

# **ECOLOGICAL GRIEF AND CREATIONAL HOPE:**

*A Lent Curriculum  
for all Ages*

created by Sylvia Keesmaat with  
The Bishop's Committee on Creation Care  
For the people of the Diocese of Toronto

Lent 2022

welcome

# INTRODUCTION

The world as we know it seems to be **changing irreversibly**. Loss of biodiversity, unbearable heat, flash floods and forest fires have started to bring home the reality of the climate crisis. For many, this has created both **deep grief**, as we mourn the loss of the beautiful and diverse world we grew up with, and **deep anxiety**, as we worry about the world that will be our future home. For many, this grief and anxiety has made it **difficult to imagine a hopeful future**.

What if we allowed the **Bible to provide some guidance** in our struggles, recognizing that the Biblical text is acquainted with our griefs and our anxieties? The Bible is a book with stories about climate crisis, creational breakdown, and the challenge of hope in bleak times. This curriculum seeks to draw on that ancient wisdom and re-engage with our **love for God's creation and all of God's creatures**.

Lent is a time when **we join Jesus in his walk to Jerusalem**. That walk ended on the cross. This study takes seriously the suffering that we experience as a result of sin and brokenness. The walk to the cross was also, paradoxically, the only way to new life. **The hope of resurrection, of a world restored and renewed, animated all that Jesus did**. That is the hope that permeates this curriculum as well.

# *how to use* **HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM**

This is a six-week study, suitable for all ages, that can be used for small groups, either in person or online. We have sought to include activities for groups with different abilities; it is up to the leaders to gauge the level of appropriate activity for their group, keeping in mind that many basic activities are enjoyed by all ages. This guide can also be used individually or by families at home. There are more activities than can be accomplished by any one group in the time frame given. Pick and choose the ones most appropriate for your context. It may be that as you go through this curriculum, you earmark activities as future projects for your church group or your family. Many of the activities lend themselves to this ongoing action.

*This study, which contains both biblical reflection and practical, earth-centred action, is not meant to be a to-do list, but a series of nurturing activities that can help us give voice to our collective grief and anxiety, as well as grow hope in our lives and communities. It provides a variety of activities to meet different circumstances; pick and choose what fits for your context.*

Although we make suggestions for individual use throughout the text, this might be a good time to invite a friend or two who are also experiencing climate anxiety and grief to join with you on your journey.

It would be helpful for all participants in the curriculum to have a journal to use for drawing, reflection, and questions throughout these six weeks, preferably one made out of recycled or non-tree-based paper. Small group leader may choose to provide these for their groups.

The group leader should prepare by reading through each week ahead of time.

The final week of the curriculum focusses on a hopeful vision of the new heaven and the new earth. Given that Holy Week services might make it impossible to meet as a group during Holy Week, it might make sense to complete the last week of the curriculum after Easter.

*experience*

# HERE IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM:

## 01

### CULTIVATING LOVE AND AWE FOR OUR CREATIONAL HOME

In which we recall all the ways that Creator's love is shown to us in creation.

## 02

### NOAH AND A CLIMATE CRISIS: GOD'S GRIEF OVER CREATIONAL DESTRUCTION

In which we discover the Creator's grief over the destruction of creation, and explore how to serve creation.

## 03

### JEREMIAH AND CREATION'S UNDOING: LEARNING FROM THE DISPLACED

In which we realize the grief of land loss and explore our own role in the story of displacement.

## 04

### ZACCHAEUS: REPARATIONS AND LAND BACK

In which we discover the grief of the land in unjust systems and how we can imagine righting wrongs.

## 05

### PAUL AND A GROANING CREATION: LEARNING TO GRIEVE FAITHFULLY

In which we hear the groaning of creation and explore how our own grief is a faithful response to creational breakdown.

## 06

### JOHN'S VISION OF THE NEW EARTH: LEARNING TO LIVE WITH POSSIBILITY

In which we dare to imagine renewal for the earth.

*Remember that we are all captive to creation-destroying and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. This means that it is not just our individual shopping lists and habits that must change, but the creation-destroying infrastructure that we all share. To that end, while there are personal actions in this curriculum, engaging in wider community action for hope is also important.*

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01 *week*

**CULTIVATING LOVE AND AWE FOR  
OUR CREATIONAL HOME**

# begin INTRODUCTION

We begin our six-week creation journey with a deep dive into remembrance and awe.

We need to remind ourselves of the beauty and diversity of this world that God has given us before we begin to explore our grief over creation's suffering. We need to recall that God's love is shown to us in creation. We need to remember that we are called to love our place and all the creatures, plants, water and rocks with whom we share it. This week we will consider all the ways that creation sustains us, feeds our imagination, and nurtures gratitude. In short, we will ground ourselves in what we love about creation. To explore these themes, we are going to read Psalm 104, which is as wide and vast as the creation it describes.

# USING THE CURRICULUM

*experience*

- This week includes activities for those just beginning to think about creational grief, as well as those who have been exploring these issues for some time.
- **It contains more activities than can be done in one meeting or one week.**
- Choose the activity or activities that are most appropriate for you, your group, or your family. You may choose to do only one or two, or spread them out over the course of the week. You may also earmark activities for ongoing action once Lent is over.
- **Everyone should do the sections entitled “Becoming Rooted: Hearing the Text” and “Reflection” since they form the basis for the rest of the discussion and activities.**
- For the opening activity, ask people to bring a photo or drawing of a place that they love in creation, or a photo of a creature that they love.

## BEGIN WITH PRAYER

*together*

### OPENING LITURGY AND PRAYER

We gather from many places,  
places of brokenness and grief,  
places of joy and hope.

**We lay down our grief and hope  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
forests and fields,  
streams and lakes,  
small gardens and apartment balconies,  
sidewalks and pavement.

**We lay down the suffering and the joy  
of our places  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
Indigenous and settler,  
Black and people of colour,  
immigrant and refugee,

now together on the traditional lands  
of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg  
and the Haudenosaunee peoples,  
including the Mississauga people,  
lands that have praised Creator  
since time began.

**We bring the cry of the land  
before the Creator.**

Creator God,  
we gather together in your presence  
longing for restoration for creation,  
forgiveness for our own brokenness  
and the injustices we have created,  
and reconciliation for the divisions  
that separate us.

**We lay our longing before you, Creator,  
and ask for healing.**

**Amen.**

# *hear the text* **BECOMING ROOTED: HEARING THE TEXT**

Choose a reader, or a number of readers, for the various sections of Psalm 104. Read Psalm 104 slowly, pausing wherever there is an asterisk in the text. Ask people to hold up their photos during the pause after the Psalm refers to the part of creation that includes their picture (for instance, a starry sky when the moon is mentioned, birds when birds are mentioned, animals when cattle and lions are mentioned, fish when the sea is mentioned, insects when small animals are mentioned, trees when trees are mentioned, flowers at the point when the text says the earth is covered by God's creatures).

Or, ask people to imagine that they are sitting on a mountain ledge overlooking a valley. As the Psalm is read, imagine the words creating the view before you, from the clouds and the wind down to the rocks and the animals. Do the same if you are reading this on your own.

## **FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH**

Before reading Psalm 104, find photos or drawings of beautiful plants or animals or places that you love in creation. You may also find a large piece of paper, along with tape or sticky tacky if you choose to make a collage that you can keep. Read Psalm 104 slowly, pausing wherever there is an asterisk. When the Psalm seems to be talking about the part of creation that includes your picture, lay your pictures on the table or attach them to the paper (for instance, a starry sky when the moon is mentioned, birds when birds are mentioned, animals when cattle and lions are mentioned, fish when the sea is mentioned, insects when small animals are mentioned, trees when trees are mentioned, flowers at the point when the text says the earth is covered by God's creatures). As Psalm 104 is read, watch the diversity and beauty of creation unfold before you.



### **LOOK FOR**

activities that are suitable For Families and Youth

## PSALM 104 (CEV)

I praise you, Lord God,  
with all my heart.  
You are glorious and majestic,  
dressed in royal robes

<sup>2</sup> and surrounded by light.

You spread out the sky  
like a tent,

<sup>3</sup> and you built your home  
over the mighty ocean.

The clouds are your chariot  
with the wind as its wings.

<sup>4</sup> The winds are your  
messengers,  
and flames of fire  
are your servants.\*

<sup>5</sup> You built foundations  
for the earth,  
and it  
will never be shaken.

<sup>6</sup> You covered the earth  
with the ocean  
that rose  
above the mountains.

<sup>7</sup> Then your voice thundered!  
And the water flowed

<sup>8</sup> down the mountains  
and through the valleys  
to the place you prepared.

<sup>9</sup> Now you have set boundaries,  
so that the water will never  
flood the earth again.\*

<sup>10</sup> You provide streams of water  
in the hills and valleys,

<sup>11</sup> so that the donkeys  
and other wild animals  
can satisfy their thirst.

<sup>12</sup> Birds build their nests nearby  
and sing in the trees.\*

<sup>13</sup> From your home above  
you send rain on the hills  
and water the earth.

<sup>14</sup> You let the earth produce  
grass for cattle,  
plants for our food,

<sup>15</sup> wine to cheer us up,  
olive oil for our skin,  
and grain for our health.\*

<sup>16</sup> Our Lord, your trees  
always have water,  
and so do the cedars  
you planted in Lebanon.

<sup>17</sup> Birds nest in those trees,  
and storks make their home  
in the fir trees.\*

<sup>18</sup> Wild goats find a home  
in the tall mountains,  
and small animals can hide  
between the rocks.\*

<sup>19</sup> You created the moon  
to tell us the seasons.  
The sun knows when to set,  
<sup>20</sup> and you made the darkness,  
so the animals in the forest  
could come out at night.

<sup>21</sup> Lions roar as they hunt  
for the food you provide.\*

<sup>22</sup> But when morning comes,  
they return to their dens,  
<sup>23</sup> then we go out to work  
until the end of day.

<sup>24</sup> Our Lord, by your wisdom  
you made so many things;  
the whole earth is covered  
with your living creatures.

<sup>25</sup> But what about the ocean  
so big and wide?  
It is alive with creatures,  
large and small.

<sup>26</sup> And there are the ships,  
as well as Leviathan,  
the monster you created  
to splash in the sea.\*

<sup>27</sup> All of these depend on you  
to provide them with food,

<sup>28</sup> and you feed each one  
with your own hand,  
until they are full.

<sup>29</sup> But when you turn away,  
they are distressed;  
when you take away their  
breath,

they return to the earth.

<sup>30</sup> You created all of them  
by your Spirit,  
and you give new life  
to the earth.

<sup>31</sup> Our Lord, we pray  
that your glory  
will last forever  
and that you will be pleased  
with what you have done.

<sup>32</sup> You look at the earth,  
and it trembles.  
You touch the mountains,  
and smoke goes up.\*

<sup>33</sup> As long as I live,  
I will sing and praise you,  
the Lord God.

<sup>34</sup> I hope my thoughts  
will please you,  
because you are the one  
who makes me glad.

\* = pause for participants to put up photos or hold them up to the screen.

# reflect REFLECTION

**T**his Psalm describes creation as a place where everything that is created is interconnected and at home. God finds a home in creation and all other creatures find a home in creation. They are provided with food and shelter; there are trees and streams for birds and animals, mountains for the goats, and rocks for the badgers. Wild animals and human beings have their own places, and even a time of day or night to themselves, so that they are

## WHAT IS YOUR WATERSHED?

Before maps were created with place names and boundaries, most people identified where they lived in relation to the bodies of water that provided them with drinking water, irrigation, and food. Your watershed is your most local, natural area of creation that is nourished by the streams and rivers around you. In the Diocese of Toronto, everyone is part of the Great Lakes watershed. More locally, the Humber River and the Don River are each the centre of a watershed. In Peterborough and the Kawarthas, a local river or lake might be the basis of your watershed. You can find your local watershed by following the links in *Resources* below.

happy and cared for in creation. The Psalmist has also spent a lot of time learning about her creational home: she knows where the streams are, where the wild goats live, what the trees are called, and the names of the birds that live in them. Another way to put it is that she knows and loves her watershed [see *What is your watershed?*]. And she shares with us her awe and gratitude for this place that she loves. The following activities all flow out of that sense of love, awe, and gratitude. Choose one or more of them for your time together or to try on your own this week.

# discuss QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Depending on the length of your meeting, you may have time for only one or two of these questions. Choose the one(s) that are most appropriate for your group.

- A** What plants, trees, birds, animals and landforms you are aware of where you live? If you don't know their names, maybe someone else in your group will! Share them with the group, and then offer a prayer of thanksgiving for them.
- B** Studies have shown that feelings of anxiety and depression are lifted somewhat when people are outside in nature and experience awe or wonder. When have you experienced awe and wonder in creation? Describe the moment to one another and then offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH

End each day this week by reflecting on a moment in creation where you experienced a sense of deep happiness, sometimes called awe or wonder. Offer a prayer of thanks for that moment.

- C** Psalm 104 reflects a deep knowledge and appreciation for the land, similar to that found in Indigenous cultures around the world. In many places, however, Indigenous peoples are unable to rejoice in the land and water around them because the land and water have been poisoned or are under threat of logging and mining. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have been working together to provide restoration in many of these situations. If you are Indigenous, share ways that restoration is or could happen in your community. If you are non-Indigenous, share ways that you have partnered or would like to partner for healing in Indigenous communities. If you would like to engage in new actions or donate to restoration efforts for Indigenous peoples in Ontario, consider the following actions:
- Stay up to date on what is happening in Grassy Narrows. Go to Free Grassy Narrows: <https://freegrassy.net>
  - The new Mishkodeh Center for Indigenous Knowledge is a partnership between the Bobcaygeon Truth and Reconciliation Group and the people of Curve Lake. It will be located in the heart of our diocese in Bobcaygeon. For information go to: <https://mishkodeh.org>

## *grow hope* **ACTIONS TO GROW HOPE**

- A** Provide Nesting Materials for birds outside your church, in your yard, or on your balcony. Go to: <https://davidsuzuki.org/queen-of-green/how-offer-birds-nesting-material>
- B** Leave a bare patch of soil in your churchyard or backyard for birds and bees that need mud to create their nests, and for butterflies.
- C** Leave a pile of sticks or stones in the corner of your church property or home garden for insects and snakes to live in (snakes will help you by eating mice!). Do not rake up all your leaves; small bugs like to live under them!
- D** Explore the Blue Dot Movement, which advocates for environmental rights at all levels of government: [www.bluedot.ca](http://www.bluedot.ca)



Both this American Bumble Bee and this Great Black Digger Wasp benefit from a patch of bare soil in your garden.

# ACTIVITIES TO DO OUTSIDE

go outside

**A** Walk through the area around where you live or worship, either as a group or by yourself. Notice places where other creatures are at home: trees where birds gather, pollinator gardens for insects, streams for frogs and toads, weedy thickets for rabbits and mice, piles of stones for snakes. Take photos if you wish. Meet together in person or on zoom to share what you saw. Write a Psalm, or a different kind of song (either together or individually) giving thanks for these places.

**B** Weather permitting, find a spot outside (or inside your house or apartment) where you can sit quietly and observe creation. Choose a spot where you can return day after day. Bring binoculars, if you have them.

- Do you see any birds, squirrels, other animals, or insects? Depending on where you live and how early spring is this year, you may not see many creatures yet.
- Can you see any plants beginning to green up, or trees budding?
- What sounds do you hear from creation?

Come back to this spot over the next week, and, if possible, over the next few weeks. Note what animals, birds, trees and plants make this spot their home. If you can, create a journal or take pictures of what you see. Give thanks for the creatures that you see.



## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH

### SHARE WHAT YOU OBSERVED

Upload the photos that you take to [inaturalist.ca](https://inaturalist.ca) for help with identification and to contribute to Citizen Science in your area.

**Citizen Science** happens when people observe the plants, animals, birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles that they come across and report their findings to a community like <https://inaturalist.ca> which then uses their findings to help increase scientific knowledge.

