the water itself.

### **Psalm 51 - Wash me and I shall be clean**

Following the intervention of the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12), David writes this Psalm seeking God's forgiveness. He asks to be washed clean from his sin and cleansed from his unrighteousness. As we journey through towards Easter and the water of baptism as a symbol our spiritual cleansing, this Lent offers us an opportunity to lay all before God who alone can 'wash us clean of our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.'

### **Hebrews 9:1-10 - Ritual cleansing**

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews notes the importance of ritual cleansing when performing various rituals. This is a reminder of the many references to ritual cleansing in the Old Testament and practices in the temple. The cleaning with water is not only important for personal health but also essential in corporate worship.

### **Mark 1:1-8 - Ministry of John the Baptist**

John the Baptist was in the wilderness baptizing, when Jesus approached him and asked to be baptized. Lent is a time of preparation for baptism and for the renewal of baptismal promises. As we focus on water during this Lent, we reflect on the water for our personal cleansing and ablution and that water from the source is also used for baptism. As the water of baptism is sacred, so all water we use is sacred, because it stems from the same Source, our Creator God.

## PRAYERS

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, presented himself to John the Baptist, asking to be baptized. Let us now turn to Jesus and ask him to assist us in our local and global water crises.

For our world, where there is enough water for our need, but not our greed  
Lord hear us

**Lord graciously hear us**

For our world, where 844 million people lack access to safe drinking water  
Lord hear us

**Lord graciously hear us**

For our world, where 2,3 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation  
Lord hear us

**Lord graciously hear us**

For our world, where infants and vulnerable adults die as a result of water-borne diseases  
Lord hear us

**Lord graciously hear us**

For all governments, that they may ensure safe spaces for personal ablutions where life and dignity are protected  
Lord hear us  
**Lord graciously hear us**

For the government of South Africa, that it may end the use of the bucket system and the need to walk for water  
**We pray to the Lord**

For our provincial government, that they may ensure a high standard of service delivery  
Lord hear us  
**Lord graciously hear us**

For our local government, that they may provide good leadership during this time of crisis  
Lord hear us  
**Lord graciously hear us**

For all who are preparing for baptism during this Eastertide  
Lord hear us  
**Lord graciously hear us**

For ourselves as we prepare to renew our baptismal vows at Eastertide  
Lord hear us  
**Lord graciously hear us**

Lord of all the earth, hear our prayers for ourselves and for all whose lives are affected by inadequate water and sanitation. Answer them as may be best for all your people and provide for us from your riches in glory.  
**Amen**

## **BIBLE STUDY**

The focus for this week is on water-use, sanitation and hygiene. Sanitation is always closely linked with water, health and hygiene. A threat to available water therefore also poses a health threat. This week we will look at the story of Naaman and reflect on what we would need to do to protect ourselves during this water crisis.

### **Scripture**

Read **2 Kings 5:1-14** in as many different versions/translations as available. What are the words or phrases that stand out from this text as we reflect on sanitation and hygiene?

### **Observation**

What changes in water-use, sanitation and hygiene did you make when the City of Cape Town restricted water use to (1) 87 litres per person per day and (2) 50 litres per person per day. What do you plan to do if/when the taps are turned off and water-use is restricted to 25 liters per person per day?

### **Application**

What advice, on water-use, sanitation and hygiene could we offer to our families, our congregation and different sectors of the community? How can we assist those for whom 'Day Zero' is the norm?

### **Prayer**

Gracious God you freed your people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea. Help us to liberate ourselves, and each other, through the streams of our effort and sweat that your people may find fulfilment in the redemption, which your gospel brings. Help us to share and use water with diligence so that your love for the world may be made complete. **Amen**

# 4. WATER AS A HABITAT

## THE EFFECT OF THE WESTERN CAPE DROUGHT ON OTHER SPECIES

Dr. Leeanne Seeliger<sup>11</sup>

Drought is not a new phenomenon in the Western Cape. Residents of the small and central Karoo, that form part of the Western Cape, have been living with drought conditions for centuries. They have learned to read natural signs and adapt their lifestyles to low rainfall.

