

Water Justice



An order of service for Season of Creation

Background

‘Justice should flow down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream’ Amos 5.24

Today many people live in an environment where water has stopped rolling and the ever flowing streams have dried up and become ‘never flowing’. In this context of water injustice this service invites us to worship the God of justice with the hope that water justice will flow like a river and eco-righteousness will permeate our hearts and minds like an overflowing stream.

This service was prepared by the Student Christian Movement India (SCMI) and first published by the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN).

The Virtual water cube activity demonstrates how much water it takes to produce many of the foods we eat regularly. People could be invited to explore it during the service, or it could be created for a separate occasion. Find information and instructions at:

www.ctbi.org/ctresources

Call to worship

Dear brothers and sisters,
as many rivers merge together into the sea,
we have come together to worship our God,
the fountain of living water.

As we worship God in spirit and in truth,
let our hearts overflow with praise,
let us be cleansed by the waters of God's grace and forgiveness.

Let us be refreshed and restored by Jesus Christ
who promises us the waters of life through his resurrection.

Prayer of adoration and thanksgiving

With hearts welling up in praise for God the fountain of all goodness,
let us adore the Lord.

God of the deep ocean and the tiny brook,
we praise you and adore you for the gift of water that sustains all life.
At this time of worship we remember with thanksgiving
the manifold manifestations of your grace through the gift of water.

Leader We remember the waters of Massah and Meribah and
All **we praise and thank you for you are the God of gracious provision.**

Leader We remember the healing waters of the pool of Siloam and
All **we praise and thank you for you are a God of ceaseless compassion.**

Leader We remember the baptism in the waters of the river Jordan
and
All **we praise and thank you for you are a God of transformation.**

Leader Today we worship and adore you, God of provision,
compassion and transformation.

All **Let this worship enable us to be responsible stewards of your provision, channels of your compassion and agents of your transformation.**
Amen.

Hymn Such as *Morning has broken*

Prayer of confession

Leader God, the very source of life, whose spirit hovered over waters at the time of creation; God in Jesus Christ, who came as living waters to quench the thirsty;
God the Holy Spirit, who waters and brings forth the fruit;
we come to your presence confessing our attitudes of greed, dominance and insensitivity towards your wonderful creation, and particularly towards water.

All **Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.**

Leader We confess that we have been irresponsible in our use of water, wasting it to satisfy our comfortable lives. In many places we have commodified and privatised water, a natural resource, denying people access to it. In the name of development projects, water sources have been drained or polluted with industrial waste, causing risk to flora and fauna.

All **Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.**

Leader We acknowledge the lack of cooperation between different authorities and organisations to manage water resources fairly. We confess our failure, as faith communities, to address water justice and seek forgiveness for not speaking out for the thirsty and the dying in situations of drought.

All **Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.**

Leader We confess to being silent spectators as many vulnerable communities walk miles every day in search of water for their families.
We regret our involvement in the commodification of water, which has resulted in contamination and reduction of water supplies.
We come to your presence ashamed of our apathy and insincerity towards the abuse of water and other natural resources, asking you to inspire us to be challenged to conserve, preserve and use water prudently.

All **Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice.**

Absolution

All **God who brought water out of the rock,
God who quenched the thirst of those dying in the wilderness,
God who in Jesus gave the living waters
so that those who taste them would never thirst,
God who in Jesus died on the Cross thirsty,
for there was none to quench his thirst,
listen to all those who truly confess
and grant us forgiveness so that we act responsibly in our use of water,
become sensitive to the desperate needs of those without water,
and gain wisdom in conserving and preserving water so that rivers roll out in justice among all nations and all peoples.
Amen.**

Scripture readings **Amos 5:24
John 4:7-42**

Intercessory prayer

You will need: a glass of clean water, a glass of salty water, a bottle of cola and an empty glass. You might like to play soft music in the background.

Leader Let us pray for the whole universe. (*Hold up the glass of clean water.*) Lord let this glass of clean water remind us of the available sources of fresh drinking water. Help us to protect the gift of water and utilise it with the spirit of sanctity and responsibility. May our lives be so balanced that greed makes way for need and the tendency to waste makes way for a commitment to save.

