



SEASON OF CREATION

2026 WORSHIP TOOLKIT





THE SEASON OF CREATION is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. **During the Season of Creation, we join our siblings in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.** Started in 1989 by the Orthodox Church as a day of prayer, the World Council of Churches was key in expanding the celebration from the Day of Prayer for Creation (September 1st) to last until the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, on October 4th.

This year's theme is "Immersion in Living Waters". This toolkit offers resources to help congregations explore that theme in worship and to mobilize around water issues in their community and beyond. You can learn more about Season of Creation in general and this year's particular theme at www.seasonofcreation.org.

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ISSUE FRAMING

(adapted from seasonofcreation.org)

THE CURRENT WATER CRISIS

Ezekiel's vision stands in sharp contrast to the reality of the water crisis we face. According to the United Nations [UN News](https://www.un.org/en/news/story/2019/09/190901), 1.7 billion people lack basic hygiene services at home, and 2.1 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water - that is 1 in 4 people on the globe!

As climate change intensifies, and groundwater extraction increases, several countries are now reaching a so-called “point of water bankruptcy” ([link](#)), that is a condition marked by irreversible losses of natural water capital.

Although access to drinking water is a human right for all, the multifaceted water crisis disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, future generations, and non-human life that has no voice in political or economic systems. These are some of the many challenges:

- Water becomes unaffordable for the poor.
- Impact on health of water borne diseases.
- Impact of industrial discharge of chemicals and other pollutants into rivers.
- Increasing water consumption fueled by the data centers and energy production required by our digital activities, including for use of artificial intelligence.

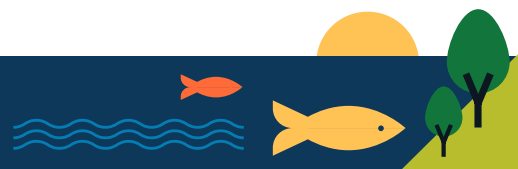


- Poor governance and corruption by companies and governments.
- Impact on food security of droughts, floods, storms and desertification.
- Salination of the soil due to sea level rise or overexploitation of aquifers.
- Violence over competition over scarce water supplies.

These many issues are leading to migration, pushing people into exile and resulting in a loss of homes and culture.

The impact on ecosystems and biodiversity is devastating: according to the World Wide Fund for Nature, we are facing catastrophic declines in aquatic wildlife, with [freshwater populations dropping by a staggering 85 % and marine populations by 56 % in the last 50 years](#).

From a theological perspective, this crisis reflects broken relationships — between humankind and God, within the human family itself, and between human beings and other living beings. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to stress that water pollution has implications related to social justice and equity.



THEOLOGICAL FRAMING

(adapted from seasonofcreation.org)

TEXT AND THEME

“Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. [...] Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”

(Ezekiel 47:9,12)

This year’s **theme**, “Living Water”, explores Ezekiel 47:9 and 12 as a powerful biblical vision of hope and ecological healing. Set amid exile and loss, the image of living water flowing from God’s sanctuary reveals divine healing that renews land, water, biodiversity, and human responsibility towards the whole creation.

Ezekiel has been describing the building of a new temple in the desert from chapter 40 through chapter 46. This new temple is impressive but empty and lifeless. It is only in chapter 47 that life finally appears.

In this passage, the prophet is brought in a vision to the entrance of a future, idealized temple. From beneath its threshold flows water that begins as a trickle and becomes an ever-deepening river - too deep to cross. This river courses through lands once barren, transforming deserts into fertile

deltas, restoring fish, vegetation, and even healing the salt-laden waters of the Dead Sea. The Hebrew verb *šûb* (“to return”) may be imagined spatially as a turning point, comparable to a place along the Jordan River where fish could turn back before being carried into the lifeless waters of the Dead Sea. This notion also has a deep theological meaning of conversion. The imagery is vibrant and dynamic, and yet its ecological significance often gets overshadowed by purely metaphorical readings.