When the Terrapin Tortoise and a variety of snakes move down the mountain, locals say a drought is coming. Similarly when game is not breeding/ or sheep are not lambing, a drought is predicted. Signs of rain on the other hand include the Blue Crane circling up high in the sky or black ants collecting food.

Unfortunately, many of us urban dwellers have lost touch with our ecosystems and no longer understand the services they provide. There are four broad categories: provisioning, such as the production of food and water; regulating, such as the control of climate and disease; supporting, such as nutrient cycles and crop pollination; and cultural, such as spiritual and recreational benefits.

The Western Cape drought is likely to severely impact on all of these. Visible impacts on other species and farming in our immediate urban environment are likely to include the following:

- Migratory birds might not visit the Western Cape anymore and resident birds will struggle to survive as functional wetlands and rivers begin to dry up.
- The drying up of wetlands and rivers will lead to a loss of habitats and death for a variety of other species like otters, frogs and fish.
- Domestic animals in good care are likely to survive. Strays, however, will become more hungry, diseased, thirsty and dangerous.
- Many livestock will need to be prepared for market, as animal feed dwindles and water runs out. Farmers are likely to focus on keeping their breeding stock alive to survive the drought
- Fruit growers might remove less productive orchards to save water for remaining orchards.
- An increase in cockroaches, flies and mosquitoes is likely
- Plants species in our gardens that are not adapted to live in semi-arid conditions will perish with only hardy indigenous species surviving.

There is little we as individuals can do to rejuvenate the ecosystem services that will be lost in the drought. We can, however, attempt in our back yards to create a haven for some creatures to survive the drought. We can place water and bird feeders in shaded areas and cover ponds with netting to prevent transpiration. When it rains we can put out containers to catch rain for the benefit of birds, dogs and cats. We can plant indigenous plants, mulch our gardens, buy rain tanks and wash less. We can also chose to eat more vegetable protein and less meat, so as to reduce the Western Cape's appetite for water intensive forms of agriculture. Supporting animal rescue organisations and joining community groups that clear aliens and protect wetlands, are other options that can have a significant impact in the broader ecosystem.

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<sup>11</sup> Leanne Seeliger is a Consultant with the Stellenbosch University Water Institute, a founder member of the Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute and member of St. Mary's, Stellenbosch

# CARING FOR ALL GOD'S CREATURES

Revd. Austen Jackson<sup>12</sup>

The Christian understanding of responsibility to care for the environment and especially, as this very short article is required to address, care for life in the deep, starts with a Biblical vision of Christian Stewardship.

The Book of Genesis in its first Chapter reveals God as a powerful creator. He created plants, and animals to populate the land, the sky and the water. When he created the world, he set aside a special place, the Garden of Eden. In it he placed the first man, Adam (Gen. 2:8—15). He instructed him to cultivate and guard the Garden (Gen. 2:15). Adam was to improve its fruitfulness, to protect the Garden against the encroaching wilderness of the rest of the earth. After Adam, God created the first woman, Eve, to join him (Gen. 2:18-25). God commanded them and their descendants to increase, spread out beyond the borders of the Garden, to populate, subdue, and to rule over the whole earth with everything on it, in the sky and in the deep (Gen. 1:26, 28). God endowed them with his likeness and with the authority to rule as stewards over his creation. Here he gave all men and women a status and priority over all other living creatures. It is a vocation of stewardship that implies seeking the fulfilment of the needs of all creatures. When there is a conflict between the two, human needs are to be balanced with non-human needs.

But how do we balance the needs? One approach is Eco-centrism an approach adopted by some Global Environmental movements, under the auspices of the United Nations, which tackles the issue with a vision that does not put human needs at the centre. They work with an alternative that gives equal moral value to all creatures. It is an attractively appealing belief to work with, but it hides certain dangers. In the logic of this belief no creature is more important than the eco-system in which it lives. It raises ethical and accountability issues if this orthodoxy requires that certain species are to be eliminated to sustain the integrity of an eco-system.

Another way of balancing the needs is Anthropocentrism; it is people alone, in God's creation who are endowed with the rationality and moral capability to exercise stewardship. They alone are accountable for their choices. A vision of environmental care that gives the human the same value as any creature in an eco-system undermines the value of the human. If a vision like this is driven by a network of Global NGO's with funding sources and agendas that are unknown to the general public, the voice of the citizens of a country would be rendered worthless. There will be stewardship but one that is framed and driven by unelected bureaucrats somewhere else in the world.