# PRAYERS

pray  
**PRAYERS**

Choose one of these prayers to end your time together.  
These prayers are also suitable for use throughout the week.

1

Loving Creator,  
we pause in deep gratitude  
for the gift of life,  
for the self-giving love  
of the Earth, our Mother,  
who, in her mysterious life  
systems,  
nurtures and sustains us  
every moment of our lives.  
Sometimes we lose sight  
of this astonishing beauty  
and grace.

Let us sit in silence,  
remembering the many  
wondrous things  
for which we are thankful  
this day.

*a pause for reflection*

Creator of all living things,  
**we give you thanks.**

Loving Creator,  
we remember the many animals  
that have comforted us in  
loneliness,  
the birds and insects  
that have surprised us with  
beauty,  
the trees that have sheltered  
us in times of crisis

*a pause for reflection*

Creator whose love is seen  
in all living things,  
**we give you thanks.**

Loving Creator,  
we stand in awe at the intricacy  
of your creation,  
every creature in relationship,  
nourishing and strengthening  
all that you delight in:  
rivers and lakes,  
trees and grasslands,  
the four-legged, the swimmers,  
the fliers, and us, the  
two-legged,  
all bound together  
for the flourishing of all.

*a pause for reflection*

Creator whose love  
permeates all our relations,  
**we give you thanks.**  
**Amen.**

2

God of unchangeable power  
when you fashioned the world  
the morning stars sang together  
and the host of heaven shouted with joy;  
open our eyes to the wonder of creation  
and teach us to use all things for good,  
to the honour of your glorious name;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

3

Set me free, O God,  
to go off with you today  
on one wild, specific tangent after another,  
immersed and amazed  
in the wonder  
and even the terror  
of your immense creative beauty.  
Amen.

*dig deep*  
**DIGGING DEEPER:**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE  
THIS WEEK'S THEMES**

**READ**

**PICTURE BOOKS:**

- *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell
- *All the Places to Love* by Patricia MacLachlan
- *Grandad's Prayers of the Earth* by Douglas Wood
- *The Hike* by Alison Farrell
- *Winter in the Forest* by Rusty Finch
- *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox* by Danielle Daniel
- *Ancient Thunder* by Leo Yerxa
- *SkySisters* by Jan Bourdeau Waboose

**TWEEN AND TEEN:**

- *Bayou Magic* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Margarito's Forest / El Bosque de don Margarito* by Andy Carter
- *The Boreal Forest: A Year in the World's Largest Biome* by L.E.Carmichael
- *The Sockeye Mother* by Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Hudson)
- *The Grizzly Mother* by Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Hudson)

**TEEN AND ADULT:**

- *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- *Finding the Mother Tree* by Suzanne Simard
- *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard
- "What Are the Trees Saying About Us?" by Sarah Lazarovic:  
<https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2021/10/27/talk-to-the-trees>

**LISTEN**

- Cockburn, "Lord of the Starfields":  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFkM\\_R3CZvI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFkM_R3CZvI) (with imagery)
- Sarah Harmer, "Escarpment Blues": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52vXPZAKDug>  
(with images from the Niagara Escarpment): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbV1ib7Ybew>

## WATCH

### ALL AGES:

- A short video of common Ontario Backyard birds and their calls (7 minutes):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtzREghQPHo>

### TEEN AND ADULT:

- *My Octopus Teacher* - available from Netflix

## EXPLORE

- Information about birds: [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)
- Contribute to Citizen Science: [www.inaturalist.ca](http://www.inaturalist.ca)
- Free Grassy Narrows: <https://freegrassy.net>
- Mishkodeh Center for Indigenous Knowledge: <https://mishkodeh.org>
- How to find your watershed:
  - In the GTA: [Toronto Watershed Map](#)
  - In Ajax and Whitby: [Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority](#)
  - Port Perry and the Kawartha Lakes: [Kawartha Conservation](#)  
(scroll down to reach subwatersheds)
  - Stouffville to Barrie, Orillia, and Uxbridge and Environs: [Lake Simcoe Conservation](#)
  - Peterborough and Environs: [Otonabee Conservation](#)

## JOIN

- *Flock Together* is a birdwatching collective for people of colour that has a chapter in Toronto. For information go to: <https://www.flocktogether.world>
- Many communities have local Field Naturalist Groups that arrange outings to see birds, plants and other creatures, as well as engage in education and conservation efforts.
  - Toronto Field Naturalists: <https://torontofieldnaturalists.org>
  - Junior Naturalist Programme for kids 8-14:  
<https://torontofieldnaturalists.org/about-tfn/junior-naturalists>
  - Peterborough Field Naturalists: <https://peterboroughnature.org>
  - Kawartha Field Naturalists: <https://kawarthafieldnaturalists.org>
  - Orillia Naturalists: <http://orillianaturalistsclub.ca>

02  
*week*

**NOAH AND A CLIMATE CRISIS:  
GOD'S GRIEF OVER CREATIONAL DESTRUCTION**

## *begin* **INTRODUCTION**

This week we will begin to explore the theme of grief by looking at a familiar story through a **slightly different lens**. The story is usually called Noah's Ark and many of us have heard it told since childhood. We will explore the way in which **our grief over the destruction of creation is a reflection of God's grief over the destruction of creation during the flood**. And we will see how, in the middle of grief, God made a plan for the survival of the creation **that God so loved**.

# USING THE CURRICULUM *experience*

- This week includes activities for those just beginning to think about creational grief, as well as those who have been exploring these issues for some time.
- **It contains more activities than can be done in one meeting or one week.**
- Choose the activity or activities that are most appropriate for you, your group, or your family. You may choose to do only one or two, or spread them out over the course of the week. You may also earmark activities for ongoing action once Lent is over.
- **Everyone should do the sections entitled “Becoming Rooted: Hearing the Text” and “Reflection” since they form the basis for the rest of the discussion and activities.**

## *together* BEGIN WITH PRAYER

### OPENING LITURGY AND PRAYER

We gather from many places,  
places of brokenness and grief,  
places of joy and hope.

**We lay down our grief and hope  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
forests and fields,  
streams and lakes,  
small gardens and apartment balconies,  
sidewalks and pavement.

**We lay down the suffering and the joy  
of our places  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
Indigenous and settler,  
Black and people of colour,  
immigrant and refugee,

now together on the traditional lands  
of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg  
and the Haudenosaunee peoples,  
including the Mississauga people,  
lands that have praised Creator  
since time began.

**We bring the cry of the land  
before the Creator.**

Creator God,  
we gather together in your presence  
longing for restoration for creation,  
forgiveness for our own brokenness  
and the injustices we have created,  
and reconciliation for the divisions  
that separate us.

**We lay our longing before you, Creator,  
and ask for healing.  
Amen.**

# *grounding* **GROUNDING OURSELVES IN CREATIONAL LOVE**

Briefly share with each other a moment from the past week where being in creation gave you a sense of deep happiness, awe, or wonder. Conclude this time with this brief prayer:

Creator of all,  
in love you have called us into being  
and surrounded us  
with the sight, sound, and scent of beauty.  
We thank you for . . . .  
*[here may be inserted those things that were shared above].*  
May they remind us of your love for us,  
and for all of creation.  
Amen.

## *hear the text* **BECOMING ROOTED: HEARING THE TEXT**

Read this retelling of the Noah story. If you are part of a group,  
close your eyes while the story is being read.

### **CREATOR'S GRIEF AND NOAH'S SERVICE**

**A RETELLING OF GENESIS 6-9 BY SYLVIA KEESMAAT**

Creator could not believe what was happening to creation.

Not long ago, the beauty of creation had been overwhelming: clouds and sunsets, mountains and streams, trees and meadows, birds and insects, animals and human beings, all living in harmony with each other. Not that long ago, Creator had laughed and said, "This is good — wonderful and beautiful in every way."

Now all Creator could see was violence on the earth.

Violence towards other creatures. Violence towards the waters and the forests. Violence towards each other. Everything that the human beings were doing was destroying creation, all day, every day.

It was as though human beings could think of nothing but destruction.

Creator's heart was full of grief, looking at it all. Creator was sorry to have made the earth with humans in it. So Creator made the decision to destroy everything and start again.

But it was hard. In fact, it was impossible for Creator to destroy all the beauty, all the plants and animals, every living thing that Creator had made.

So Creator came up with another plan. There was one family who did not practice violence, one family that lived on the earth in harmony with all other creatures. That family was known by the name of the oldest man: Noah. Creator decided that Noah's family would be the one to save the animals and plants while Creator wiped the violent ones from the face of the earth.

The family was stunned when they heard the plan. Surely Creator was joking! But no, apparently not. Creator had decided to destroy almost everything that lived on the earth by a flood. And the family's job was this: to build an ark, a three-storey boat with a side door, big enough to hold two of every animal, birds, insects, frogs, snakes, skinks, turtles and whatever else creeps upon the earth.

Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives would go into the ark with the animals. They were also supposed to collect whatever plants would be needed by the family and the animals for food: leaves, stalks, grains, seeds and fruits.

As they thought about it, they also realized they would need to save seed for planting. For if all the plants were wiped out by the flood, there would be no seed to plant.

They were all so busy with building, with rounding up animals and harvesting seed, so busy figuring out what each animal would need and how they would keep them all safe from the flood and each other, they didn't really have time to think about what was happening.

Not until the door was closed, and the rain began to fall did it hit them. All the places they loved, the blueberry patches where they could almost touch the sky, the swamp where the first ducklings hatched each spring, the cedar bush, where the little red mushrooms grew, the meadow where the spangled fritillary butterfly caught the sun, the maple where the oriole flashed—all of it was going to be destroyed.

And the people! How could the ones on the ark watch their family and friends as homes flooded, as they desperately tried to save their animals, as they realized that there was no higher ground to run to?

As the reality of the flood hit the family, it was hard to tell if their faces were wet because of the rain or because of their tears.

Creator was feeling deep grief, too. All that beauty! All those valleys and hills, the brooks that ran over the rocks, and the dark red of the cedar roots after a rain; the mist that rose from the earth after a cold night, the bright blue of the blue-spotted skink and the soft brown of the shy female cardinal—all disappearing. What if this flood made it impossible for the earth to show beauty again?

And the people! Creator had held such hope for how humanity would flourish throughout all of creation! How hard it was to watch their suffering as the waters rose, how heart-breaking to see the panic in their faces. Creator knew at that point that this would never be the way to deal with violence again.

The family on the ark and the Creator were united in their grief.

It was a long time to be grieving. Noah and his family were in the ark for almost a year. That whole time they learned what it meant to observe and serve the creatures that were in their care. They had known about farm animals, of course, but what of the wild animals, and the wild birds, and the little animals that creep on the earth? They had to watch closely, learn their ways, see what they would eat.

At first their grief made it hard for them to care for some of these wild, weird creatures. But gradually their grief began to share space with joy as birds hatched and baby rabbits appeared everywhere. As the birds learned to trust them, as the goats followed them around and they began to love the grumpy face of the porcupine, they realized that in creating a safe home for these creatures their own sorrow began to heal.



Finally the waters receded. The animals that had come on in twos left as families. As Creator looked out over all of creation and smelled the offering that Noah and his family made in thanksgiving after leaving the ark, Creator realized that even in the face of violence, never again would it be possible to destroy the creation again. It was more than Creator could bear.

And so Creator made a promise to Noah and his family, to the earth, and to every living creature on the earth: Never again would Creator destroy every living thing. And, as a reminder, the rainbow stands in the sky, so that Creator would remember this promise as long as the earth endures.

*reflect and discuss*

## REFLECTION & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- A** We could describe this story as the first climate catastrophe, or the first climate crisis. This retelling of the Noah story highlights the grief that Creator God felt because of the violence that had been done to creation and humanity, as well as the grief that the people and Creator God felt as the flood destroyed the earth. In the Bible it is clear that Creator's grief is rooted in love. Losing something that is deeply loved creates sorrow and sadness. In Genesis God was delighted with the beauty and diversity of creation. When people began to destroy creation with violence, Creator responded with sorrow. You can find a description of this sorrow in Genesis 6.5-7.
- ① Share with each other (or remember, if you are alone) a place that you loved that no longer exists any more. How do you feel about this place? How do you feel about its loss? What has been lost to you?
  - ② If you can imagine God grieving the loss of that place as well, discuss (or reflect on, if you are alone) how this changes or deepens your understanding of the Creator.
  - ③ Share or reflect on how your sadness and grief makes you feel. Does it make you want to give up? Does it make you angry? Despairing? Does it make you want to do more to preserve other places? Does this story provide any comfort to you as you think about your grief? Why or why not?
  - ④ Close your session with one of the prayers from the resources section below.

### FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Questions 1 and 3 can be asked of both children and youth. For children who may not know of a place that they have lost, ask "How does it make you feel when you see garbage in a place that you love (i.e. a local park or playground, or in a stream or river)?" They may also feel anxiety about the climate crisis even though they do not feel grief over losing a specific place or creatures. This can lead into a discussion of sadness or anxiety and whether sadness is overwhelming for them, or whether it makes them want to work to improve things.

- B** Noah's family had to learn how to care for all the animals on the ark. They had to learn how to *observe* them and *serve* them—they had to become the servants of the creatures on the ark. Share with the group (or remember, if you are alone) a time or place where you served other creatures or the earth (i.e. fed the birds, saved a bug from drowning, watered a plant, planted a garden).

- ① What did you need to know to do this well?
- ② What could have gone wrong if you didn't know about that creature? (For instance, a bug could have stung you if you didn't know what it was; some birds don't eat seed; a plant can be overwatered; a garden needs good soil; white bread is unhealthy for ducks and geese).
- ③ Reflect on what you learned from caring for another creature.

## FOR FAMILIES

Many children may only be able to respond to the question of whether they have served another creature if they have had a pet. One way to shift the question slightly is to ask about what an animal in a zoo might need if it is being cared for, and what might go wrong if it does not have what it needs (proper food, space to roam or dig, a place to swim, shelter at night). After this discussion ask, "What did Noah need to learn to care for the animals on the ark?" and "How would being in the ark with animals for a long time help Noah's family look after animals and creation after they left the ark?"

**FF+Y**

- C** Choose an animal or plant that lives in your neighbourhood or nearby ravine or conservation area (ie. frogs, foxes, milkweed, skunks, butterflies, bees, maples trees). As a group, or on your own, learn about and discuss what that creature needs to survive (shelter, water, food, sunlight, companionship, space). Brainstorm ways that you could help to provide these things for this creature.

## YOUTH

Watch Greta Thunberg's speech to the world leaders at the UN Climate Summit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJsdgTPJpU>

1. How would you describe the emotional tone of this speech?
2. Can you relate to what she is saying?
3. Do you think that you could say these things to the adults in your life? Why or why not?
4. What do you wish adults understood about climate crisis?
5. If you had five minutes alone with the Prime Minister to talk climate change, what would you say to them?

## YOUTH

Watch TRUST: The Climate Kids

[www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-the-climate-kids](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-the-climate-kids) (15 minutes) with young people and children in your congregation. After the video, discuss the following:

1. What did you think about what these kids did?
2. What kinds of activities did they do as a group to make their campaign successful? Why do you think those activities mattered?
3. Would you want to be part of a campaign like this? What would you say to your city council? What kinds of things would you ask for?

# grow hope ACTIONS TO GROW HOPE

A

God warns Noah that a climate catastrophe is coming and then tells Noah to build an ark and collect food for two of every kind of animal. Two of each creature might not seem like enough to create a diverse creation. In our looming environmental crisis, small “ark” places that we create to protect pollinators or other creatures can seem too small to have an impact. But this story suggests otherwise. There are also other stories where small changes in a habitat and the presence of animals that had once been destroyed, have contributed to creational renewal (see the short films “How Wolves Change Rivers” or “How Beavers Engineer the Land” in *Resources* below).

Discuss (or reflect on) whether there is a place near you where an “ark” could be created to provide habitat and shelter for animals to live through this climate crisis. Is there a place on your church property? In your neighbourhood? In your backyard?