In many Christian traditions, Ezekiel 47 has been read primarily as a future eschatological promise — a depiction of the messianic age when God dwells fully with his people and renews all things. The prophet’s vision is, however, also for healing now, as well as anticipating a broader cosmic restoration. The River of Life represents a renewal that extends beyond human salvation to include the healing of creation itself. The trees whose leaves are “for healing” suggest not only physical sustenance but holistic flourishing, encompassing both humanity and creation. Ezekiel 47:1–12 contains a distinct environmental message that speaks of global healing, renewal and transformation of life, of the interdependence between humanity and the natural world, and of hope through action in caring for the earth, our common home.





ADVOCACY AND ACTION

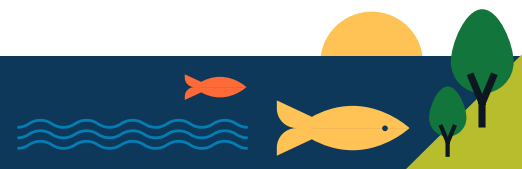
WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS RIGHT NOW: CURRENT ATTACKS ON WATER

Water is both a fundamental physical and spiritual need. Water is connective, restorative, and life-giving. It unites us with God and God's sacred Creation, and we have a moral responsibility to protect it. All major religious traditions recognize the importance of water as that which renews, cleanses, and connects us. Water represents life itself – to eliminate water protections is to dishonor the gift of life given to us by God. As we face the impacts of climate change and increasing environmental degradation, we need stronger protections for all of our waters: from the ocean, to wetlands, to the water we bring into our homes. And yet, many of the laws, regulations and policies originally designed to protect our waters are being rolled back, eliminated or significantly weakened.

Threats to our Ocean

[The World Meteorological Organization's 2025 State of the Climate Report](#) shows that 2015-2025 were the hottest years on record, and in 2025 ocean heat content reached the highest level since the start of records in 1960. The report demonstrates that the ocean has been absorbing about eighteen times the annual human energy use each year for the past two decades. Science shows us that this warming of the ocean is causing land ice to melt and ultimately driving sea levels to rise, impacting our neighbors in coastal communities around the world.

The current administration continues to prioritize extraction over protection. Through the recent five year offshore drilling proposal, the administration would open up untouched waters of Alaska to drilling, attempt to resurrect the offshore oil and gas industry in California, and offer up waters off the coast of Florida that haven't been put up for leasing in decades—in addition to adding



even more leasing in the Gulf of Mexico. This plan would damage these places, and the people who rely on them, for generations.

Further extraction through expanding commercial fishing has placed our Marine National Monuments at risk. Marine National Monuments feature underwater wonders and safe havens for threatened and endangered marine life. These marine protected areas, free from commercially extractive activities such as commercial fishing, deep-sea mining, and oil and gas exploration, are vital ocean refuges that support ocean – and human – health. Scientists agree that the strong protections afforded by marine monuments are necessary to combat the biodiversity and climate crises. These special places in the ocean have been created and protected on a bipartisan basis to preserve America’s cultural, historic, and natural resources, while also uplifting the economy.

Protecting our ocean means divesting from fossil fuels, eliminating new and existing fossil fuel infrastructure and investing in clean and renewable energy, while also protecting the sacred biodiversity of marine national monuments and sanctuaries.

Threats to Wetlands and Waterways

In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its *Sackett v. EPA* decision which overturned decades of federal protections for wetlands and waterways by narrowing the scope of the Clean Water Act. The loss of federal protections means most of our waterways and wetlands are threatened by the dumping of chemicals, sewage, and other pollutants from industries and businesses; stream flows being obstructed by infill; streams being polluted by runoff from mines; and wetlands being filled in or damaged by development or pollution.



In March 2025, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers announced their plan to revise the definition of “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS). This definition determines which types of waters are regulated and protected



under the Clean Water Act. It's estimated that close to 80% of America's remaining wetlands would lose Clean Water Act protections. As written, the rule would leave many waterways vulnerable to pollution, degradation, and destruction, threatening water quality and

community resilience across the country.