The care and stewardship of life in our rivers and our oceans cannot be undertaken effectively without co-operation on a Global level. As Christians we are to keep abreast with the activities and literature produced by environmental movements. The largest in the world is probably Greenpeace, which is based in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Care of the oceans, with research into habitat destruction, form part of their focus. The oceans cover 71% of the planet. This volume of water that covers the earth may get people to assume that its resources cannot be exhausted. This is far from true. Intense pressure from over fishing by huge corporations have led to the collapse of populations of large fish, mammals and many other species of sea life. For the Christian to inform his/her prayer life about the threats and challenges to the resources in our oceans it would be well to go to websites such as National Geographic and Greenpeace.

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<sup>12</sup> Austen Jackson is the rector of St. Mark's District Six, formerly Chaplain to Stellenbosch University

# SERMON NOTES

## **Genesis 1:20-23 - God creates sea creatures**

The story of creation indicates that before God created the earth, the spirit hovered over the waters. Water is one of the building blocks of all life on earth and essential for sustaining life on earth. But water is also the habitat for sea and water creatures. With rivers running dry, not only do we risk the lives of all who are dependent on water to drink, for water creatures there is the additional risk of their habitat being destroyed.

## **Psalms 8 - All creation is subject to God**

This Psalm reminds us that God created human beings to be a little less than the angels and has made us responsible for caring for creation. As we consider the impact of the water crisis, we should therefore look not only at the impact on human life, but the impact on all of creation.

## **Romans 8:18-25 - The earth groans**

This text reminds us of our link to all of creation. As we suffer under the weight of sin so also creation groans, awaiting salvation. As we consider the impact of the current water crisis, we remember that we are linked to all of creation, who like us, are suffering. We see this in dry domestic gardens, the number of destructive fires and dry riverbeds.

## **Mark 1:16-20 - Jesus calls fisherman as disciples**

Throughout the gospels one of the key locations is the sea. In this text Jesus walks by the sea and calls fisherman, people whose livelihoods are linked to the availability of fish, to be his disciples. We remember also all whose livelihoods are dependent on natural resources, whose lives are threatened by the knock-on effects of the current lack of water.

# PRAYERS

### *For the World:*

Creator God, we thank you for everything that ministers to us in your wonderful world: for the inspiration of morning mists, for the dew on field and flower, for the whispering wind and purifying rain, for sunshine, warmth and colour, for the calm seas reflecting the beauty of the skies, and the lashing of the waves that speak of your power and might. For all that we see in the world around us, we give you thanks.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

### *For Farming Communities:*

Father, you provide all our needs. We thank you for all who work in the agricultural industry, harvesting the earth's resources. We pray for all who are engaged in farming throughout the world. We thank you for their energies and skills, as we ask that they may use them wisely. Help them to feel a deep responsibility to hold the balance between profitability and the care and conservation of the soil. We pray for farming communities where the countryside is being encroached upon for development because of the need for housing land. Strengthen those who farm in difficult conditions, who shepherd their flocks on remote hills and lonely moors. Let all perceive your hand in creation and realize their stewardship. Help your church in rural areas to be welcoming, uniting communities: this we ask in the name of the great Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

### *For Animals:*

Loving Creator, who designed and made everything, we thank you for all the earth's animals and birds. Your wonderful creation is a cause for celebration! When we see the exquisite patterns and shapes and colours of wildlife, we are given a glimpse of your grand sovereignty, your authority over the universe. Show us how to look after all creatures: the domestic – both pets and working animals; and the wild – the rare species and the ordinary. Give us pity, Lord; help us to prevent their needless suffering, and to make their existence happy. May we fulfill our stewardship of your creation to the glory of our Creator and Redeemer.