Here are a few ideas for warmer weather:

- Plan out and plant a pollinator garden on a lawn or a strip of grass in a parking lot, or in front of your church or school. Invite your neighbours to join you. For more ideas on pollinator gardens see resources below.
- Create a wildlife water bowl for insects and butterflies in your back yard: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-provide-water-wildlife>
- Leave piles of brush and stones in the corners and edges of your yard for birds and insects

B

Find out what your local government bylaws or provincial regulations are about:

- Pesticide use in parks
- Front lawn gardens / natural front lawns
- Plantings along highways

Advocate for habitat-friendly bylaws and legislation for these spaces.

# *go outside* ACTIVITIES TO DO OUTSIDE

FF+Y

**A** Return to the spot that you chose for reflection last week (see page 11 above). This week as you observe the creatures that are in that place, ask yourself what they are teaching you about their needs.

FF+Y

**B** At the end of this week's story, Creator promises to be in faithful relationship with humanity, the earth, and all living creatures. And Creator provides a rainbow as a reminder of that promise. Although the story says that the reminder is so that Creator won't forget, what if we learned to always interpret a rainbow as a reminder for us of Creator's faithfulness? Say a prayer of thanksgiving for this beautiful sign in the sky.



A newly planted pollinator garden at St Margaret, New Toronto.



# PRAYERS

## PRAYERS

Say this prayer to end your time together. This prayer is also suitable for use throughout the week. This prayer pairs well with a reading of Psalm 42 with its themes of longing for God, and loss of community in the midst of despair.

1

### PRAYERS FOR CREATION DURING A TIME OF CRISIS

Creator God,  
you made us in love  
to live in peace with your creation.  
In these days of catastrophe and uncertainty,  
when all of creation seems to be  
shifting under our feet,  
we pray that your vision of peace,  
might call us forward to seek peace  
for the earth and all creatures with whom  
we share our creational home.

*spoken or silent prayers for the earth  
and all living things*

As the deer longs for the flowing streams,  
**so we long for your healing, O God.**

Saviour, who walks with the wounded  
along the road of our world's suffering,  
you created us for abundance and welcome.  
We pray for those who do not have access  
to clean water, good food,  
medicine and adequate shelter,  
the gifts of your creation for all.  
Let your generosity and compassion  
so move in us,  
that we learn how to live in community  
and so meet the needs of all.

*spoken or silent prayers for those suffering  
from deprivation due to disaster*

As the deer longs for the flowing streams,  
**so we long for your healing, O God.**

Comforter who moves among us and makes  
us one,  
you created us for community and love,  
but we have cut ourselves off from the earth

and all of our relations,  
the trees, the meadows,  
the waters, the rivers,  
and the birds and animals  
that nourish our creational home.  
Let your comforting Spirit so live in us  
that we might learn to embrace  
our relations once again,  
and learn from those  
who are attuned to the gifts  
abundant in creation.

*spoken or silent prayers for the isolation  
we find ourselves in*

As the deer longs for the flowing streams,  
**so we long for your healing, O God.**

Spirit of the nations,  
who calls all people to lives of justice  
and peace,  
you created all the peoples of the world  
to reflect your wonderful diversity.  
We pray for those who are drowning  
in the creational floodwaters  
that we have created.  
Help us to work together  
creatively and compassionately,  
with wisdom and strength,  
to provide comfort for the grieving,  
and nourish new patterns of flourishing  
for our communities  
and the earth.

*spoken or silent prayers for  
reconciliation and healing*

As the deer longs for the flowing streams,  
**so we long for your healing, O God,  
for only you can make us whole once  
again.  
Amen.**

*dig deep*  
**DIGGING DEEPER:**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE  
THIS WEEK'S THEMES**

**READ**

**PICTURE BOOKS:**

- *Harlem Grown: How One Big Idea Transformed a Neighborhood* by Tony Hillery and Jessie Hartland
- *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart
- *City Green* by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
- *Curious Garden* by Peter Brown
- *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman

**TWEEN AND TEEN:**

- *I Have a Right to Save My Planet* by Alain Serres
- *Ninth Ward* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Rising Seas: Flooding, Climate Change and Our New World* by Keltie Thomas

**TEEN AND ADULT:**

- *The Overstory* by Richard Power
- *Mi María: Surviving the Storm: Voices from Puerto Rico* by Ricia Anne Chansky and Marci Denesiuk, eds.
- *Flight Behaviour* by Barbara Kingsolver
- *Rebugging the Planet* by Vicki Hird

**WATCH**

- How Wolves Change Rivers (5 minutes):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q&t=42s>
- Why Beavers are the Smartest Thing in Fur Pants (5 minutes):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zm6X77ShHa8&t=21s>
- TRUST: The Climate Kids (15 minutes): [www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-the-climate-kids](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-the-climate-kids)
- Greta Thunberg's speech to the world leaders at the UN Climate Summit:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJsdgTPjU>

## EXPLORE

- A Rocha, a Christian environmental organization: <https://arocha.ca/where-we-work/ontario>
- David Suzuki Foundation: <https://david Suzuki.org>

## JOIN

- Indigenous Youth Leadership Initiative:  
<https://www.earthguardians.org/indigenous-youth-leadership-initiative> (includes a video)

## GET INVOLVED

- Check out the Diocesan Community Garden Toolkit:  
<https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/diocesan-life/social-justice-advocacy/creation-care/practical-greening>

## RESOURCES FOR POLLINATOR GARDENS

- *How to Create a Pollinator Friendly Garden* by David Suzuki
- Greening Sacred Spaces Native Gardening Guide: <https://caroliniancanada.ca/guide/gardening>

# 03 *week*

**JEREMIAH AND CREATION'S UNDOING:  
LEARNING FROM THE DISPLACED**

# begin INTRODUCTION

Many people in Canada are feeling more and more anxiety about the climate crisis, especially in the last year as unbearable heat, wildfires, flooding, and extreme cold have destroyed mountains, forests and homes. In other parts of the world, however, these kinds of events have been happening for many years. Lack of water during heat waves, along with flooding in the rainy season, is becoming more and more common in Asia, Africa and South and Central America. These natural disasters are often made worse by the destruction that comes from war. In fact, in many places war has been the result of these environmental disasters.

Although for some people this anxiety about the climate crisis is recent, there are others who have been grieving for a long time over the loss of the places they love. All over the world, Indigenous peoples have been forced off the land that contained their stories, their customs, their way of life, and their places of worship. Ever since European explorers began to take their resources, Indigenous peoples have been mourning loss of their places. All over the world Indigenous peoples have been forced to leave their land. Sometimes they have been forced to live in areas separate from everyone else, like Black people in South Africa, Palestinians in Palestine and Israel, and Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island.

The global capitalist culture that is dominant in the world at the moment, with its emphasis on cheap goods and food flowing to wealthier countries from poorer countries, forces people around the world to sacrifice their land for mining interests and single crops that can be exported to other countries. As a result, people are forced off their land, or their land becomes less and less fertile. But this doesn't just affect

people far away. Our dominant consumer culture also forces everyone on Turtle Island to live in a way that is disconnected from a balanced and harmonious relationship with creation. That disconnection has created the crisis that the world is now experiencing.

Some of us are just realizing that creation is in crisis, and are newly grieving. Others of us have known for generations, and have been coping with that grief for a long time. And some of us are grieving because we realize that our way of life has contributed to land loss for other people, along with the destruction of creation. What if those newly grieving the loss of their places were to learn in humility from those who have already been displaced? What if those who have already suffered the loss of land were to offer up the lessons they have learned about resilience, healing, and re-connection?

**Turtle Island** is the name that some Indigenous peoples use for the area that is currently called North America. The creation stories of the Anishnaabeg and Haudenosaune peoples describe the world being created on the back of a large turtle.

This may be a difficult week for some participants. Think about who is in your group, and what their experiences of displacement might be. Who has fled a country at war? Who has stories of the loss of a family farm or a rural community? Whose ancestors were removed from their traditional lands or forced off their farms? These will be places where grief can be awakened, and so being with one another in compassionate listening, and enfolding the conversation in prayer is very important. We recommend that you check in with one another often as you move through grief into hope in this session.

# USING THE CURRICULUM

- This week includes activities for those just beginning to think about creational grief, as well as those who have been exploring these issues for some time.
- **It contains more activities than can be done in one meeting or one week.**
- Choose the activity or activities that are most appropriate for you, your group, or your family. You may choose to do only one or two, or spread them out over the course of the week. You may also earmark activities for ongoing action once Lent is over.
- **Everyone should do the sections entitled “Becoming Rooted: Hearing the Text” and “Reflection” since they form the basis for the rest of the discussion and activities.**

## BEGIN WITH PRAYER

### OPENING LITURGY AND PRAYER

We gather from many places,  
places of brokenness and grief,  
places of joy and hope.

**We lay down our grief and hope  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
forests and fields,  
streams and lakes,  
small gardens and apartment balconies,  
sidewalks and pavement.

**We lay down the suffering and the joy  
of our places  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
Indigenous and settler,  
Black and people of colour,  
immigrant and refugee,

now together on the traditional lands  
of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg  
and the Haudenosaunee peoples,  
including the Mississauga people,  
lands that have praised Creator  
since time began.

**We bring the cry of the land  
before the Creator.**

Creator God,  
we gather together in your presence  
longing for restoration for creation,  
forgiveness for our own brokenness  
and the injustices we have created,  
and reconciliation for the divisions  
that separate us.

**We lay our longing before you, Creator,  
and ask for healing.**

**Amen.**

# *grounding* **GROUNDING OURSELVES IN CREATIONAL LOVE**

Briefly share with each other a moment from the past week where being in creation gave you a sense of deep happiness, awe, or wonder. Conclude this time with this brief prayer:

Creator of all,  
in love you have called us into being  
and surrounded us  
with the sight, sound, and scent of beauty.  
We thank you for . . . .  
*[here may be inserted those things that were shared above].*  
May they remind us of your love for us,  
and for all of creation.  
Amen.

## *hear the text* **BECOMING ROOTED: HEARING THE TEXT**

This is the background of the reading for this week: The Hebrew people who lived in the hillsides of Judah had been defeated in war. Their towns were burned, and many were forced to relocate to Babylon (modern day Iraq) as refugees. They were so sad about leaving their homes and their land that they wrote psalms about weeping by the rivers of Babylon (see “By the Waters of Babylon” in *Resources*, based on Psalm 137). Our readings this week are from the prophet Jeremiah.

The first passage describes how devastated the land was by bad farming practices. The second passage is a part of a letter sent by Jeremiah to the people in exile. (If you are meeting in a group, you could have someone print the letter on a paper that is rolled up like a scroll, and they could read it as a proclamation).

## JEREMIAH 9.10-14 (MESSAGE)

<sup>10-11</sup> "Weep and wail for the loss of the mountain pastures.  
Cry out in lament for the old grazing grounds.  
They've become deserted wastelands too dangerous for travellers.  
No sounds of sheep bleating or cattle mooing.  
Birds and wild animals, all gone.  
Nothing stirring, no sounds of life.  
I'm going to make Jerusalem a pile of rubble,  
fit for nothing but stray cats and dogs.  
I'm going to reduce Judah's towns to piles of ruins

where no one lives!"  
<sup>12</sup> I asked, "Is there anyone around bright enough to tell us what's going on here? Anyone who has the inside story from God and can let us in on it?  
"Why is the country wasted?  
"Why no travellers in this desert?"  
<sup>13-15</sup> God's answer: "Because they abandoned my plain teaching. They wouldn't listen to anything I said, refused to live the way I told them to. Instead they lived any way they wanted and took up with the Baal gods, who they thought would give them what they wanted—following the example of their parents."

## JEREMIAH 29.1-2, 4-7 (MESSAGE)

<sup>1-2</sup> This is the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to what was left of the elders among the exiles, to the priests and prophets and all the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon from Jerusalem, including King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the government leaders, and all the skilled labourers and craftsmen.

<sup>4</sup> This is what the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, has to say to all the exiles whom

I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what grows in that place. <sup>6</sup> Marry and have children, and encourage your children to marry and have children so that you will thrive in that country. <sup>7</sup> Make yourselves at home there and work for the flourishing of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for if it flourishes you too will flourish.

# reflect REFLECTION

**T**he people to whom this letter was written to have become displaced from their land. They have been taken from the hill country of Judea, with its mountains and streams and a richly biodiverse ecosystem, and are now in a land of deserts and flat plateaus that need irrigation, a land they do not know. They are grieving for the land where they knew the rhythm of the seasons, the times for sowing and harvest, and the lifecycles of the animals that they depended on for clothing and food.

The first passage is a lament for the land that they have lost. Because they were not attentive to the land, their farming practices depleted the land and turned it into a desert. Just like industrial farming today, the economic system they followed abused the land and created some who were very rich and some who were very poor. This was the economic system practiced by those who followed the god Baal, and it resulted in creational destruction because the proper relationship with creation was destroyed.

The text also makes it clear that the armies that conquered the Hebrew people were from an enormous empire, Babylon, a huge colonial power that was taking over all the small nations in the area. Just as Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island were colonized by European powers, so the ancient Hebrews were colonized by Babylon. This text was written to the victims of colonization. However, many people who read this text are the colonizers rather than the victims. This requires wrestling with what it means to be an oppressor.

The letter that Jeremiah sent to the exiles is about becoming re-placed, connected to the land where they find themselves, and learning to live faithfully with the land once again. The people who have been captured are to build themselves homes, surrounding them with gardens for food. This sounds simple, but it would mean paying attention to the soil of that place, learning what grows well there, when the rainy and dry seasons are and how to plant in their rhythm. It would mean learning about what animals and birds are likely to want to eat their food, and how to repel them or feed them something else, and what insects are beneficial. In short, the letter tells the people to become at home in their place, to become connected to this new place where they find themselves. When they build a relationship with creation in this new place, the community will be able to grow and flourish.



Tissot, Flight of the prisoners

# discuss DISCUSSION

**A** The following discussion and questions about displacement might be difficult for some people in your group. These could be conversations where grief is awakened, and so being with one another in compassionate listening and enfolding the conversation in prayer is very important. Be attentive to the dynamics of the group and check in with people as the discussion unfolds. Is there a story of displacement and replacement in your family history? Were your parents or grandparents forced to move from the place they had been born, either within Canada, or from another country? If you know the story, share it with the group. If you know the answers to the following questions, share them with the group as well:

- ① How hard was such displacement?
- ② What was lost?
- ③ Did they ever think they would be at home again?
- ④ Were they able to connect with the land ever again?

## FOR FAMILIES

Talk about your family history of displacement or immigration, even if it is far back. Ask your children if they have any friends who have come from other countries, or who have been forced by the government to move within Turtle Island. Explain that many Indigenous communities in Canada, along with some Black communities, were forced by the government to move to new places (see *Resources* for books on this). Ask them to imagine what it would be like leaving their home for a different place. What kinds of things would they miss? Would they find it hard to learn a different language? What places and plants and animals would they miss? If your family has immigrated recently, or been forced to move within Turtle Island, talk about what you miss from the place that you left behind.

**B** For many Indigenous peoples in Canada, displacement and the destruction of the land is ongoing. For communities in Northern Alberta, not only is the land being contaminated, but their very bodies are becoming sick from the pollution of the lands and rivers. In B.C., the Wet'suwet'en people have been resisting the pipeline that the federal government is forcing through their land. That resistance has been met with violence. In Grassy Narrows in Ontario, not only has the government refused to clean up the mercury that poisoned the waters, but the government is also about to permit mining on their land. For these people the destruction of the land of Jeremiah 9 is still taking place, but with one big difference. They have not been unfaithful to the land; they are, rather, the victims of a larger dominating cultural system. They are the ones suffering because *other people* have not been faithful to the needs of the land.

And, in a Canadian context, treaty violations and the undermining of Indigenous sovereignty have made it difficult to become re-rooted, to flourish, to grow healthy food and build healthy community. Instead, as with the people of Grassy Narrows, who have been forcefully re-located in the past, their water continues to be poisoned and their land is continually threatened.