[NRDC's 2025 GIS](#) analysis found that between 38 million and 70 million acres of wetlands are at risk of pollution or destruction under modeled scenarios similar to the changes the proposal includes.

AN EXAMPLE OF HOPE: THE BLAKE PLATEAU

Off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina is an



ecological treasure trove found in a region called the Blake Plateau. This extraordinary sacred ecosystem is home to the world's largest deep-sea coral reef habitat, where floating Sargassum seaweed meadows nurture colossal sperm whales, bluefin tuna, whale sharks, threatened loggerhead sea turtles, rare seabirds, and thousands of other species.

In addition to providing an important habitat for fish and marine life, the deepsea

corals on the Blake Plateau consume organic matter that rains down from the ocean's surface and recycle it into essential nutrients for the entire ecosystem. As the Gulf Stream rolls over the plateau, it pushes

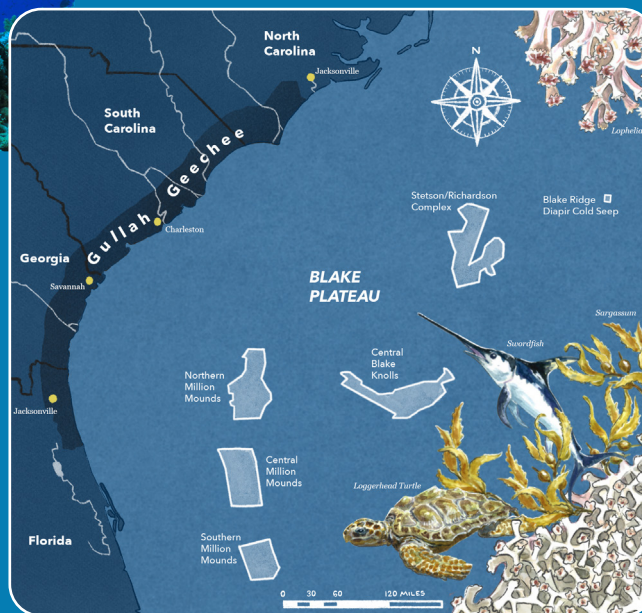
these nutrients back up to the surface, supporting the ocean's wildlife. These nutrients ultimately sustain the region's fisheries, and all of us who rely on them.

For the Gullah/Geechee nation, descendants of African and Indigenous tribes, this site is a sacred ancestral burial ground – “the resting place where the blood and bones of Gullah/Geechee ancestors

have contributed to the growth of this tremendous ecological area,” as Chieftess Queen Quet eloquently states. It stands as a solemn witness to the tragedy of the Middle Passage while also symbolizing the possibility of new life emerging from that horror.

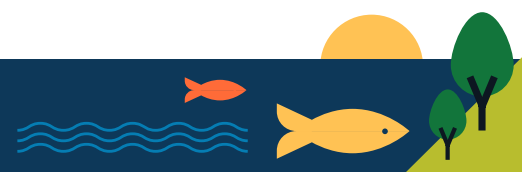
As the Blake Plateau reminds us of the beauty of the darkness, the Season of Creation is an invitation to lament the harms done to God's Creation

and call for a better future together. The Season of Creation offers hope and reignites our imagination of healing and restoration for all of Creation.



Map by Jessica Russo • Illustrations by Richard Jones

Please note that while the Blake Plateau stretches from North Carolina to Florida, this map only shows key areas offshore South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Conversations with scientists helped shape the polygons' boundaries.



CALL TO ACTION

(adapted from seasonofcreation.org)

God calls us to accept our Creator's love (1 John 4:19). Welcoming that love as children, through a continual conversion of mind and heart, is our lifelong calling. If we choose to step into the true living water, we can contribute to a more just and life-giving world for the entire human family as well as for non-human creation.