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

Grant these our prayers, Lord God, from whom all blessings flow, in heaven above and the earth below; three Persons in one God, to whom be praise for evermore. **Amen**

*(Adapted from: Prayers for the People<sup>13</sup>)*

## **BIBLE STUDY**

The focus for this week is on water as a habitat. Most of the discussions on the water crisis has focused on the impact that the low water levels have on us as human beings. Water, in addition to being a substance for drinking, is also a habitat for plants, fish and all kinds of creatures. With the dam levels running low and the rivers that feed the dams drying up, how do we show our care for creation? How can we care for water creatures? How do we care for animals in the wild that depends on the rivers for their survival?

### **Scripture**

Read **Mark 1:16-20** in as many different versions/translations as available. What are the words or phrases that stand out from this text as we reflect on water as a habitat?

### **Observation**

What creatures, other than human beings, will be affected by this water crisis? Can we assist them in any way?

### **Application**

What can we do to assist birds, animals and fish during this water crisis? What should our message of encouragement be to:

- Our families
- Our congregation
- Our community

### **Prayer**

Creator God, you created the earth with all its creatures and said that it is good. Help us to care for the creatures with whom we share the earth. As we reflect on our own challenges brought about by this water crisis, may we also see and hear the suffering of all your creatures. Amen.

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Perry, M., Goodland, P., & Griffiths, A. (Eds.). (1992). *Prayers for the People* (Leader's Edition ed.). London, UK: HarperCollins Religious.



# 5. SUSTAINABILITY

## TIME TO RE-THINK 'OUR' RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

Michelle Pressend<sup>14</sup>

Water featured prominently in the descriptions of Khoenknoen (Khoi) places. Names derived from plants and animals were also used frequently and were important points of reference concerning what was needed to sustain their life.<sup>15</sup> The Khoi-San commonly named the places they inhabited and migrated to by their geographical features such as mountains, rivers, hills, fountains and so forth. Tsitsikamma for example is derived from the Khoenknoen reference to *tsau-or tsou* (well) plus *kamma* (water), which can be translated as the "Place of Plenty Sparkling Waters". This area had a large number of rivers and high rainfall.<sup>16</sup>

The days of regular winter rains in both the Eastern and Western Cape are probably over. The planet at global scale is experiencing climate disorder in action in the form of droughts, floods and extreme and erratic weather conditions are common occurrences. How did 'we' get here is a critical and complex question, which I can merely touch on in this short piece. How are 'we' responding to these drastic planetary alterations is another critical question.

Globally the key responses to climate change are mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation is mostly concerned with technology advancement to 'combat' the climate crisis by supposedly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mostly carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from the use of fossil fuels. Adaptation is about finding ways to adapt to the emerging extreme weather conditions. In 2010, the South African government prepared, the National Climate Change Response Green Paper compiled by the Department of Environmental Affairs. This report raised alarm bells and underscored that South Africa as water scarce country will exceed the limit of its economically usable, land-based sources of water by 2050, given the current growth trends and water use behaviour.<sup>17</sup> The Green Paper further stresses that, '[t]he adverse impacts of climate change as a consequence of changes in rainfall patterns will worsen the problem of systemic water shortages and increase the limits of water resources'.<sup>18</sup>

In 2006, the City of Cape Town's Environmental Planning Department commissioned the development of an Adaptation Framework in response to the potential short- to medium-term impacts of climate change in the metropolitan area. The document presented a "Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the City of Cape Town (FAC4T) – an overarching framework for a City-wide consolidated and coordinated approach to reducing vulnerability to climate impacts." The framework has a section on urban water management, couched in demand and supply side rhetoric. Examples of demand side adaptation included water restrictions, water tariffs, and reduction of leaks programme, pressure management and awareness campaigns. The supply side aspects referred to developing the Table Mountain aquifer, the re-use of effluent, water harvesting, desalination amongst other actions.

These documents are littered with tools, models, and strategies for assessing the impact of climate change. Within these climate change is most often framed as a catastrophe and an apocalypse facing humankind. In response to this technology advancement and planetary management 'solutions' tend to be relied on.

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<sup>15</sup> Raper 1979

<sup>16</sup> Raper 1979 in Notes on Khoenknoen Place Names and Young 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs National Climate Change Response Paper 2010 Green Paper, pages 8- 11, [https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/national\\_climatechnage\\_response.pdf](https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/national_climatechnage_response.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

However, these techno-scientific approaches do not consider modernist and post-modern implications for both nature and human nature.