Many people who are settlers identify with those people who were taken into exile from the Jeremiah passages above. But the reality is that many settlers in Canada are more like the Babylonian empire: most settlers are from cultures that have displaced Indigenous peoples from their lands. The church has also played an important role in helping to disconnect Indigenous peoples from their land.

Being forced off land is also part of Black history in Canada. Most well-known, perhaps, is the forced relocation of the Black residents of Africville in Halifax, and the final destruction of that community in 1970 (see links to this story in *Resources*).

The two World Wars also played a role in the forced relocation and internment of many Canadians, primarily of German, Ukrainian and Japanese descent, many of whom lost the land that held them. Those of Japanese descent also lost their deep connection to the ocean and their livelihood as fishers.

- ① Reflect as a group what role each of you play in Canadian history. Are you Indigenous? Are you Black? Are you Asian? Are you a settler? Are you an immigrant? Are you a refugee?
- ② Does realizing your place in Canadian history change or affirm how you hear the Jeremiah passage?

## FOR FAMILIES

Explain to your children what the terms Indigenous, settler, immigrant and refugee mean. Discuss which group(s) your family belongs to and what this means for your relationships to other people.

A *settler* is someone who has settled in Canada from another part of the world. In other words, someone who is not Indigenous to Turtle Island.

A settler might come from a family that has been here for generations, or they might be an *immigrant*, someone who has recently come to Canada. A *refugee* is someone who was forced to leave their land because of war, violence, or a climate crisis. It is possible for people from all of these groups to act in unjust ways in relation with Indigenous peoples, or to work for justice and restoration with Indigenous peoples.

# ACTIONS TO GROW HOPE

A

The letter to the exiles in Jeremiah 29 did not just suggest that the people become embedded in the land of their new place. The letter also told them to have children who would themselves marry and have children, which in that day would have been how healthy community grew from generation to generation. Perhaps in our context, it is best to describe the letter in this way: they were to create a living and vibrant multi-generational community in their new land. In our context that might be a “chosen family” or a neighbourhood, or “Life Village” (see *Resources*) or, indeed, a church family. And the people in this community are not to stick to themselves, but they are to seek the well-being of the place where they find themselves. This last point might have been difficult. They were in the land of the people who had captured them: they might not be thinking that they wanted to make sure that their captors were flourishing. But the text is clear: this community is not just multi-generational, it is also multi-ethnic. The people were called to build community.

Here are some ideas for building such a community:

- ① Have a storytelling evening in which people from different ethnic backgrounds are invited to share their stories of connection with the land.
- ② If the public health situation allows, have a potluck in which people share dishes that are unique to their ethnic background.
- ③ Create a cookbook for your community which highlights the ethnic diversity of those in your community.

## FOR FAMILIES

Talk about where some of your favourite foods come from and who the people are who grow that food. Discuss how well they are paid for growing your food, or what the effect is on the land where that food is grown. Depending on what you can afford, plan a whole meal or replace one food in a meal with food that is only local to your area and that is sustainably grown. Visit the farmer’s market as a family to purchase the food.

- ④ Watch the short 5 minute film with Adriana Laurent entitled “Racial justice is climate justice”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlladyVT23A>  
Adrianna makes some suggestions at the end of the video about how to engage in systemic change.
  - Discuss how you could begin to get involved in making some of these changes.

- ⑤ Watch the 8 minute film “Soul Fire Farm: Feeding the Soul, Growing Community” where Leah Penniman shares some of the history of Black farmers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StygQm6YlwQ&t=149s>
- Penniman ends with this quote: “The Talmud teaches us not to be overwhelmed by the grief and despair of the world. We are not obligated to finish the work, but we are obligated to take a step in the direction of completing the work.”
- Discuss how this quotation makes you feel when you think about dealing with grief and despair.

## YOUTH

**Fridays for Future**, the worldwide youth movement founded by Greta Thunberg, is planning their next big climate strike on March 25th, to demand reparations and the return of land (see next week’s theme). See if a march is happening near you: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/march25>

## ACTIVITIES TO DO OUTSIDE

- A Many people who are new to Canada, and many who are not, do not have easy access to land for gardening or growing food. Walk around your church property or your neighbourhood or even in a local park, and discuss where you might garden. Invite your neighbours and make it a community garden! The Bishop’s Committee on Creation Care has created a community garden toolkit; it can be accessed here: <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/diocesan-life/social-justice-advocacy/creation-care/practical-greening>



The Common Table Urban Farm at the Church of Our Saviour, Don Mills, is a project of Flemingdon Park Ministry, which works with refugees and newcomers in the community.

# PRAYERS

## pray PRAYERS

Choose one of these prayers to end your time together.  
These prayers are also suitable for use throughout the week.

1

### A PRAYER OF LAMENT WHEN DISPLACED

Creator God,  
you made us from the earth  
to be at one with the earth,  
bound together in love  
with the animals,  
plants and waterways of our land.  
But we have been forced  
from the places that we love,  
disconnected from the  
land that shaped us,  
torn from the sounds and scent  
of the creatures and plants  
that held and fed us.

*a pause for remembrance*

We cry out to you, Creator,  
**Plant us in the earth once again.**

Wilderness God,  
you led your people  
through unknown lands,  
fed them when they were lost,  
and promised to plant them  
in the land once again.  
But we have been hungry and  
alone,  
we have been betrayed and  
forgotten,  
we have been denied a chance  
to flourish.

*a pause for remembrance*

Even so, we cry out to you,  
Creator,  
**Plant us in the earth once again.**

Suffering God,  
you came to a traumatized people,  
in an occupied land.  
You walked dusty roads  
with no place to lay your head,  
and promised a home,  
for those with no place to call  
their own.  
Hear our cry to you for justice,  
hold our tears in your broken  
hands,  
strengthen our hearts to hear  
your promise.

We cry out to you, Creator.  
**Plant us in the earth once again.  
Amen.**

2

### A PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Creator God,  
you made us from the earth  
to live at peace with each other  
and with all of creation.  
But we have failed to listen  
to the voice of creation,  
and disregarded the suffering  
of the land and the creatures

*a pause for reflection*

Creator we cry out to you,  
**how shall we find  
forgiveness and healing?**

Creator God,  
you established all peoples  
in the lands where they could  
flourish.

But we have taken the land  
of others,  
refused to hear their cries  
for justice,  
and ignored the suffering  
that our systems reinforce.

*a pause for reflection*

Creator we cry out to you,  
**where is the path of  
forgiveness  
and healing?**

Creator God,  
you called us into one new  
community,  
where all tongues and nations  
would share in your abundance.  
But we have shared  
with only a comfortable few  
and disregarded those who are  
made destitute by our wealth.

*a pause for reflection*

Creator we cry to you,  
**open our ears to hear  
the suffering of creation  
and the cries of those communities  
we have displaced,  
whose resources we have taken.**

Suffering Saviour, we cry to you,  
**open our eyes to the path  
of restoration and healing.**

Spirit of Transformation,  
we cry to you,  
**give us the courage  
to right the wrongs of injustice,  
and live into a story  
of abundance and plenty for all,  
the story of your  
forgiveness and healing.  
Amen.**

*dig deep*  
**DIGGING DEEPER:**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE  
THIS WEEK'S THEMES**

**READ**

**PICTURE BOOKS:**

- *Africville* by Shauntay Grant and Eva Campbell
- *Birdsong* by Julie Flett
- *Where are You From?* by Yamile Saied Méndez
- *Naomi's Tree* by Joy Kogawa
- *My Friend Earth* by Patricia MacLachlan
- *Little You* by Richard van Camp
- *My Beautiful Birds* by Suzanne Del Rizzo

**TEEN AND ADULT:**

- *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg: This is Our Territory* by Gidigaa Migizi (Doug Williams)
- *Imaginary Borders* by Xiuhtezcatl Martinez
- *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa
- *A Bigger Picture: My Fight to Bring a New African Voice to the Climate Crisis* by Vanessa Nakate
- *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to Standing Rock* by Dian Gilio-Whitaker
- *The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save Our Earth* by The Red Nation
- On the climate roots of the Syrian crisis:  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/3/2/syrias-civil-war-linked-partly-to-drought-global-warming.html>
- On climate change, colonialism and migration:  
<https://new.artsmia.org/stories/how-climate-change-and-colonialism-are-spurring-mass-migration-the-violent-roots-of-todays-unprecedented-displacement>
- *Read about the restoration of Indigenous Foodways and Wild Rice in the Kawarthas:*  
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/what-is-wild-rice>
- Todd Lewan and Dolores Barclay, 'When They Steal Your Land, They Steal Your Future,' *Los Angeles Times*, (December 2, 2001):  
<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-dec-02-mn-10514-story.html>
- "Black Farmers are Rebuilding Agriculture in Coal Country" by Natalie Peart, *Yes! Magazine*:  
<https://www.yesmagazine.org/economy/2022/01/10/black-farmers-agriculture-appalachia>
- "Internment in Canada" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*:  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/internment>
- On the different cultural and racial context for discussing the climate crisis:  
"Is it Time to Abandon the Term 'Climate Anxiety?'" by Isobel Whitcomb, *Yes! Magazine*:  
<https://www.yesmagazine.org/environment/2021/08/31/climate-anxiety-mental-health>

CONTINUED

### TWEEN AND TEEN:

- *Same Sun Here* by Silas House and Neela Vaswani
- *I am not a Number* by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer (parental supervision suggested: although this is a picture book, there are disturbing descriptions of physical abuse)
- *Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines* by Paul Fleischman
- *Fatty Legs* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
- *Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation* by Monique Gray Smith
- *The Orange Shirt Story* by Phyllis Webstad
- *Naomi's Road* by Joy Kogawa

### WATCH

- White Earth Wild Rice Harvest (3 minute video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs8UyGIL3iU>
- “A Sacred Trust” (13 minutes): <http://mncfn.ca/a-sacred-trust> (a history of the Mississauga of the Credit River, the traditional caretakers of Toronto)
- Places Not our Own (57 minutes): [https://www.nfb.ca/film/places\\_not\\_our\\_own](https://www.nfb.ca/film/places_not_our_own)
- *There's Something in the Water* – feature-length documentary (2019) on Netflix – this was co-directed by Elliot Page (pre-transition) and includes Canadian examples of environmental racism against Black and Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia.
- “Racial justice is climate justice”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlladyVT23A>
- “Soul Fire Farm: Feeding the Soul, Growing Community” where Leah Penniman shares some of the history of Black farmers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StygQm6YlwQ&t=149s>
- Disability and Climate Justice:  
(short version, 4 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36jwHDRtmGg>  
(long version, 17 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnOIRdFFdMk&t=0s>

### LISTEN AND SING

- Don McLean, “By the Water of Babylon”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTnspbSjKVc>

## LISTEN TO MUSIC

- Cockburn, "Beautiful Creatures,": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwZZf5oB4I4> (with artwork)
- Common, Malik Yusef, Kumasi ft. Aaron Fresh, Choklate, Laci Kay, "Trouble in the Water" (Official Video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDUY3eXv-UY>

## JOIN

- Fridays for Future: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/march25>

## EXPLORE

- For Youth: The Youth Program of Indigenous Climate Action: <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/youth>
- On Indigenous Sovereignty and Decolonizing Climate Policy go to Indigenous Climate Action: <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com>
- On creating intergenerational diverse communities: <https://www.thelifevillage.com>

04  
*week*

**ZACCHAEUS:  
REPARATIONS AND LAND BACK**

# 04

*begin*  
**INTRODUCTION**

Like the story of Noah, the story of Zacchaeus is familiar to many. However, we don't often read this story through **the lens of the land**. Behind the injustice of this story is the grief of the people whose land Zacchaeus had taken, as well as the grief of the land itself. This week we explore the way in which Zacchaeus **healed the grief of the land and his neighbours by restoring the land and creating justice**. Zacchaeus is more than a story about money, as we shall see, it is a story about **how to create hope in the face of grief over land loss**.

# USING THE CURRICULUM *experience*

- This week includes activities for those just beginning to think about creational grief, as well as those who have been exploring these issues for some time.
- **It contains more activities than can be done in one meeting or one week.**
- Choose the activity or activities that are most appropriate for you, your group, or your family. You may choose to do only one or two, or spread them out over the course of the week. You may also earmark activities for ongoing action once Lent is over.
- **Everyone should do the sections entitled “Becoming Rooted: Hearing the Text” and “Reflection” since they form the basis for the rest of the discussion and activities.**

## *together* BEGIN WITH PRAYER

### OPENING LITURGY AND PRAYER

We gather from many places,  
places of brokenness and grief,  
places of joy and hope.

**We lay down our grief and hope  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
forests and fields,  
streams and lakes,  
small gardens and apartment balconies,  
sidewalks and pavement.

**We lay down the suffering and the joy  
of our places  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
Indigenous and settler,  
Black and people of colour,  
immigrant and refugee,

now together on the traditional lands  
of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg  
and the Haudenosaunee peoples,  
including the Mississauga people,  
lands that have praised Creator  
since time began.

**We bring the cry of the land  
before the Creator.**

Creator God,  
we gather together in your presence  
longing for restoration for creation,  
forgiveness for our own brokenness  
and the injustices we have created,  
and reconciliation for the divisions  
that separate us.

**We lay our longing before you, Creator,  
and ask for healing.  
Amen.**

## *grounding* **GROUNDING OURSELVES IN CREATIONAL LOVE**

Briefly share with each other a moment from the past week where being in creation gave you a sense of deep happiness, awe, or wonder. Conclude this time with this brief prayer:

Creator of all,  
in love you have called us into being  
and surrounded us  
with the sight, sound, and scent of beauty.  
We thank you for . . . .  
*[here may be inserted those things that were shared above].*  
May they remind us of your love for us,  
and for all of creation.  
Amen.

## *hear the story* **BECOMING ROOTED: HEARING THE STORY**

It's time to get out the costume trunk and set the stage! We're going to do a bit of drama to get into the amazing story of Jesus' encounter with Zaccheaus. In a group of children, youth or adults, this can be a fun way to enter the story. Why? Because when you enter the story by acting it out, you discover more about how the characters feel about what's happening. A script can be found on page 56, which can be used for a performance as a play or for reader's theatre, where the parts are read by participants without actions. Remember that there are parts for audience members too. They can be careful observers who can share what they notice as the story comes to life.

## LUKE 19.1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. <sup>2</sup> The chief tax collector in Jericho was a very rich man named Zacchaeus. <sup>3</sup> He really wanted to see Jesus, but there was a large crowd, and he was too short to see over everyone. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree that Jesus was going to pass by. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup> So Zacchaeus hurried down and was happy to welcome Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> When everyone else saw this, they began to complain and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have taken anything unfairly from anyone, I will pay back four times as much." <sup>9</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because Zacchaeus too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to look for and to save the lost."

### *reflect* REFLECTION

**W**hile the story of Zacchaeus might be familiar to many of us, the untold stories behind his actions connect with the themes we have been talking about so far in our Lent study. While we know that Zacchaeus was a tax collector, we often don't realize that this meant Zacchaeus was someone who had the opportunity to easily take over the land of others. This meant that the land passed out of the care and affection of those who knew it well. Instead, the land was now "owned" by someone who viewed it primarily as something to buy and sell. When land is just something that creates money, then it is easy to abuse the land rather than care for it. And when the land is farmed too intensively or mistreated, the creatures that live on the land begin to die. At the heart of the story of Zacchaeus there is sadness and grief—the grief of those farmers who have lost the land they loved, the sadness of the farmers who can no longer provide food for their families, the grief of the families who have lost their way of life. And as we will see, the land also grieves when it is no longer cared for with affection.

There is also anger in this story. The people were angry that Zacchaeus had taken their land. That anger might also be why the people of the town wouldn't let him get to the front of the crowd to see Jesus.