Food security

Ezekiel's prophecy speaks of trees that "bear fresh fruit every month" (Ezek 47:12). We are called to shape and influence our policies and practices so that all people have access to nourishing and safe food, so that the fruits of biodiversity are shared equitably. Churches can also promote greening projects which reflect Christian values on their own land, and/or equip their members with skills to grow some of their own food.



Water pollution

We are called both to refrain from and to denounce harmful pollution, while at the same time urging governments, local authorities, industry, and agriculture to act responsibly and protect water sources.



Water & sanitation

Many of our siblings still lack regular access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Therefore, we must act so that households, schools, healthcare facilities, and places of worship — including churches and parishes — have access to clean water and proper sanitation.



Tree growing

Many churches now link tree planting to key moments of faith such as baptism, confirmation, and funerals. Let tree growing become an integral part of our spiritual lives. Trees absorb carbon pollution, prevent erosion, reduce flooding, provide food and medicine, and cool urban environments—they truly bring healing to the nations.



Drawing spiritual inspiration from Creation

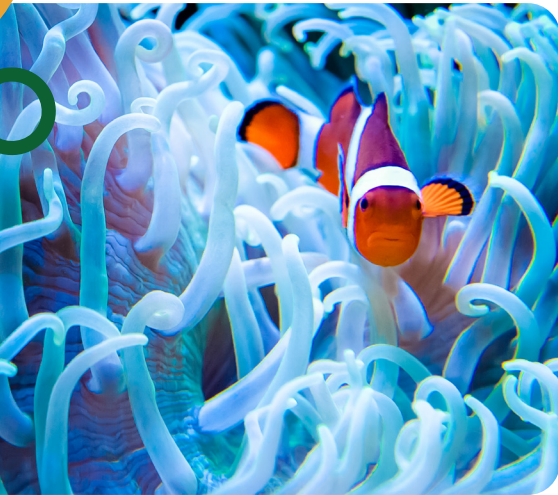
Through contemplation of the natural world created by God (Job 7–12), we are invited to move from domination to humility, from exploitation to care, and from short-term profit to long-term flourishing. This transformation is both spiritual and practical, requiring a rethinking of values, economic systems, and educational priorities.



Environmental education

Parents, catechists, clergy, and faith communities are thus called to foster a holistic care for creation — human and non-human alike — drawing not only on technical knowledge, but also on relationships, ethics, and spiritual formation.





Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration and protection

We are called to restore land in our churches, homes, and communities. There are many initiatives which we can engage with : a Decade of Climate justice has been declared by both the [World Council of Reformed Churches](#) and the [World Council of Churches](#); there are online platforms such as [Laudato si' Action Platform](#), [Anglican Communion Forest](#) and national programmes such as Green Church / [Eglise Verte](#) or [Eco Church - A Rocha International](#).

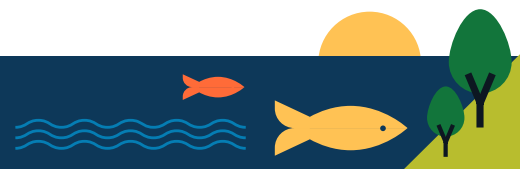


Caring for our oceans

Our “Blue Lung” — which face rising threats from waste discharge, overfishing, pollution, and deep-sea mining. Life and biodiversity beneath the waves must not be treated as out of sight and out of mind. May educators help our communities see and value these marine worlds. May government leaders act with courage to protect marine biomes and livelihoods. And may we choose guardianship that keeps the Blue Lung breathing for generations.



Let us overcome our fear and step into the water of God's love - to be part of the River of Transformation for the world, to see the literal healing and renewal of creation and the blessing of the Earth.



RESOURCES

SERMON STARTER

Ezekiel 47:9, 12

Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish once these waters reach there. It will become fresh, and everything will live where the river goes.

Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish once these waters reach there. It will become fresh, and everything will live where the river goes.