The ways of 'indigenous' peoples, other societies, cultures and 'traditional' knowledges and local systems have been discursively erased in the process of socially constructing 'nature'. We see this not only in the way nature is framed as an external exploitable domain for accumulation under capitalist productive relations but also the "sustainable management of the system of capitalized nature".<sup>19</sup> In this form of capital for example, "trees produced capitalistically are plantations, land and water rights are privatized, genetically altered species are sold on the market..."<sup>20</sup> In biodiversity conservation: microorganisms, flora, fauna have become "reservoirs of value – this value residing in their very genes – that scientific research, along with biotechnology, can release for capital and communities."<sup>21</sup>

In these times of ecological troubles perhaps it is appropriate to end with a riddle posed by an explorer to New England, Thomas Morton: "if Indians lived richly by wanting little, then might it not be possible that Europeans lived poorly by wanting much?"<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Escobar 1996. p. 327.

<sup>20</sup> Escobar 1996. p.333

<sup>21</sup> Escobar,1996. p.335

<sup>22</sup> Cronon 1983. p. 80

# SUSTAINABILITY OF WATER

Revd. Dr. John Klaasen<sup>23</sup>

There is nothing more fascinating than reflections on God and God's dealing with creation. What is even more fascinating is not so much to understand how God deals with creation but to ask the right question about God's dealing with creation. Understanding a question is more important than the answer to the question.

As I am writing this reflection I can see through the window of the study that a pipe has burst and the water is gushing down the street. I witness a number of households scrambling to fill their buckets with water. As tempting as it is to join the crowd I am confronted with the question, did anyone think about contacting the authorities to fix the pipe? The answer is obvious otherwise I will be a strangely unique person. The answer does not match the reaction of the crowd nor my non-reaction. My guess is that the reaction of the crowd (including myself) did not assist the water crises in the Western Cape.

To reflect seriously on the sustainability of water during this Lent is to ask, who are we in relation to the sustainability of water in the Western Cape? In order to understand the question I invite you to reflect on three parts of the question.

## **Sustainability**

This term found permanent significance in the church during 1975 at the Nairobi gathering of the World Council of Churches, under the theme "Towards a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" to highlight the social ministry of the church in a deteriorating environment. The meaning of sustainability is widely accepted as the responsible use of resources without jeopardising the availability of resources for future generations.

There are a few assumptions within this understanding of sustainability. It is assumed that resources are available. The book of Genesis reminds us that God created the universe and provided resources for all living creatures (Gen. 1:26-31). Water is available. This brings me to the second part of the question.

## **Water**

Water has significance that goes way back before the church was established in the form that we know it. Gen, 1:2 reminds us that the idea of water is as old as creation itself. Within the New Testament water took on a symbolic form that depicts newness, renewal, transformation, change and future. Romans 6:3-4 reminds us that just like Christ took on a new form at the resurrection we too are new creatures through our baptism. At the 1988 Lambeth conference, baptism was also affirmed as the mark of our calling. "every baptized and confirmed member must share in God's mission to the world" (Anglican Prayer Book 1989, Catechism). This takes me to the third part of the question.

## **Who we are**

Our identity is both about our make-up, in the image of God and our calling, to have responsibility. To ask who are we is to address our responsibility towards God's creation. Here it is important to read Genesis 1:27 with verse 28. This implies that the identity of persons is not only to be "created in the likeness of God", but "to be responsible for the rest of Creation". Creation is not static, but dynamic, creative, growing and we have the inherent responsibility for the wellbeing of the other, whether it is a living other or "different living other".

Is it possible that the struggle to understand the question about our being is made difficult because implicit in the question is the responsibility that we have for the sustainability of water for the future generations?

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# SERMON NOTES

## **2 Kings 2:9-14 - Elisha, like Elijah before him, parts the waters**

When Elisha realizes that his spiritual father was about to be taken up to heaven he tried to stall the inevitable for as long as he could. Eventually, Elijah negotiated with Elisha that he could have whatever he asked for, if Elisha would allow Elijah to be taken. Elisha asks for something near impossible; that he might have a double portion of the spirit of arguably the greatest prophet in the history of Israel. After Elijah is taken up to heaven Elisha's request is granted, and with the spirit of Elijah resting on Elisha, he separated the waters of the Jordan, like Elijah before him signaling the continuation of the work of Elijah. Similarly, when our time comes to leave the earth, what will we leave to those who succeed us? Not only in money or property, but what kind of world will we leave behind?