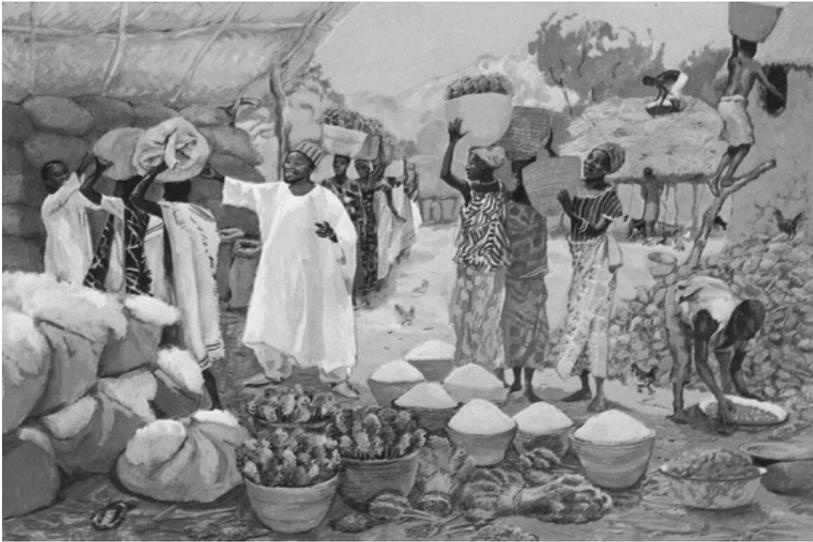


Illustration from Mafa Jesus, Cameroon

**Tax Collectors** were appointed by the Romans to collect taxes from farmers. Rather than paying with money, farmers would often pay with some of their crop. One of the chief ways that tax collectors became rich was by giving loans to those who could not pay their taxes. Instead of lending money, tax collectors would lend seed for planting and the farmer would be expected to repay the loan with seed or olive oil from their harvest (see the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16:1-9). However, if the harvest was poor, farmers would be unable to repay their loan, and the tax collector could take away their farm and make it his own.

Zacchaeus had taken the land of the other farmers for his own, and having that land meant he was able to get richer and richer. This means that when he gave away his possessions and returned what he had taken, he was correcting injustice. He was giving the land back to those he had taken it from. And by giving back more than he had taken, he was making up for the years that the people had not been able to flourish because Zacchaeus had their land.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

**A** Look at the picture above. This painting from The Mafa Jesus Project in Cameroon was created to illustrate the parable of the rich man who built bigger and bigger barns, but it is also an accurate illustration of what the harvest would have looked like for Zacchaeus. Notice all the people bringing wool and rice and heads of grain. These people are probably bringing the harvest from land that they used to own, on which they now work as day labourers.

- ① Look at the smile on the face of the rich man. What do the faces of the other people in the picture tell you about how they are feeling?
- ② Why do you think so many of the people bringing food are women?

- ③ Look at how food is being stored in the other buildings. What does this tell you about the amount of food that is being stored up?
- ④ The rich man has far more food than he can possibly eat. Jesus also tells stories about people who do not have enough food to eat. Do you think anyone in this picture is not getting enough to eat? What makes you think that?
- ⑤ Can you relate to anyone in this picture?
- ⑥ Imagine how the rich man felt about all these people, and how they felt about him.

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Explain how a loan works. In our time, a loan usually involves money. In Zacchaeus' day, it almost always involved food or seed. Explain how Zacchaeus was able to take land when people could not repay their loan. People might not be able to repay a loan because of lack of rain (which would mean a poor crop), grasshoppers or other pests eating the crop, or an illness that made it hard to get the crop in. The questions under A. can easily be used for a discussion with children and youth.

## *reflect* FURTHER REFLECTION

**I**n Jericho (where Zacchaeus lived) it was easy for everyone to know who had lost land and who had taken land. In our culture, the stories of land loss have often been left untold; history books have not talked about how Indigenous land was taken, or how the treaties Canada made with Indigenous peoples denied access to the hunting and fishing that provided food. And while history books might describe how historically Black people were taken from their own land in Africa, they are generally silent about how Black people in North America were systematically pushed off land that they had farmed for generations, and how Black, Indigenous, and people of colour are still discriminated against when it comes to land ownership today.

As a result of the loss of their relationship with the human beings who treated them with respect and service, the land and the creatures who live on it are now treated as something that can be easily bought and sold to the highest bidder and used for profit. The wisdom of those who loved the land, respected it, and lived in harmony with all their relations has been suppressed.

**T**he biblical story is clear that if our relationship to the land is rooted in injustice, and if we view the land as something that can be bought, accumulated and traded like other possessions, we will never be able to live in harmony with each other and with creation. When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he did not just decide out of the blue to give away his land and possessions to the poor and return everything he had taken unjustly with interest. To set the wider context, we need to ask: Why was Zacchaeus so eager to see Jesus that he would go to the bother of climbing a tree? Had he heard about Jesus and his teaching? A large part of that teaching had been about money: on three previous occasions Jesus had told his followers, along with the rich young man, to give up their possessions and give to the poor (Luke 12.33; 14.33; 18.22). It seems very likely that Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus' teaching about the folly of accumulating more and more wealth like the one who built bigger and bigger barns (Luke 12.13-21), and the dangers of not sharing wealth with those in need, like the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16.19-31). We can be fairly certain about this, because by this point everyone was talking about Jesus. By this point, he was famous!

So, before Jesus even says a word, Zacchaeus knows in his heart that something dramatic has to happen. If he wants to follow this Jesus, then he will need to give back not only what he had taken from his neighbours, but also to give back four times more than he had taken. This might look like a one-off event to us, but Jesus is clear: in order for the kingdom to come, a whole new way of interacting with each other economically has to take place. The economics of greed must be replaced with an economics of generosity, with *Sabbath Economics*.

One way to describe Zacchaeus's actions is to use the language of reparations. Making reparations means acknowledging historical wrongs and finding ways to right those wrongs. It is connected to *repairing* what has been broken and *restoring* what has been taken. For those with privilege, this means sacrificing some of that privilege to make things right.

We can start with thinking about what reparations look like in our own lives, but we also need to continue to advocate for reparations at a structural level in order to right historic wrongs. Ultimately we need to explore what it will look like for our economic system to move from one based on greed (which will continue to destroy creation) to one based on generosity.

**Sabbath Economics** refers to a way of engaging in economic life found in a number of Old Testament texts such as Exodus 20.8-11; 23.10-12; Deuteronomy 15.1-18; and Leviticus 15 which is shaped by these things:

**Rest** every seven days for all people and all animals, and every seven years for the land. No person or creature shall be exploited.

**Debt forgiveness** every seven years, when slaves are set free. At that time people became slaves when they owed people more than they could pay. The sabbath laws say that even if their debt was not paid, they were to be set free in the seventh year. God repeatedly says that because God has set slaves free, the people are also to free all slaves. People are made for freedom, not slavery.

**Generosity** demonstrated by leaving 10% of the harvest in the fields and on the trees to allow the poor and animals to take what they need. Creation is to be shared.

**No multi-generational wealth or poverty.** In the year of Jubilee, land is returned, and debts are forgiven. Everyone starts with the same amount again.

**All of creation is a gift from the Creator** is the basis for all of our economic endeavours.

# grow hope ACTIONS TO GROW HOPE

Discerning appropriate reparations can be hard work. The following actions are clustered around three themes:

- A.** Making reparations for loss of land and food access
- B.** and **C.** Making reparations for loss of land and sovereignty
- D.** Making reparation of land destruction because of fossil fuels

**A**

## MAKING REPARATIONS FOR LOSS OF LAND AND FOOD ACCESS

People who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour have historically faced barriers in relation to access to land and farms. Make a donation to one of the following organization to assist the work that they do to assist growers who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

- Toronto Black Farmers: <https://www.torontoblackfarmers.ca>
- Black Creek Community Farm: <https://www.blackcreekfarm.ca>
- Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network: <https://ojibiikaan.com>

**B**

## MAKING REPARATIONS FOR LOSS OF LAND AND SOVEREIGNTY

The David Suzuki Foundation has produced three movies about Land Governance and Canada's Colonial History: (Each is 12 minutes long. If possible, watch all three videos.)

<https://davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/what-is-land-back>

However, if you only have time to watch one video, watch the one entitled "Future: Land Governance: Honouring Rights and Responsibilities." The discussion questions below are based on that video. This video describes a number of ways that settlers can engage in reparations and be allies with Indigenous peoples.

- ① Which suggestions resonated with you?
- ② One of the suggestions is that governments on traditional land should pay to the traditional caretakers of that land a tax on every economic transaction that takes place. In addition, the traditional caretakers should have a say in future development. Another option is that those who are on Indigenous land could work out a lease arrangement in exchange for occupying that land. What do you think of this suggestion? Is this something your church could discuss and consider? If you are Indigenous, how do you think your community would respond to this suggestion?

- ③ One suggestion from this video is that those who are non-Indigenous identify a project that can be worked on with Indigenous people as a way to work together, build relationships and create trust for further work around land issues and conservation issues. Do some brainstorming about a project like this that could happen in your community.



A teaching gathering at the site of the future Mishkodeh Centre for Indigenous Knowledge.

One project in the Diocese of Toronto where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are working together is the Mishkodeh Centre for Indigenous Knowledge in Bobcaygeon. In Anishnaabemowin, *Mishkodeh* means meadow, a place where Indigenous people long ago created a clearing to cultivate trees and medicinal plants and to have space to gather. This project seeks to purchase the land that was formerly a *mishkodeh* in the heart of Bobcaygeon and create a centre for Indigenous Knowledge on this land. More information can be found at <https://mishkodeh.org>.

C

Join a local Truth and Reconciliation Group.

- In Toronto the Church of the Redeemer hosts an Indigenous Solidarity Working Group: <https://theredeemer.ca/get-involved/indigenous-solidarity-working-group>
- In Peterborough and the Kawarthas: <https://trcbobcaygeon.org>

D

#### MAKING REPARATIONS FOR LAND DESTRUCTION BECAUSE OF FOSSIL FUELS

Pressuring churches and other institutions to divest from fossil fuels is one way to address the abuse of creation at a structural level. Find out how your church invests its money, and what policies they have around investing in fossil fuels. See links in *Resources*.

## YOUTH

Watch the video **Common, Malik Yusef, Kumasi ft. Aaron Fresh, Choklate, Laci Kay, "Trouble in the Water"** (Official Video)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDUY3eXv-UY>

Lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/common/troubleinthewater.html>

Background: This three minute video is about the Flint Water Crisis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUSiLOWkrlw>

Not mentioned in the video is the fact that the majority of the population of Flint is Black, making this one of the most prominent examples of environmental racism in recent years.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

**What do you see?** Reflect together on the images in the video.

- What is going on here? What kind of a community is portrayed in the video?
- Why is there a minister in the video, and church scenes?
- What are they doing together?
- Did you feel attracted to this community? Was it alien or threatening to you?

**What do you hear?** How did the music impact you?

- What kind of emotions arose for you as you listened to the song?
- Joy? Rebellion? Anger? Fear? Did it make you want to dance?

**What do you think?** What is this song about?

- Putting together lyrics, music, and imagery, what is the "trouble in the water?"
- What are the biblical references in the song? Why are they there?
- Does the song call for any action?



Harvesting at St George's,  
Pickering Village



"It's all About the Beets" at St George's,  
Pickering Village

# PRAYERS

pray  
**PRAYERS**

Choose one of these prayers to end your time together.  
These prayers are also suitable for use throughout the week.  
Either one of the prayers from last week would be suitable here as well.

1

Let us be aware of the source of being  
that is common to all  
and to all living creatures.

*Silence*

Let us be filled with the presence of great  
compassion  
Toward ourselves and all living beings.

*Silence*

Realizing that we are all nourished  
From the same source of life,  
May we so live that others be not deprived  
Of air, food, water, shelter or the chance to live.

*Silence*

Amen.

2

Great Spirit, give us hearts to understand;  
never to take from creation's beauty more than we give;  
never to destroy wantonly for the furtherance of greed;  
never to deny to give our hands  
for the building of Earth's beauty;  
never to take from her what we cannot use.  
Give us hearts to understand  
that to destroy Earth's music is to create confusion;  
that to wreck her appearance is to blind us to beauty;  
that to callously pollute her fragrance  
is to make a house of stench;  
that as we care for her she will care for us.

Amen.

*dig deep*  
**DIGGING DEEPER:**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE  
THIS WEEK'S THEMES**

**READ**

**PICTURE BOOKS:**

- *May we Have Enough to Share* by Richard Van Camp
- *On the Trapline* by David A. Robertson
- *Greta and the Giants* by Zoe Tucker
- *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai

**TWEEN AND TEEN:**

- *One Earth: People of Color Protecting Our Planet* by Anuradha Rao
- *Poisoned Water: How the Citizens of Flint, Michigan, Fought For Their Lives and Warned the Nation* by Candy J. Cooper with Marc Aronson

**TEEN AND ADULT:**

- *Farming While Black* by Leah Pennimen
- *Eaarth: Making Life on a Tough New Planet* (Revised) by Bill McKibben
- *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace* by Vandana Shiva
- *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together* by Steve Heinrichs, ed.
- *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist* by Kate Raworth
- *Healing Haunted Histories: Landlines, Bloodlines, Storylines* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi, 'The Case For Reparations', *The Atlantic*, (June 2014.):  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631>
- "A Guide to Climate Reparations" by Anita Bhadani, *Yes! Magazine*:  
<https://www.yesmagazine.org/environment/2021/11/29/climate-reparations>

**LISTEN TO MUSIC**

- Craig Ginn, "Let Justice Roll": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-KTmnJ4408>
- Craig Ginn, "Hercules": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zspaheuxhal>
- Common, Malik Yusef, Kumasi ft. Aaron Fresh, Choklate, Laci Kay, "Trouble in the Water" (Official Video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDUY3eXv-UY>

## LISTEN TO PODCASTS

- John Biewen, 'Losing Ground,' Scene on Radio, (July 26, 2017):
  - Podcast: <https://www.sceneonradio.org/episode-43-losing-ground>
  - Transcript: <https://revealnews.org/episodes/losing-ground>
- Nicole Hannah-Jones, 'Land of Our Fathers Part 1,' Podcast from *The New York Times*, (October 4, 2019.):
  - Podcast: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/podcasts/1619-slavery-sugar-farm-land.html?action=click&module=audio-series-bar&pgtype=Article&region=header>
  - Transcript: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/podcasts/1619-slavery-sugar-farm-land.html?action=click&module=audio-series-bar&pgtype=Article&region=header&showTranscript=1>
- Nicole Hannah-Jones, 'Land of Our Fathers Part 2,' Podcast from *The New York Times*, (October 11, 2019.):
  - Podcast: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/11/podcasts/1619-slavery-farm-loan-discrimination.html?action=click&module=audio-series-bar&region=header&pgtype=Article>
  - Transcript: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/11/podcasts/1619-slavery-farm-loan-discrimination.html?action=click&module=audio-series-bar&pgtype=Article&region=header&showTranscript=1>

## EXPLORE

- For practical steps on divestment go to:
  - <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/indigenous-divestment>
  - <https://gofossilfree.org/how-to-divest>
  - <https://divestinvest.org>
- Infographic: Neumann, Jeff and Tracy Matsu Loeffelholz, '40 Acres and a Mule Would Be at Least \$6.4 Trillion Today,' *Yes! Magazine*. (May 14, 2015.):  
<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/make-right/2015/05/14/infographic-40-acres-and-a-mule-would-be-at-least-64-trillion-today>
- Doughnut Economics: <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut>

# ZACCHAEUS RETURNS THE LAND

*a play*

A PLAY BY SYLVIA KEESMAAT ON LUKE 19.1-10

(the play takes approximately 13 minutes)

## CAST:

*Rachel - married to Zacchaeus*  
*Zacchaeus - married to Rachel*  
*Benjamin - a villager*  
*Rebekah - a villager*  
*Morry - a villager married to Sarah*  
*Sarah - a villager married to Morry*  
*Ezra - a villager married to Miriam*  
*Miriam - a villager married to Ezra*  
*Various other villagers to make a crowd*  
*Jesus*

N.B. Stage directions refer to an in-person performance. If performing virtually, just have someone narrate the stage directions, which are in italics. Note that if working with a smaller group of people, one person can play more than one part. Zacchaeus and Rachel should only play one part, however, and Morry and Benjamin should be played by different people. If you have a larger group of people, everyone can contribute to the dialogue in the crowd scenes.