Ezekiel's vision is of a life-giving river. That the river originates in the temple is a sign that it is God's gift, offered freely for all members of the created community. This vision happens in the midst of Israel's exile, a time when the people were disconnected from the land and its gifts in a harsh manner. God gives the prophet an image of a future where God's people rebuild on their own land and the Spirit of God returns to their presence. The river is a sign of restoration and renewal, a sign that life is returning and that that life will be abundant.

Ezekiel's vision is a stark example of prophetic imagination. While much of the environmental justice movement is (rightfully) focused on the devastation that is happening to God's Creation, what is often needed to move us forward is a vision of what life can look like when Creation is allowed to flourish. This is especially true in times

when it feels like disaster is all around us and our relationship to Creation feels broken. The need to convince others that there is a problem is diminishing. The need to envision a hope-filled new world is on the rise.

Prophetic imagination is called for in times of exile. Can we imagine rivers untouched by pollution? Can we imagine oceans free of garbage and harmful plastics? Can we imagine access to clean drinking water for all those who thirst both in our own communities and in cities, towns, and villages across the globe? Water is central to Ezekiel's vision because he knows that there is no future flourishing without it.

Ezekiel 47 is an invitation for preachers to help their community envision a healthy watershed where life is abundant, people are fed, and the land begins to heal. This all starts with water. Between the extremes of droughts and heavy storms, water's impact on communities is deeply felt and it's easy to believe that we have no impact on a force that is so elemental. And yet the vision of a thriving Creation-centered community need not remain a dream. The prophetic vision is not something for which we passively wait. The preacher's task here is to invite the congregation to be immersed in the living waters of their ecosystem and work to protect, restore, and rightly share those waters for the sake of all Creation.





PRAYERS

Living Water

Season of Creation 2026 Prayer (from the Season of Creation Celebration Guide)

Holy God, whose Spirit hovered over the waters at the beginning, we gather as part of your community of all creation, thirsty for your grace. We give thanks for the gift of water, the veins of our common home, that sustains the cedar and the whale, the pasture and the city. We are grateful for the local waters that nourish our homelands and our fellow creatures. We give thanks that in your well-watered garden, every drop is a sacred testament to your love. Yet, we confess that we have treated this gift as a mere commodity. We have choked the seas with our waste and watched the warming tides rise in judgment. We lament the cracked earth of the drought-stricken and the salty tears of the climate refugee. Melt our frozen hearts, O God, and let the waters of repentance flow.

Lord of all Life, you promised that wherever the river flows, everything shall live. Stir in us a calling to care for the waters — to protect the watershed, defend the rights of water, and honor the dignity of the thirsty. May your Word be a spring within us, gushing forth for the healing of the nations. May God our Creator who brought water from the rock sustain us in the desert. May Christ our Lord who is Living Water refresh us for the work of restoration. And may the Holy Spirit carry us on currents of grace until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis

Oct. 4th, 2026 recognizes the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi known for preaching the Gospel to all of Creation.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal
Life.
Amen.*

A Responsive Lord's Prayer for the Season of Creation

Leader: Our Father in heaven

People: *You are also at home in the air, soil, forests and oceans*

Leader: Hallowed be your name

Leader: Our Father in heaven

People: *You are also at home in the air, soil, forests and oceans*

Leader: Hallowed be your name

People: *By the care we take of your Creation*

Leader: Your kingdom come

People: *All that you see is good*

Leader: Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven

People: *Your will to till and care*

Leader: Give us this day our daily bread

People: *That all may have enough to live life in fullness*

Leader: Forgive us our trespasses

People: *Our greed, our exploitation, our lack of concern for other species and for future generations*