## **Psalm 90 - God's blessings are from one generation to another**

The Psalmist questions the meaning and purpose of life and our frailty in the light of God's omnipotence. Human beings work hard only for a short while and then depart. We are reminded in this Psalm that God is the author of our lives and that true meaning stems from a life focused on God's will. The same blessings available to us will also be available to the generations that come after us, because what we have is God-given.

## **Acts 20:25-37 - Paul's farewell to the Elders**

Paul says an emotional goodbye to the Elders in Ephesus. He reminds them of his ministry amongst them and that everything he did was for their benefit. The time was ready for those who had been students to become the leaders and as Paul departs he encourages them to follow the example that they had seen in him, as this would lead to life. Like Paul, we ought to live our lives in such a way that those who come after us may find their way to God, by walking in our footsteps.

## **Matthew 28:16-20 - The Great Commission**

Jesus has come to the end of His ministry on earth. He stands before the disciples, who have been on this journey with him. He promises them that they would have the same authority that he had and that they would do even greater things. He sends them out into the world to practice what they have learnt and thereby to change the world. With all that we have heard and discussed about water during Lent, how can we change the world around us?

# PRAYERS

As we conclude our reflection on water, let us offer our prayers to God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer:

We pray for God to provide adequate rain so that our needs may be met. We pray God's blessings over dams that are running empty, rivers left lifeless and boreholes that are dry.

Creator God, open our eyes that we may see your provision for us in this time of drought, provide rain for our crops and sustenance for all your creatures.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for all those for whom rain means misery, for the homeless and those in informal settlements. We pray for those whose livelihoods are affected by rain and for whom large amounts of rain spell disaster. We pray for persons with disabilities who are left immobile during floods.

Jesus our Redeemer, as we pray to you for rain be also with those for whom this rain will be unwelcome, protect them and their livelihoods that they too may rejoice in your salvation.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Bless, O Lord, those who will inherit the earth from us. Help us to live our lives in such a way that they too may enjoy the benefits of your love and your provision. May we leave to them a world filled with beauty and awe and inspire them to leave the same for generations to come.

Holy Spirit our Sustainer, continue the work that you have begun in us, and give us strength to face the challenges placed on our way.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Triune God, answer our prayers as may be best for us, that as you have been our companion and guide during this Lent, continue to refresh the dryness within us, make fruitful the barrenness and renew the broken. **Amen**

## **BIBLE STUDY**

The focus for our final week is on sustainability. Water is a renewal resource, it is naturally replenished into rivers and oceans through rain. Even though the outlook for water in the near future might seem bleak, the situation will eventually stabilize. How will we take the lessons we have learnt during this water crisis into the future and not simply have business as usual?

### **Scripture**

Read **Matthew 28:16-20** in as many different versions/translations as available. What are the words or phrases that stand out from this text as we reflect on the sustainable use of water?

### **Observation**

What permanent changes have we made to our water use:

- At home
- At work
- At school
- At church
- In the community

### **Application**

Having listened, prayed, and discussed over the past weeks, what does God want us to do?

What needs to be done at:

- Home
- Work
- School
- Church
- In the community

### **Prayer**

Lord God, you have been our companion through this Lenten journey, be with us as we remember the journey of your son to Jerusalem, following him along the Way of Suffering and share in his suffering at Calvary. As we see the new life that comes with the resurrection, may we know that you are still able to make all things new. May our experience this Lent stay with us, so that we have deeper appreciation for your gifts and live in appreciation of your grace. Amen.

# A Canticle for Sister Water

All praises to you, O Lord of all and of the guiding stars  
the blue moon and singing sun and waters above the heavens.

We sing of you along with your creatures,  
Sister Water, over whom your Spirit brooded  
and decreed both womb and witness to creation.

Bless, O Lord of choirs of angels,  
our time and purpose this day.