## PROPS:

*A table with two chairs.*  
*Tea towels for folding.*  
*Something to count.*  
*Paper or parchment.*  
*Some scarves or shawls to use as costumes.*

*Zacchaeus is sitting at a table, leaning over a piece of parchment.*

Zacchaeus: *(talking to himself as he looks at the parchment)*: Jake owes me 4 bushels of wheat; Zeke owes me 6 bushels of wheat, and then 10 from Mo, and 15 from the sons of Seth. Hmm, I think I may need to build bigger barns this year.

*Rachel enters with the laundry and sits at the table. Throughout this conversation, have the two of them doing something at the table. Rachel could be folding towels and Zacchaeus is counting money, stacking it into little piles. Some old pennies would work.*

Rachel: Zach, you'll never believe it, I've just heard that Jesus is coming!

Z: Jesus! Coming here?

R: Well, not here to our house, but to Jericho! He's coming to our city!

Z: And you want to go and see him, I guess.

R: Of course I do, and I want *you* to come with me.

Z: Me? Oh, Rachel, I don't think that's a good idea. I mean, I don't think I'm the kind of person that Jesus wants to see.

R: Oh Zach, he wants to see *everyone*. He's gone for supper at the homes of Pharisees. They say he healed the slave of a Centurion. And they say that one of his followers is a tax collector just like you!

Z: That's the problem, Rachel. That tax collector isn't collecting taxes any more, is he?

R: I think his name is Matthew. The tax collector's name is Matthew.

Z: Okay, Matthew. I mean, he can't be sitting in his toll booth collecting taxes if he's following Jesus all over Galilee and Judea. And I heard that Matthew has been throwing big feasts and everyone is invited. What's that about?

R: You know what it's about. It's about God returning to us once again, about God becoming our king, so that we can live in our own land in peace, and no one is sick, and our fields are producing enough food for everyone. Maybe Matthew thinks this kingdom is finally here.

Z: But what if it isn't? What if this Jesus is just some crazy preacher who speaks well? Then Matthew has just lost his job *and* lost all his money.

R: Zach, *you know* he's not just some crazy preacher. Why would people all over Galilee be giving away their possessions to help Jesus feed himself and those disciples of his? Even Susannah, the wife of Herod's steward has been funnelling money to Jesus. And Joanna, and Salome.

Z: Well, I think that they might regret it.

R: Zach, these people are actually showing us what it looks like when God is in our community. Jesus is healing people, and his followers are feeding those who are hungry, and making sure people have clothing, and welcoming everyone to those banquets that Jesus is throwing.

Z: Look, Rachel, I'm just too scared to meet Jesus. I know that he has been telling everyone to get rid of their possessions and give them to the poor. I heard about what he said to that rich young man a couple of days ago. What if Jesus asks *me* to give up *my* possessions?

R: Would that be so bad, Zach? Don't we have enough? We already have so much land that you can't keep track of everything you are growing on it.

Z: That's what I have Danny for. He's a good manager.

R: (*dryly*) He certainly manages well for *himself*. But that's not the point. Look, when you became a tax collector in this village, we had *friends*. Our children could go to Rebekah's house to help harvest grapes. Morry and Sarah loved to have our kids help their kids with the olives, and Ezra and Miriam always invited us over for the shearing. None of that happens anymore!

Z: Well, Rebekah doesn't have that vineyard anymore, does she? Now it's mine. And Ezra and Miriam had to give us their sheep after they didn't pay back the barley I loaned them, and it's not my fault that Morry broke his leg and couldn't get his olive harvest in. At least I make sure those trees are harvested . . . Why are you looking at me like that?

R: Come on, Zach. These were our *friends*, and all you can do is congratulate yourself that you are better at getting work done. You haven't personally harvested an olive in over 10 years! But we could have helped Morry get those olives harvested. We could have let Ezra and Miriam keep their sheep. We could have waited another year for grapes instead of taking the vineyard. It isn't as though those farms are thriving under our care.

Z: What do you mean?

R: We can never attend to those grape vines the way Benjamin did. We don't know the names of the sheep like Miriam did. We don't love the fig trees the way that Sarah did. I think the land doesn't do as well for us because it is grieving.

Z: Grieving?

R: Yes. And I think that you are secretly grieving, too. Don't you miss being part of the community? I know that I do.

Z: Part of the community? I am the head of the community, Rachel.

R: (*sadly*) No you aren't, Zach. The community is made up of people loving and caring for the land that their ancestors cared for and loved. Land, animals and people bound together in care and affection. That is community. As far as the village is concerned, you are the destroyer of the community.

Z: Ouch.

R: Well, doesn't it make you feel sad to see your old friends waiting in the city square for work each day? Don't you miss visiting them? Doesn't the sadness in their faces bother you?

Z: It is hard to see sadness in the eyes of people you never see, Rachel. But you are right, I do miss them. I miss eating with them, I miss seeing how their kids have turned out. I do miss being a part of the community.

R: Then maybe we should something about it!

Z: Do something? *(with sadness)* It's too late for that. I own their land now. I have my position to consider, and mouths to feed. It would be embarrassing to give it back, it would look as if I'd done something wrong. I just followed the rules, Rachel! Really, it's too much to ask!

R: I guess that if it is too hard to imagine making this right, then it is too hard to imagine that God will really return. Have you really given up all hope that there would be peace and justice, and land for everyone and food for all?

Z: No. No, I don't want to give up that hope. I do long for all of that. With all my heart!

R: And so do I. Maybe that means we need to give up our wealth!

Z: Rachel, I couldn't . . . it would be so hard . . .

R: Then come and see Jesus.

Z: Jesus!

R: Yes, come and see Jesus. You know that you have been wanting to see him for a while now.

Z: That's true. I *have* really wanted to see Jesus.

R: And maybe he'll help us, Zach. Maybe he'll help us both imagine how we can fit into his community again.

Z: *(aside)* It would take a miracle!

*Zacchaeus and Rachel exit the stage. The villagers walk on and form a tight knit group all looking in one direction. Have a chair or ladder nearby that can be the "tree." The villagers are all muttering saying things like "Do you see him yet?" "I think I see him!" "No, that's just a donkey!" "I wish he'd hurry up!" "I'm thirsty!" "Hush, it won't be long now." etc.*

*Zacchaeus and Rachel walk on from the side behind the group. Zacchaeus walks up to the group. They all nudge each other and point at him and fall silent.*

Z: *(smiling at them)*: Well, hello everyone! Here to see Jesus, eh! I'm wondering whether I could just get through to the front there . . . *(he trails off as the people push closer together so that he can't pass).*

Benjamin: Sorry Zach, no space at the front here.

Sarah: The children get the front spots, Mr. Tax Collector.

Ezra: Maybe you should have brought a ladder. You probably own a dozen or so by now!

Miriam: Not sure why you want to see Jesus, anyway, Zach. I don't think he owns any land for you to repossess.

*Some in the crowd laugh. Others just look angry. Morry and Rebekah just look sadly at Zacchaeus and shake their heads. Then Morry yells!*

Morry: There he is! I see him coming!

*The crowd starts to mutter excitedly: "Here he comes!" "I thought he'd be taller." "He's got a lot of people with him." "I can see at least six women in that group." "They look very tired." etc.*

*Zacchaeus looks around sadly, then spots the "tree". He goes over to it:*

Z: Rachel, here, give me a hand.

*(Rachel comes over)*

Z: This is perfect. I'll be able to see Jesus, but he won't be able to see me.

R: And he won't know that the others gave you the cold shoulder!

Z: Exactly!

*(Rachel helps Zacchaeus up onto the chair).*

*Jesus walks onto the stage and through the people shaking hands and saying hello. He walks up to the tree and walks around it once, looking up. The crowd is silent.*

Jesus: Is that Zacchaeus up that tree?

Z: Um, yes, it is.

Jesus: Zacchaeus, come down from there, I'd like to come to your house.

Z: My . . . .my . . . house?

Jesus: Yes, your house.

*The crowd grumbles: “What!” “Doesn’t he know that this guy is a sinner!” “He’s gotta be kidding!” “I thought that Jesus cared about people who are hungry?” “No way!” “Jesus, this guy’s a crook! He took my land!” “He took mine, too!” “And mine!” “And mine!” “And mine!”*

*In the meantime, Zacchaeus has come down from the “tree” and is looking from Jesus to the crowd. Finally, he licks his lips and begins to speak. He has to yell a bit to be heard.*

Z: Okay, okay, you are all right. I’ve been a jerk. And I’m sorry. I’m sorry for all that I’ve done to you.

Morry: Yeah, right. Prove it!

Z: *(swallows hard)* Okay, well, I’m going to give away half of my all my wealth to the poor.

Benjamin: Only half?

Rebekah: What about our vineyard?

Sarah: What about my olive trees?

*Others chime in “what about our land?”*

Z: And if I’ve defrauded anyone of anything, I’ll give back four times as much. I mean, I can’t give you four times your land, but I’ll give your land back and four times its worth in grain, or wool or wine or olives.

Jesus: Today salvation has come to this house because Zacchaeus is also a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek out and save the lost.

Rebekah: I never imagined this day would come! Our vineyard returned in time for the harvest!

Ezra: Will I really be followed around by lambs once again?

Morry: *(looking Zacchaeus closely in the face):* I really have hated you, Zach . . . .

Sarah: Morry!

Morry: . . . but to have my olive trees back! I don’t know what to say!  
Except maybe thank you to Jesus!

*They all laugh*

Benjamin: *(putting his arms around both Rachel and Zacchaeus)* Well, I know what to say.  
Welcome back, friends!

THE END.

05 *week*

**PAUL AND A GROANING CREATION:  
LEARNING TO GRIEVE FAITHFULLY**

# 03

*begin*  
**INTRODUCTION**

The apostle Paul did a lot of walking as he carried the message of Jesus throughout the ancient Roman world. As he walked, he noticed the traces that the Roman empire had left across the land: **forests had been cut down** everywhere he walked. Animals that were once common were becoming extinct, as **hundreds of them were killed** in Colosseums each week. Once the forests were cut down, soil washed off the mountains and filled up the harbours, creating swamps where mosquitoes bred, contributing to **widespread sickness**. Aqueducts diverted water to large cities, often **depriving small towns**. And, in cities like Rome, the smoke from cooking fires and bath-heating commonly created **smog which blocked the sun**. **Creation wasn't doing too well**, as far as Paul could see. Which is why, in Romans 8, he talks about **all of creation groaning**, as though it is in painful labour. The grief and lament of God over creation at the time of the flood is now mirrored in the grief and lament of creation at the time of Paul.



Wood was the oil of the Roman Empire. Trees were cut down to build hips—and the biggest, oldest trees were used for the masts. Wood was used to build tunnels for mining, and was burned in order to purify the metals needed for coins and goblets and jewellery. Wood was also burned for cooking, and an enormous amount of wood was burned to heat the famous Roman baths. Because they needed so much wood, the Romans cut down forests in every land they ruled. They had to conquer new areas whenever they began to run out of timber.

This aqueduct carried water from a river to a large city in Paul's day.

# USING THE CURRICULUM

- This week includes activities for those just beginning to think about creational grief, as well as those who have been exploring these issues for some time.
- **It contains more activities than can be done in one meeting or one week.**
- Choose the activity or activities that are most appropriate for you, your group, or your family. You may choose to do only one or two, or spread them out over the course of the week. You may also earmark activities for ongoing action once Lent is over.
- **Everyone should do the sections entitled “Becoming Rooted: Hearing the Text” and “Reflection” since they form the basis for the rest of the discussion and activities.**
- If you make prayer flags together, you will need to gather the materials before your meeting (see *Expressing Grief* below)

## BEGIN WITH PRAYER

### OPENING LITURGY AND PRAYER

We gather from many places,  
places of brokenness and grief,  
places of joy and hope.

**We lay down our grief and hope  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
forests and fields,  
streams and lakes,  
small gardens and apartment balconies,  
sidewalks and pavement.

**We lay down the suffering and the joy  
of our places  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
Indigenous and settler,  
Black and people of colour,  
immigrant and refugee,

now together on the traditional lands  
of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg  
and the Haudenosaunee peoples,  
including the Mississauga people,  
lands that have praised Creator  
since time began.

**We bring the cry of the land  
before the Creator.**

Creator God,  
we gather together in your presence  
longing for restoration for creation,  
forgiveness for our own brokenness  
and the injustices we have created,  
and reconciliation for the divisions  
that separate us.

**We lay our longing before you, Creator,  
and ask for healing.**

**Amen.**

*grounding*  
**GROUNDING OURSELVES IN  
CREATIONAL LOVE**

Briefly share with each other a moment from the past week where being in creation gave you a sense of deep happiness, awe, or wonder. Conclude this time with this brief prayer:

Creator of all,  
in love you have called us into being  
and surrounded us  
with the sight, sound, and scent of beauty.  
We thank you for . . . .  
*[here may be inserted those things that were shared above].*  
May they remind us of your love for us,  
and for all of creation.  
Amen.

*hear the text*  
**BECOMING ROOTED: HEARING THE TEXT**

**HOSEA 4.1-3**

People of Israel, listen to the Lord's message.  
for the Lord is bringing charges  
against you who live in Israel.  
"There is no faithfulness  
or love in the land.  
No one recognizes me as God.  
<sup>2</sup> People curse one another.  
They tell lies and commit murder.  
They steal and commit adultery.  
They break all my laws.  
One murder follows another.  
<sup>3</sup> That is why the land is mourning.  
All those who live in it  
are getting weaker and weaker.  
The wild animals and the birds in the  
sky are dying.  
So are the fish in the ocean

**ROMANS 8.19-26**

<sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with breathless anticipation for the revealing of the children of God. <sup>20</sup> Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, we ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be redeemed. <sup>24</sup> We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray, but that very Spirit intercedes with groans too deep for words.

reflect + discuss

## REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- A** Hosea says that the land is mourning, and Paul says that creation is groaning, or crying out like a woman in labour.
- ① What do you think Hosea means when he says that the land is mourning?
  - ② What do you think that Paul means when he says that creation is groaning?
  - ③ Discuss or reflect on any places or creatures that you think might be mourning or groaning and longing to be set free. What would freedom mean for these places and creatures?

### FOR FAMILIES

Spend some time remembering places where you have seen harm done to creation (garbage in waterways that could poison fish; plastic on the ground that birds might eat; pollution of water or ground by oil or gasoline; pesticides used on a lawn; trees clear-cut). Talk about what it means for creation to be crying or mourning when these things happen. Ask if they can think of other examples of creation mourning or groaning.

- B** This remarkable passage from Romans describes the groaning of creation crying out in lament. The groaning of creation is joined by the groaning of those who have the Spirit of Jesus. Human beings join creation in lament. And then the passage says that the very Spirit of God is joining our lamenting prayers with wordless groans. God's very Spirit is joining creation and humanity in crying out that "this isn't the way things are supposed to be! Creation is not supposed to be groaning!" This suggests that ***experiencing grief and lament over what is happening to creation may be the most faithful response to the crisis we face.***

- ① If you feel comfortable doing so, share your feelings of grief and lament over what is happening to creation. What are you most afraid of? What keeps you awake at night?
- ② Paul says that God's very Spirit is sharing in our lament. This suggests that lament is the right response to what is going on. This means that lament might be something we should not try to "get over" but rather is a faithful response to this crisis. How does this affect your sense of grief or lament?

Lament is another word for passionately expressing our grief and sorrow. We can express a lament by crying out to God in prayer, or by crying out to creation. It is one way of saying to God, "This is not the way things are supposed to be, God. And what are you going to do about it?"