All **Fountain of life, wash us clean from greed and sin.**

Leader (*Hold up the glass of salty water.*) Let this glass of salty water remind us of the tears of those whose lives have been threatened by the excessive salination of their water resources. Let those who contribute to the rising sea levels shed tears of repentance and learn to lead a simple life so that others can 'simply live'.

All **Creator of new life, transform us so that we may be channels of life.**

Leader (*Hold up a bottle of cola.*) God of justice, we pray for all those who are resisting multinational corporations and developmental processes which plunder our natural resources and threaten the livelihood of millions. We pray for all organisations involved in the preservation of water, and with it, your gift of life. Help, guide and sustain them in their endeavours.

All **God of justice strengthen those who seek to preserve your creation.**

Leader *(Hold up the empty glass.)* Lord, we pray for all communities involved in the issues of water justice. Give us compassion to walk with those who lack the water of life. Help us to empty ourselves of prejudice and fill us with a vision of solidarity and fellowship so that we can work together in conserving the Gift of water.

All **God of justice give us your vision.**

Leader Lord, we pray for the universal church and its mission and vision. Inspire us to work towards water justice. Transform our lives so that we may be channels of justice - not just in what we preach, but in our daily practice. Let your churches be role models within our communities in conserving water and preserving life in all its fullness. Bring churches together to work in unity so that justice will prevail and water will be available for our generation and future generations.

All **God of hope make us instruments of hope.**

Leader We bring these prayers to you in the name of Christ, our Saviour,

All **Amen.**

Hymn **All creatures of our God and King**

All creatures of our God and king
Lift up your voice and with us sing
O praise ye Alleluia
O brother sun with golden beam
O sister moon with silver gleam
O praise ye O praise ye
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

O brother wind, air, clouds and rain
By which all creatures ye sustain
O praise ye Alleluia
Thou rising morn in praise rejoice
Ye lights of evening find a voice
O praise ye, O praise ye
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

O sister water flowing clear
Make music for the Lord to hear
Alleluia, Alleluia
O brother fire who lights the night
Providing warmth enhancing sight
O praise ye, O praise ye
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

Dear mother earth who day by day
Unfolding blessings on our way
Alleluia, Alleluia
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow
Let them God's glory also show
O praise ye, o praise ye
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

The Lord's Prayer (Re-read)

**All Our God, father and mother,
 from, through and to whom all lives flow,
 Your name is holy for you water every creature with life.
 May the 'waters rolling in justice' come down among us
 and dwell as in your presence.
 Give us water sufficient for our living,
 and help us to share water and other resources with those
 who are dying of thirst.
 Forgive us our insincerity, insensitivity and irresponsibility
 in saving and preserving water, and for our abuse of creation.
 And teach us to forgive one another.
 Lead us not into the temptation of accumulation,**

**greed and power over water,
and deliver us from avaricious life styles.
For your word is like water cleansing us from evil,
your reign is righteousness flowing like an ever-flowing
stream
dismantling the powers and principalities
from generation to generation,
from history to history, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The blessing

**All May God, who caused rain to water the face of the earth,
May Jesus Christ, who gives us the water of eternal life,
May the Holy Spirit, who quenches thirst with gifts from
the spring of life
inspire and challenge us to become advocates for water justice
and bless us all to flow as 'justice rolls down as waters'
both now and forever more.
Amen.**

Water Justice

Sermon notes

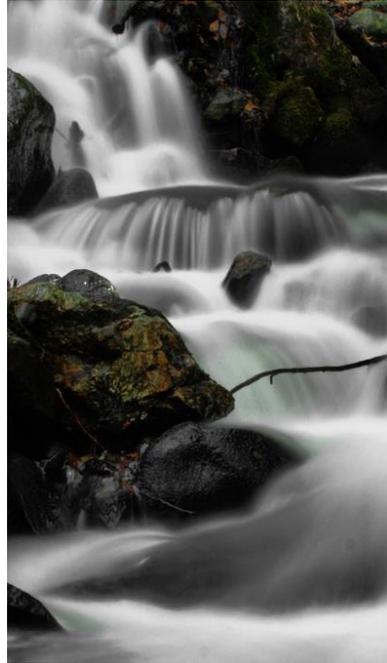
for Season of Creation 2013

Using Amos as a starting point

'Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (Amos 5:24)