Bless us as we herald our intent to be better stewards,  
to begin again and renew and commit to be mindful  
of what we have received from our forebears here  
and everywhere where humanity signals their love  
of each other and of the mystery that we call Allah,  
whom we proclaim Yahweh, our Sustenance  
whom we sing of as Father, who loves us  
with a mother's tenderness, God the Son  
and the Spirit whom in all holiness that even now  
gives us life in all its abundance.  
Through Sister Water, Almighty God,  
you nourish and sustain us and by your creation of water,  
we are proclaimed baptised and welcomed  
into the family of faith, the home of all  
who walk along the way of love.  
We praise you, Lord, who through  
our Sister Water, nudge our neglected  
and abandoned conscience, Sister Water who serves  
as our moral life-spring  
awakening in us, the ebb and flow of repentance,  
leading us to the shores of the grace of your forgiveness.

You, dear Lord, were with us  
on the ships of misery that stole us from south India,  
Malaysia, Indonesia and Bali and brought us here,  
to our earth mother, Africa.  
We praise you, O God who never abandoned us,  
who witnessed our tears and heard the sigh of our prayers:  
*Bismillah, Rahman, Raheem,*  
above the roar and rage of angry waves.

There is no other God: You provide for all of us –  
those who witness to your truths and those who say  
there is only the truth of what they see and do  
in their own strength.  
For you are compassionate and all that you  
have made before and in creation is good.

The work of your hands is holy and blessed,  
it is *iRaheem*, the sign and source of our eternal blessing  
that leads us out of the depth of darkness into the warm

and welcome light of your eternal bliss.

Praise be to you, O Lord: Your creature Sister Water,  
carried us along the currents and depth of your oceans  
from the cold North of ice and snow  
to this place of artesian streams, the curious deer,  
the languishing hippopotamus and restless geckos.

You embraced us to this place of our African selves:  
The *Goringhaiqa* and *Gorachouqa*, the warrior peacemaker,  
*Autshumato* and our First Nation Mother, *Krotoa*.

We sing your praise, O Lord, of the mighty *Camissa*  
that gathers in the shade of the great *Hoerikwaggo*,  
and flows into the bay beyond.  
We are thankful, that despite our conflictual beginnings,  
despite the virtual holocaust of our African selves,  
that somehow, we have survived.

We who, in our white and our black difference,  
were anointed out of diversity into this place,  
to this land that belongs to you  
and where we belong to the land.  
O let the earth praise you, O Lord, as we bow  
the knee of our heart to burn *imphepho*, *everlasting*,  
*kooigoed* and *buchu*; the sage that reminds us  
of the need for cleansing and the healing that comes  
and sustains us through difficult times.

We praise you, O Lord, for Sister Water,  
who fills the Seven Seas and by whose passage  
we came, now gathered as a people;  
a commonwealth of communities who struggled  
through the hell of Apartheid to this first step  
onto the heaven and challenge of freedom.

We bless you, O Lord of springs and rivers  
as we pray that the rain will fall, in and out of season,  
and that we may always be mindful of the water  
that fills our dams and the water that floods  
and the water that signs and signals  
the rainbow of new beginnings.  
Amen. Amen. Ame

(Adapted from the prayer prayed by **Dean Michael Weeder** at the Water Justice  
Conference held at St George's Cathedral on Friday 24 March 2017.)

# SPECIAL DAYS OF PRAYER FOR WATER

*In addition to the Lenten focus, these are some of the days on which we can pray and take action for water justice during the Year of Water*

21 March	National Human Rights Day
22 March	World Water Day
7 April	World Health Day
22 April	Earth Day
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity
5 June	World Environment Day
16 June	Youth Day
17 June	World Day to combat Desertification and Drought
11 July	World Population Day
18 July	Mandela Day
9 August	National Women's Day
1-7 September	National Arbor Week
4 October	Feast of St. Francis of Assisi
6 October	World Habitat Day
6-10 October	WeedBuster Week
13-17 October	National Marine Week
16 October	World Food Day
20 November	Universal Children's Day
25 November – 10 December	16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children
1 December	World Aids Day
10 December	International Human Rights Day
16 December	Day of Reconciliation



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