**C** We live in a culture that wants to downplay the suffering of creation. That our world is in crisis is still denied by many people. We are so committed to having easy access to everything we want, when we want it, that we are willing to suppress the voices of creation and the poor who suffer as a result of our desires. This makes us numb to the suffering of creation and numb to the suffering of others. And when we are numb, we are unable to do anything to make things better. Allowing the groaning of creation and the laments of the earth to be heard cuts through the numbness and brings us back to life. Giving voice to our own laments allows us to name the truth of the injustice that surrounds us, and allows us to demand change. Without lament, without passionately giving voice to our pain and grief, we remain trapped in a world where nothing can change.

- ① How has giving voice to your pain and grief, giving space and time for allowing lament to be heard, motivated you to bring about change?
- ② What place does lament have in our common worship? How often do we join our voice in grief with the rest of creation? How can we create space to sing songs of lament or pray prayers of lament in our churches?

## *express grief* **EXPRESSING GRIEF**

**A** One way to bring laments to expression is to create prayer flags that answer the question “How are You Feeling About Creation’s Suffering?” If you make the prayer flags as a group, you can string them together and hang them at the front of the church, or outside your church. If you do them as a neighbourhood event, you can hang them outside of someone’s house or hang them on an apartment balcony. If you are meeting virtually, everyone can show their flag on the screen, and perhaps gather later to hang them together. If you make a prayer flag on your own, hang it near where you say your prayers.



### **FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH**

If you make flags at home, you each do a few flags and hang them from the front of your house to a tree or clothesline pole. You could also invite your neighbours to join you in this activity and begin conversations around climate grief with them.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

### FOR PRAYER FLAGS:

- 20cm x 20cm (8" x 8") squares of material in five different colours, preferably from 2nd hand shops, no need to hem
- Sharpies for writing on the fabric
- String or rope to hang the flags
- Small clothespins to attach the flags to the string

## MAKING PRAYER FLAGS:

Ask people the question: How are you feeling about creation's suffering? Have people pick a flag in the colour that matches their feeling. They could write a prayer or message on the flag.

Here are some examples:

Grey = I feel unconcerned

Green = I feel confused

Red = I feel angry

Dark Blue = I feel despairing

Light Blue = I feel sad

Yellow = I feel anxious

Orange = I feel motivated to bring about change

Purple = I feel hopeful

Patterns = I feel many things at once

(you may need a lot of patterned cloth)

- B** Paul talks about how the Spirit of Creator joins both us and creation with “wordless groans.” Sometimes our lament is so deep, that we don’t know how to put it into words. Perhaps music or art is a better expression, or even a song. Listen to the songs listed at the end of this week’s study. Do you resonate with Blind Willie Johnson’s blues, Bruce Cockburn’s cry of lament, or the hard-hitting rap of Common? Create a drawing or painting, or write a song, a rap or a poem that gives voice to the grief and anxiety you feel over the climate crisis.

## YOUTH

### **Autograf & Janelle Kroll, “Walk with You” (Official Video)**

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzLe55aMGaY>

Lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/autograf/walkwithyou.html>

**What do you see?** Reflect together on the images in the video?

- What is going on here?
- How is the ice figure first presented?
- What happens to her? Why?
- What emotions do the images evoke?
- Are there images of hope in the video?

**What do you hear?** How did the music impact you?

- What kind of emotions arose for you as you listened to the song?
- Sadness? Anxiety? Tenderness? Hope? Intimacy? Loss?

**What do you think?** What is this song about?

- Putting together lyrics, music and imagery, why is the singer promising to walk with the person to whom the song is addressed?
- Could the song be addressed to creation?
- What are the crises, the obstacles and threats the song is facing?
- What is falling apart?
- Does the song call for any action?

# grow hope ACTIONS TO GROW HOPE

A

For some people, engaging in community action helps to build hope in the midst of lament. Find out if there are any climate actions being planned in your city for Earth Day. If there are, plan to attend.

## YOUTH

Check out a Fridays for Future Group near you.

[www.fridaysforfuture.org](http://www.fridaysforfuture.org)

Twitter: TOforFuture  
Instagram: fridaysforfutureto  
FB: Fridays For Future Toronto

## FOR FAMILIES

Plan a family outing to pick up garbage in a park or at the side of a country road.

You will need:

- Garbage bags
- Gloves

Adult supervision is recommended to ensure there are no needles or other dangerous objects that could pierce gloves.

B

Much of what creates anxiety for us is the relentless way that news is present in our life. Consider changing your media diet and connect with organizations that are engaged in renewal in your city and province. Here are some suggestions:

- ① *Yes! Magazine* contains an abundance of stories about how ordinary people are involved in creating hope and healing all over the world:  
<https://www.yesmagazine.org>
- ② Good news about the climate can be found on sites like Environment 911 (they periodically publish lists of good things happening for the environment):  
<https://www.environment911.org/Good-Things-That-Happened-for-the-Environment-in-2021>
- ③ A Rocha is a Christian environmental organization engaged in conservation science, environmental education, and sustainable agriculture:  
<https://arocha.ca>
- ④ The David Suzuki website has a wealth of stories about the environmental movement in Canada, along with educational resources and ideas for action:  
<https://david Suzuki.org>

# ACTIVITIES TO DO OUTSIDE

*go outside*

- A** Grief is the fruit of love. It is because we love something deeply that we grieve its loss. We might be grieving the loss of something that has already been in our life, or the loss of our hopes for the future. This ritual provides an opportunity to share our grief so that others, and creation itself, might help us carry our grief. Note that if it is too cold outside, the first part of the activity can be done inside.

Position a bowl of water where everyone can see and easily approach it. Surround it with stones that easily fit in the palm of the hand (or ask everyone to bring a couple of stones to the gathering). After a few moments of stillness, ask everyone to take a turn to pick up a stone, name their grief, and put the stone in the water. People may do this more than once, if there are enough stones. As the ritual progresses, our griefs are no longer carried just by ourselves, but they become collective griefs, carried by the group, and by the stones themselves.

When everyone has shared their grief, the bowl of water is carried to a tree or garden. Pour out the water in which we have immersed our griefs so that it may nourish the earth and the plants or tree. Say this prayer before doing so:

Grieving Spirit,  
who gave us hearts to love  
and grieve the loss of our loves,  
we offer our grief to each other,  
to creation, and to you.  
May these stones and this water  
so carry our grief and bear our sorrows  
that we might feel ourselves held  
in the care of each other,  
the embrace of creation,  
and your wounded hands.  
We pray this in the name of Jesus,  
who carried our grief and sorrow  
to the cross.

**Amen.**

Ideally, someone in the group will commit to taking the stones to a nearby stream, river, lake, or ocean, where our griefs can be washed into the living waters and the stones released from their burden.

- B** Return to the place that you found to sit in the first week of this study. As spring progresses, what new life do you see happening? If possible, go deeper into a park or a ravine in your neighbourhood and walk in the woods. If you can do so safely, call out your grief to the trees. If you can, sing out your gratitude for all that surrounds you.

# PRAYERS

pray  
**PRAYERS**

Choose one of these prayers to end your time together.  
These prayers are also suitable for use throughout the week.

1

## A PRAYER FOR THE WATERS

Creator of life,  
we give you thanks  
for the waters that have  
held us and nourished us,  
washed us and comforted us,  
lulled us to sleep,  
and reflected our joys and  
sorrows.

*here we pause to remember  
lakes, rivers, streams and oceans  
that we are grateful for*

Creator who mourns,  
we lament the death  
that has entered our waterways:  
the plastic in our oceans,  
the soil and poisons in our rivers  
and streams,  
the sewage in our lakes.

*here we pause to remember  
specific lakes, rivers, canals,  
streams and oceans that we  
mourn, and our complicity  
in their loss*

We bring to you our grief  
for those communities,  
especially Indigenous  
communities,  
that do not have clean water:  
those with mercury poisoning,  
illnesses from tar sand leaching,  
and increasing cancer rates.  
Forgive us for allowing this to  
happen on our watch.

*here we pause to remember those  
communities we know who do not  
have access to clean water*

Creator of new life,  
we pray that you will once again  
draw us into the story of water,  
that we might be those  
who protect our watersheds,  
and the waterways  
of the most vulnerable in  
our midst.

We pray in hope of that day  
when the water of life  
will grant us healing.  
Amen.

2

## A PRAYER FOR THE TREES

Creator of life,  
we give you thanks  
for the trees that have  
opened their arms to us,  
protected us,  
nourished and sheltered us,  
shared with us their fruit,  
and been beautiful in our eyes.

*here we pause to remember  
specific trees that we are  
grateful for*

Creator who mourns,  
we lament those trees that  
are no more:  
trees that we climbed  
and walked beneath,  
trees sacrificed for our dwellings  
our roads  
our food  
our wants.

*here we pause to remember  
specific trees that we mourn,  
and our complicity in their loss*

Creator of new life,  
we pray that you will once again  
draw us into the story of the trees,  
Shape us into a people who  
protect and plant,  
that forests might spring up  
where we have trod.  
We pray in hope of that day  
when the tree of life  
will nourish us with fruit  
in all seasons,  
and grant healing  
for all creatures of the earth.  
Amen.

# *dig deep* DIGGING DEEPER:

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE THIS WEEK'S THEMES

### READ

#### PICTURE BOOKS:

- *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom
- *Ida, Always* by Caron Levis
- *Solomon's Tree* by Andrea Spalding
- *Always Remember* by Cece Meng
- *The Lorax* by Doctor Seuss

#### TWEEN AND TEEN:

- *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen
- *Cast Away: Poems for our Time* by Naomi Shihab Nye
- *How to Change Everything: the Young Human's Guide to Protecting the Planet and Each Other* by Naomi Klein with Rebecca Stefoff
- *The Extraordinary Life of Greta Thunberg* by Devika Jina and Petra Braun

#### TEEN AND ADULT:

- *Dakwākāda Warriors* by Cole Pauls (a young-adult graphic novel)
- *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church* by Hannah Malcolm
- *The David Suzuki Reader: A Lifetime of Ideas from a Leading Activist and Thinker* (Revised Edition), by David Suzuki
- To read a lament for the earth based on Romans 8, see chapter 5 of *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire, Demanding Justice* by Sylvia Keesmaat and Brian Walsh
- *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* by Francis Weller
- *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're In Without Going Crazy* by Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy

### LISTEN TO MUSIC

- Blind Willie Johnson, "Dark was the Night, Cold was the Ground":  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNj2BXW852g>  
(instrumental - kind of what that groaning might sound like)
- Bruce Cockburn, "Radium Rain": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE6ZF9-u8vY> (with images)
- Autograf & Janelle Kroll, "Walk with You" (Official Video):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzLe55aMGaY>

## WATCH

- Hip-Hop artist and Earth Guardian founder Xiutezcatl Martinez speaks and performs at the age of 13 at TedxYouth@MileHigh (13 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2V2yVkedtM>

## JOIN

- GASP: Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet: <https://www.gasp4change.org>
- Indigenous Youth Leadership Initiative: <https://www.earthguardians.org/indigenous-youth-leadership-initiative> (includes a video)

## EXPLORE

- Environment 911 (they periodically publish lists of good things happening for the environment): <https://www.environment911.org/Good-Things-That-Happened-for-the-Environment-in-2021>
- A Rocha is a Christian environmental organization engaged in conservation science, environmental education, and sustainable agriculture: <https://arocha.ca>
- The David Suzuki website has a wealth of stories about the environmental movement in Canada, along with educational resources and ideas for action: <https://david Suzuki.org>
- Climate Generation: <https://www.climategen.org>
- This weekly climate newsletter from “Minimum Viable Planet” includes a list of other climate newsletters at the bottom of the post: <https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2022/01/26/race-to-zero-emissions>

## LISTEN TO PODCASTS

- Podcast: Nomad podcast: specifically their episode on climate grief: <https://www.nomadpodcast.co.uk/hannah-malcolm-words-for-a-dying-world-n261> (interview begins around the 12 minute mark)

*week* 06

**JOHN'S VISION OF THE NEW EARTH:  
LEARNING TO LIVE WITH POSSIBILITY**

# *begin* **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last five weeks we have explored a variety of passages that give voice to the grief that God, creation, and the people felt when violence and sin harmed the relationships between people and the land. This week's passages point us **toward the future, towards possibility**. Just as Jesus' journey in Holy Week does not stop at the cross but continues on to new life, the biblical story constantly imagines **a future of abundance and life for the earth and all of God's creatures**. Nor is this a future that we are expected to bring on our own: God promises to act for us and with us to **bring this renewed creation into being**.

It may be that the depth of our sorrow over what is happening with creation makes it **hard to imagine** any part of this future vision ever coming true. That's okay. Sometimes it is helpful to know that a vision of hope is there while admitting that **more time needs to be spent in grief**. Even the apostle Paul, when he spoke briefly of hope in last week's passage, immediately turned back to suffering and lament. But we are all different. Some of us might need to mourn a little longer. Others might need a vision of hope in order to get out of bed in the morning. As we have discovered again and again in these stories, **God is faithful to God's promises**. The trajectory of hope may be long, but God has promised that it leads to a restored creation. This week explores that hope.

# USING THE CURRICULUM

*experience*

- This week includes activities for those just beginning to think about creational grief, as well as those who have been exploring these issues for some time.
- **It contains more activities than can be done in one meeting or one week.**
- Choose the activity or activities that are most appropriate for you, your group, or your family. You may choose to do only one or two, or spread them out over the course of the week. You may also earmark activities for ongoing action once Lent is over.
- **Everyone should do the sections entitled “Becoming Rooted: Hearing the Text” and “Reflection” since they form the basis for the rest of the discussion and activities.**
- If you make prayer flags, postcards or a wall of inspiration, you will need to gather materials in advance (see *Nourishing Hope* below)
- **If Holy Week proves to be a difficult time to meet, this week’s discussion and activities would work well after Easter.**

## BEGIN WITH PRAYER

*together*

### OPENING LITURGY AND PRAYER

We gather from many places,  
places of brokenness and grief,  
places of joy and hope.

**We lay down our grief and hope  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
forests and fields,  
streams and lakes,  
small gardens and apartment balconies,  
sidewalks and pavement.

**We lay down the suffering and the joy  
of our places  
before the Creator.**

We gather from many places,  
Indigenous and settler,  
Black and people of colour,  
immigrant and refugee,

now together on the traditional lands  
of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg  
and the Haudenosaunee peoples,  
including the Mississauga people,  
lands that have praised Creator  
since time began.

**We bring the cry of the land  
before the Creator.**

Creator God,  
we gather together in your presence  
longing for restoration for creation,  
forgiveness for our own brokenness  
and the injustices we have created,  
and reconciliation for the divisions  
that separate us.

**We lay our longing before you, Creator,  
and ask for healing.**

**Amen.**

*grounding*  
**GROUNDING OURSELVES IN  
CREATIONAL LOVE**

Briefly share with each other a moment from the past week where being in creation gave you a sense of deep happiness, awe, or wonder. Conclude this time with this brief prayer:

Creator of all,  
in love you have called us into being  
and surrounded us  
with the sight, sound, and scent of beauty.  
We thank you for . . . .  
[*here may be inserted those things that were shared above*].  
May they remind us of your love for us,  
and for all of creation.  
Amen.



"A Vision of the Renewed Earth?"  
Garden Volunteers at All Saints, Whitby

*hear the text*  
**BECOMING ROOTED: HEARING THE TEXT**

Read the visions of hope found in Isaiah 65 and Revelation 18, 21-22.

## ISAIAH 65.17-25

<sup>17</sup> For I am about to create new heavens  
and a new earth;  
the former things shall not be remembered  
or come to mind.  
<sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I am creating;  
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,  
and its people as a delight.  
<sup>19</sup> I will rejoice in Jerusalem,  
and delight in my people;  
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,  
or the cry of distress.  
<sup>20</sup> No more shall there be in it  
an infant that lives but a few days,  
or an old person who does not live out a  
lifetime;  
for one who dies at a hundred years will be  
considered a youth,  
and one who falls short of a hundred will be  
considered accursed.  
<sup>21</sup> They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.  
<sup>22</sup> They shall not build and another inhabit;  
they shall not plant and another eat;  
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my  
people be,  
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of  
their hands.  
<sup>23</sup> They shall not labor in vain,  
or bear children for calamity;  
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—  
and their descendants as well.  
<sup>24</sup> Before they call I will answer,  
while they are yet speaking I will hear.  
<sup>25</sup> The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,  
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
says the Lord.