- Water was (and is) scarce in the lands of the Bible and polluted or salty water was a problematic issue, hence the need for an ever-flowing stream. Consequently, to the Bible writers generally the case for clean, accessible water was so obvious that it hardly needed stating.
- Amos 5:24 starts with 'But' because justice is contrasted with the behaviour of those to whom Amos is prophesying. Compare this justice vision to the vision of water flowing from the temple of God to bring 'fruit for food' and 'leaves for healing' (Ezekiel 47:12 and the preceding verses Ezekiel 47:1-12).

- We often use water unthinkingly (see the *Water Factsheet* at www.ctbi.org.uk/ctresources).
- Water is still not used justly. Consider areas of the world where water is a cause of conflict (between Israel and Palestine over the Jordan, between India and Bangladesh over the Ganges, between various central Asian countries where great inland lakes are drying up, and in the upper Amazon).
- How many of the world's poorest people have access to the clean drinkable water supplies which we take for granted? This is not just a matter of wells and pipelines but also of the need to reduce the pollution of sources. And where there are projects to dam rivers (for example, in South East Asia, in China and in the Congo basin) there are environmental and other challenges. Yet it rarely makes economic sense to ship water over large distances. Some parts of the world simply get too little rain to support a population which now depends on that rain whilst others still have plenty.
- Climate change might affect all this in all sorts of ways. Many climate scientists predict more extreme weather events. It is possible that future generations will see higher sea levels (as the ice caps melt) but perhaps also less, or at least less predictable, rain.
- Against all these factors, what might be a just distribution of the world's water resources? And what might an ever-flowing stream be like for the world's poorest peoples?



Using the woman at the well as a starting point

The woman said to Jesus, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I might never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.' (John 4.15)

- The woman is puzzled (John 4.11) by the notion of water which neither runs out nor has to be drawn from a well. What must it have been like for women in many places in the world to spend a significant part of their waking hours collecting water from distant wells? What about those who still do it today? See, for example, [The long trek for water](#) , [Water and sanitation](#), [It's all too easy to forget what a miracle water is](#). What might such women make of the endless supplies of drinkable running water from the tap with which we are familiar?
- What action are we called to take so that people in today's world may indeed 'never be thirsty' literally as well as metaphorically?



Other biblical resources

There are numerous potential Biblical starting points for reflection on water. Significant examples include:

- Land dividing water in the creation story (Genesis 1:2 and 6-9; Psalm 24:2; Psalm 136:6)
- The great flood (Genesis 6–9)
- New Testament imagery about rebirth through water some of which (such as John 3:5 and 1 Peter 3:20) draws on the great flood story

- Purification uses of water (Leviticus 14:8, 2 Kings 5:1-19, Matthew 27:24, Mark 7.3) including foot washing (Luke 7:44; John 13:1-20) and the pool of Siloam (John 5:2-18)
- Water offered to a guest (Job 22:7 and Matthew 10:42) and the woman at the well (John 4:7-42)

Baptism imagery from all four gospels (Matthew 3, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:15-22 and John 1:19-28)

- Eschatological rivers (Ezekiel 47:1-12, Amos 5.24 and Revelation 21:6 and 22:1).

These sermon notes were written by Dudley Coates, a local preacher in the Bridport and Dorchester Methodist Circuit and a former Vice President of the Methodist Conference.



www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime

Credits

These materials were prepared by the Student Christian Movement India (SCMI) and first published by the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), a project initiated by the World Council of Churches comprising a network of churches and Christian organizations promoting people's access to water around the world.

Sermon notes are by Dudley Coates.

Find out more about the EWN at <http://water.oikoumene.org/en/>

Photos: p1 [United Nations Photo](#), p8 [Gates Foundation](#)