Leader: As we forgive those who trespass against us

People: *By reconciliation with justice and peace.*

Leader: Lead us not into temptation

People: *The temptation to equate dominion with exploitation*

Leader: And deliver us from evil

People: *The evil of destroying your gift of creation*

Leader: For yours is the kingdom

People: *Yours, Lord, not ours*

Leader: The power and the glory

People: *In the cross and resurrection*

Leader: For ever and ever

People: *You are the beginning and you are the end. Amen. (So be it)*¹⁵



SONGS AND HYMNS

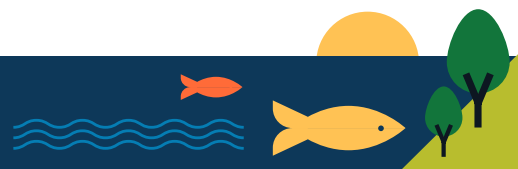
Come to the water

O let all who thirst
Let them come to the water
And let all who have nothing
Let them come to the Lord
Without money, without price
Why should you pay the price
Except for the Lord?
And let all who seek
Let them come to the water
And let all who have nothing
Let them come to the Lord
Without money, without strife
Why should you spend your life
Except for the Lord?
And let all who toil
Let them come to the water
And let all who are weary
Let them come to the Lord
All who labor without rest
How can your soul find rest
Except for the Lord?
And let all the poor
Let them come to the water
And let the ones who are laden
Let them come to the Lord
Bring the children without might
Easy the load and light
Come to the Lord
Come to the Lord
Come to the Lord
Come to the Lord
I will run to you, I will run to you
I will run to you my Lord
I will run to you, I will run to you

Let All Creation Sing

Let all creation sing before the Lord
and every nation of the earth rejoice,
let all the trees lift a shout of joy
for the Lord is King.
Let the deep waters of the sea resound,
let every mountain, every hill sing out,
let all the fields make a joyful sound
for the Lord is King.
Mighty river, barren desert,
howling wind and stormy weather,
every canyon every valley,
sing your praise and give him glory.
Nature proclaims the glory of our God,
nature proclaims his name.
Every star and constellation,
every wonder in the heavens,
silver moon and supernova,
sing a shining hallelujah!
Nature proclaims the glory of our God,
nature proclaims his name.

Honey bees and weeping willows,
grizzly bears and armadillos,
every narwhal and sea otter,
every son and every daughter.
Nature proclaims the glory of our God,
nature proclaims his name.
La la la la la la - All the earth, praise
the Lord
La la la la la la - All the earth, praise
the Lord



Crashing Waters at Creation

*Crashing waters at creation,
ordered by the Spirit's breath,
first to witness day's beginning
from the brightness of night's death.
Parting water stood and trembled
as the captives passed on through,
washing off the chains of bondage,
channel to a life made new.*

*Cleansing water once at Jordan
closed around the one foretold,
opened to reveal the glory
ever new and ever old.
Living water, never ending,
quench the thirst and flood the soul.
Wellspring, source of life eternal,
drench our dryness, make us whole.*

ABOUT RESOURCE PARTNERS



**Ecumenical
Patriarch
Dimitrios I
proclaimed
1 September**

**as a day of prayer for creation
for the Orthodox in 1989.**

In fact, the Orthodox church year starts on that day with a commemoration of how God created the world.

The World Council of Churches was instrumental in making the special time a season, extending the celebration from 1 September until 4 October. Following the leadership of Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I and the WCC, Christians worldwide have embraced the season as part of their annual calendar. Pope Francis established the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Roman Catholic Church in 2015,

and in 2019 started celebrating the Season of Creation as well.

In recent years, statements from religious leaders around the world have also encouraged the faithful to take time to care for creation during the month-long celebration.

The season starts 1 September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations.

Throughout the month-long celebration, the world's 2.2 billion Christians come together to care for our common home.

Activities and resources to celebrate the Season of Creation are supported by an ecumenical steering commit-

tee and a coalition of partners from around the world.

**For more information visit
seasonofcreation.org.**



Creation Justice Ministries represents the creation care and environmental justice policies of major Christian denominations throughout the United States. We

work in cooperation with 39 national faith bodies including Protestant denominations and Orthodox communions as well as regional faith groups, and congregants to protect and restore God's Creation.

**For more information visit
creationjustice.org.**