## REVELATION 18.11-13

And the merchants of the earth weep and  
mourn for [fallen Babylon], since no one buys  
their cargo anymore, <sup>12</sup> cargo of gold, silver,  
jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and  
scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles  
of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron,  
and marble, <sup>13</sup> cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh,  
frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and  
wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots,  
slaves—and human lives.

## REVELATION 21.1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for  
the first heaven and the first earth had passed  
away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the  
holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out  
of heaven from God, prepared as a bride  
dressed for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne  
saying,  
"See, the home of God is among mortals.  
God will dwell with them;  
they will be God's peoples,  
and God's own self will be with them;  
<sup>4</sup> God will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away."

<sup>5</sup> And the one who was seated on the throne  
said, "See, I am making all things new."

## REVELATION 22.1-2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water  
of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne  
of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of  
the street of the city. On either side of the river is  
the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit,  
producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of  
the tree are for the healing of the nations.

*reflect + discuss*  
**REFLECT AND DISCUSS**

**F**or many people, the book of Revelation is full of disturbing imagery and violence. That is not surprising, for Revelation is trying to make sense of the poverty and degradation of creation that the early Christians saw all around them. In the first century (as in the whole of the biblical story), the violence of sin has destroyed the earth and created misery for many people. At the time Revelation was written, much of that misery was caused by the Roman empire, whose shipping merchants took animals and food, fruit and wood, spices and luxury items from far countries and brought them to Rome. They also brought people to be sold as slaves. They left hunger and degraded land behind them.

Revelation ends with good news: all those who destroy the earth, the shipping merchants and the kings, will weep because all of their wealth has disappeared. One way to paraphrase Revelation 18 is to say, “The corporate climate polluters are weeping and wailing because no one buys their oil any more!” But that isn’t the end. The book of Revelation, like the prophet Isaiah long ago, then goes on to imagine the restored earth, a place where the Creator will come to live with people, where there will be justice and peace for human beings and for animals. Both of these visions give us an idea of how to think of the world that we want to see: they are visions of what the world can be, visions that call us forward into possibility.

- A**
- ① What stood out to you about the reading from Isaiah?
  - ② Why might people build houses and not be able to live in them? Or plant vineyards and not be able to eat their fruit? Who is living in the houses and eating the fruit?
  - ③ Why do you think that weeping will no longer be heard in the city?
  - ④ Discuss or reflect on what Isaiah’s vision might look like in your own community.

### **FOR FAMILIES**

Isaiah’s vision of the new earth talks about people having long lives with plenty of food to eat and houses to live in. He also describes animals that normally eat each other peacefully eating next to each other instead. This is a vision of peace and harmony.

Talk about the places of sadness or injustice you see in your community that you would like to be different on the new earth. What would you like your neighbourhood to look like? What enemies would get along with each other? What animals would live in peace with people? What would housing look like? What would getting food look like?

- B** John describes a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation. Although he uses the language of the earth “passing away,” this does not mean that it will be destroyed; it means, rather, that it will be restored. As we saw in last week’s reading, Paul describes creation as waiting to be “set free” by the children of God. Elsewhere both Paul and Peter describe creation as being purified by fire (1 Corinthians 3.13 ; 2 Peter 3.10-13). And the book of Revelation itself talks about all of creation and all creatures praising God when those who “destroy the earth” are judged.

Even the language of “the sea will be no more” doesn’t mean that there will no longer be oceans. John has just described how the sea has been the primary way that sea captains and businessmen of the first century have been able to move stolen goods like wood, jewels, fabric, animals and slaves all over the world. Saying “the sea will be no more” is like saying “the railroads have collapsed” or “the cargo ships have sunk” (or, perhaps, are stuck in a canal!). It means that an unjust network for moving goods will no longer be present in the world.

Throughout the whole of the Bible, God has wanted to come and live with people in the beautiful and diverse creation that fills the earth. This was what God wanted in Genesis, this is what Jesus came to do when he became human and moved into our neighbourhood, and this is what God is hoping to do in the future: live with us, here on earth.

- ① If the earth is going to be the future home of both God and humanity, how does that change how we think of creation?

- C** It is clear that this vision of the new heaven and the new earth is something that will be brought by God in answer to our prayers and hopes. That means that we aren’t expected to create the new earth ourselves. We quoted Leah Penniman above, saying “The Talmud teaches us not to be overwhelmed by the grief and despair of the world. We are not obligated to finish the work, but we are obligated to take a step in the direction of completing the work.”

- ① The end of the biblical story, and this quote from the Talmud, suggests that it is not our job to complete the work of bringing healing to the world. But it does suggest that it is our job to work towards that healing. How does this affect the feeling of grief or hope that you carry?

“The Talmud teaches us not to be overwhelmed by the grief and despair of the world. We are not obligated to finish the work, but we are obligated to take a step in the direction of completing the work.”  
- Leah Penniman, *paraphrasing Rabbi Tarfon in Pirkei Avot.*

- D** Revelation 22 describes a city where God hopes to live with us in the future. It has a river flowing right through the middle of the city, a lot of fruit trees growing on the banks of the river, and fruit every month of the year. This is a food forest in a city! Or, to put it another way, food forests are the cities of the future! John also says that the leaves of the trees will be for the healing of all the peoples of the earth. The trees will establish justice on the earth, because these trees will make sure that everyone has food all year long, every month of the year.

Trees have been a central part of the biblical story, and a part of creation that has been destroyed again and again by clearcutting, drought, and wildfires caused by climate change. But even though we have done so much to harm trees, their leaves will be part of our healing. In this way, trees offer us forgiveness.

- ① Have you ever thought of trees or any part of creation offering you forgiveness before? Discuss or reflect on how this changes your relationship with trees?
- ② If the vision of healing of our cities is one of food forests along our waterways, how will this change the infrastructure of our cities now? How will this affect transportation? Where we build housing? Our recreation?
- ③ It is well known that wealthier neighbourhoods have more trees and green spaces, and poorer neighbourhoods have less. Discuss or reflect on where there are trees in your neighbourhood and city. Are there groups working to plant more trees and create more green spaces? If not, is this something that your church community should pursue (see next item)?

Trees in cities have been shown to:

- Reduce temperatures
- Improve air quality
- Improve physical and mental health
- Help children do better in school
- Reduce crime
- Create friendlier neighbourhoods
- Create successful business areas
- Reduce noise pollution
- Clean water
- Reduce cooling and heating costs
- Create safer neighbourhoods

In short, trees are already providing healing in many ways.

- E** Watch the film “Singapore: A Biophilic City”  
(<https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/singapore-biophilic-city-2012>)

- ① Can you think of any places in your neighbourhood or city where this kind of planting could happen? How would that place be changed?
- ② Draw a picture of a place near you that would be changed by being covered in plants.

# NOURISHING HOPE

- A** Last week we made prayer flags that gave voice to our anxiety and grief about creation. This week, create prayer flags that show the world that you want to live in (see last week for instructions). You can write about the world you wish to see (ie. “I want a world where . . .”) or draw pictures. Hang your prayer flags so they intersect with the string of flags you made last week.



## WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR PRAYER FLAGS:

- 20cm x 20cm (8” x 8”) squares of material in five different colours, preferably from 2nd hand shops, no need to hem
- Sharpies for writing on the fabric
- String or rope to hang the flags
- Small clothes pins to attach the flags to the string

- B** Build a wall of inspiration in your home or church. If you are meeting in person, ask everyone to bring in a quote or a photo of someone, or a photo of place that inspires them. Create a wall of artwork, quotes, and people to give you hope. If you are doing this at home, depending on time and space, you can find a photo of someone who has inspired you and tape above your desk or counter, or make a larger display of photos, quotes and stories on a bulletin board or even on an entire wall!

For wall of inspiration:

- Photos of inspiring people
- Inspiring quotes
- Inspiring photos

## YOUTH

Create postcards with inspirational quotes or photos of climate heroes. Make 10 or 15 copies of each postcard. Create a pouch for each postcard; glue one of the postcards on the outside so people can see what is in it. Hang the pouches in your church or on a tree in front of your church or your house with signs inviting people to take them.

You will need:

- Copies of photos or inspiring quotes (can be handmade)
- Large envelopes or plastic pouches (if hanging outside)
- String for hanging
- Clothes pins for attaching pouches to string (or thread string through the pouches)

**OR**

Ask if the youth group can take over the church’s Instagram or Facebook account for a week to post inspirational quotes or photos about climate justice, or information and photos of climate heroes (perhaps from within the church community!).

# grow hope ACTIONS TO GROW HOPE

A

Plant a food forest in your neighbourhood, yard, or on your church property.  
Find stories of other churches who have done so here:

- ① St. Mary's Anglican Church in Fredericton:  
<https://nb.anglican.ca/news/got-excess-parish-land-plant-a-food-forest>  
Various faith communities: [https://www.faithcommongood.org/faith\\_food\\_forests](https://www.faithcommongood.org/faith_food_forests)
  
- ② For inspiration watch Shubhenda Sharma's video on how to grow a forest in your back yard: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgUOQpW4xes> and his Ted Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjUsobGWhs8>
  
- ③ This article describes food forests being planted across Canada:  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/what-on-earth-food-forests-1.5660211>
  
- ④ Donate to Plant-for-The-Planet (<https://www1.plant-for-the-planet.org>) which funds reforestation projects all over the world. Their website enables you to pick the project you will fund.
  
- ⑤ In The Netherlands, communities have created hubs where unwanted saplings are brought and made available to those who want to plant trees. Be the first to create a "More Trees Now" movement in Canada. Here is the English website for More Trees Now (Meer Bomen Nu): <https://meerbomen.nu/over-ons/in-english>  
This short video also describes the project:  
<https://www.weforum.org/videos/this-dutch-initiative-aims-to-speed-up-forest-planting>

# PRAYERS

## pray PRAYERS

Since this is the last week of our lent journey together, you may wish to end with this reflection before concluding with prayer.

### CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

The biblical vision of a flourishing and abundant creational home for all creatures has framed our exploration over the last six weeks. We have journeyed through the story: shared God's grief for the loss of a flourishing creation, felt the lament of the land and the dispossessed, and have glimpsed the hope of a world where all creatures and peoples live in a renewed creation of abundance and flourishing once again.

It is our hope that this vision has captured your imagination, that the vision of our God, who creates life out of death and whose specialty is resurrection, has drawn you in. Oddly enough, our longing for this vision to be true will mean that we live with continued grief: grief that creation is suffering so deeply, grief that so many people have been severed from their land, grief that creational injustice is so deeply entwined with racial injustice, and grief that our actions seem so small. Living with all of this grief is hard work—not something that we can easily walk through in a six-week period of time.

This is a path that we will all be on for some time. It is a path that we can only walk together, human and non-human, settler and Indigenous, people who are Black and people of colour, immigrant and refugee. We pray that this resource will have equipped you for that journey, that it will have provided space for sharing your grief, will have fed you with stories of hope that will have equipped you with actions and practices to ground you in the love of your place, and, most importantly, we hope that it will have helped you to connect with a community of others, both human and non-human, who can share your grief and join you in imagining healing and hope for the world that God so loved.

1

#### A PRAYER FOR THE RENEWED EARTH

Creator of all hope,  
sometimes our tear-filled eyes  
blur our ability  
to imagine creation renewed.

**Hold us in our grief,  
that we might envision  
all of creation restored.**

Creator of all hope,  
sometimes the cries of injustice  
drown out the voices of the creatures  
singing your new world into being.

**Hold us as we cry,  
that we might hear the music  
of all of creation restored.**

Creator of all hope,  
sometimes the stench of death  
overwhelms the scent of flowing water,  
cedar in the forest,  
and moist earth receiving seed.

**Surround us  
with the fragrance of resurrection,  
that we might inhale the Spirit  
of all of creation restored.**

**Amen.**

2

Praise to you, my God and Creator!  
Your creativity is matched  
by your compassion!  
Today is a new day in the life of creation.  
Let me see and hear,  
taste, touch, and smell  
the thrill of your grace  
the pulse of the Spirit  
in and through all creation.  
Amen.

*dig deep*  
**DIGGING DEEPER:**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE  
THIS WEEK'S THEMES**

**READ**

**PICTURE BOOKS:**

- *The Water Walker* by Joanne Robertson
- *City Green* by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
- *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth* by Oliver Jeffers
- *Fishing With Grandma* by Susan Avingaq and Maren Vsetula
- *Old Enough to Save the Planet* by Loll Kirby
- *Climate Change: What Everyone Needs to Know* by Joseph Romm
- *Beasts at Bedtime: Revealing the Environmental Wisdom in Children's Literature* by Liam Heneghan
- *What a Waste: Trash, Recycling, and Protecting our Planet* by Jess French

**TWEEN AND TEEN:**

- *Heroes of the Environment: True Stories of People who Are Helping to Save the Planet* by Harriet Rohmer
- *Climate Rebels* by Ben Lerwill
- *Stuff: Curious Everyday Stuff that Helps Our Planet* by Maddie Moate and Paul Boston
- *How Can you Save the Planet* by Hendrikus van Hensberger

**TEEN AND ADULT:**

- *We Rise: The Earth Guardians Guide to Building a Movement that Restores the Planet* by Xiuhtezcatl Martinez
- *The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed* by Robin Broad and John Cavanagh
- *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* by Katharine Hayhoe
- *Surprised by Hope* by Tom Wright
- *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings* by John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming and Arne Naess
- *Reforestation Faith: What Trees Teach Us about the Nature of God and His Love for Us* by Matthew Sleeth, MD

## EXPLORE

- An article on a food forest in Muskeg Lake First Nation: <https://canadianfeedthechildren.ca/the-feed/whats-a-food-forest>
- Faith and The Common Good describes food forests planted by faith communities: [www.faithcommongood.org](http://www.faithcommongood.org)

## WATCH

- The Film “Reflection: A Walk with Water” offers a vision on how to radically redesign our relationship with water. The trailer is available here: <https://www.reflectionfilm.com/> and the film should be available elsewhere in 2022
- The Film “Dear Future Children” follows three young activists from Hong Kong, Uganda and Chile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFyhYv-LyG8>

## LISTEN TO MUSIC

- Bruce Springsteen, “My City of Ruins”: 2 versions:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CapO4lucqH4> (big band, live)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpUv6ptY8xw> (quieter, single guitar and the band doing vocals)
- Josh Garrels, “Zion and Babylon”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mqia1Ft1Zy4>

## SING AND DANCE

- Recycling Song Jack Johnson 3Rs Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1mFymbRmv4>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PERMISSIONS

**Page 03:** “Remember that we are all captive . . .” This sentiment, and a number of the resources for action in this curriculum, are in debt to Mary deMocker, *The Parent’s Guide to Climate Revolution: 100 Ways to Build a Fossil-Free Future, Raise Empowered Kids, and Still Get a Good Night’s Sleep*. New World Library, 2018.

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All prayers by Sylvia Keesmaat except:

**Page 12:** prayer #1: adapted by Sylvia Keesmaat from a prayer written by Karen Turner for Church of the Redeemer, Toronto

prayer #2: from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

prayer #3: Sam Hamilton-Poore. *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God’s Creation*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2008. p. 62

**Page 53:** prayer #1 from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

prayer #2 from UN Environmental Sabbath, quoted in Roberts and Amidon, *Life Prayers*. p. 112

**Page 71:** prayer #3 from *Saint Gregory of Nazianzen: Selected Poems*, trans., John McGuckin (Oxford: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1986), p. 7

**Page 84:** prayer #2 from Sam Hamilton-Poore. *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God’s Creation*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2008. p. 50

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We welcome feedback on this curriculum.

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