Reflections on the Water of Life

Meditations for
THE FIVE SUNDAYS IN LENT
AND PALM SUNDAY

Written and Compiled by
Members of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN)
2017
Cathedrals and churches on four continents have come together to raise awareness and activism about water by launching the JustWater program. This program is focused on celebrating, protecting, and ensuring equal access to the gift of water for all, and is organized by St. George’s Cathedral (Cape Town), St. Paul’s Cathedral (London), St. Paul’s Cathedral (Melbourne), and Trinity Church Wall Street (New York).

Major events are scheduled to coincide with the season of Lent and around UN World Water Day on March 22, 2017, to support social justice efforts on water issues. The program aims to bring people together and encourage action on local needs and concerns, whether these are flooding, drought, rising tides, or access to fresh water and sanitation.

LEARN MORE AND TAKE ACTION: JustWater2017.org

WATER JUSTICE
TRINITY INSTITUTE 2017

Water is a gift. Water is life.
As water crises increase, access to safe and clean drinking water decreases. Faith communities worldwide can help.

MARCH 22–24, 2017

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Be part of Trinity Institute 2017: Water Justice, a global theological conference held in New York City and webcast all over the world. Water is both central to Christian theology and essential for all life. As human-caused climate change leads to increased water crises, access to safe and clean drinking water decreases—particularly for the poor and marginalized. You’re invited to join faith communities worldwide to engage directly with key water justice initiatives and take concrete action to help increase access to safe and clean drinking water for all.
These Lenten reflections on water speak to an urgent global crisis. The crisis itself is felt across the expanse and depth of the blue planet that is our common home. In a multitude of ways and to varying degrees, we are a large part of the problem, and we can be part of the solution. That is why these reflections – prepared especially for Lent – have been written.

The contributors have been drawn from diverse geographical regions and ecclesiastical Provinces of the Anglican Communion. We are part of a wonderfully diverse church. Regardless of the different places and cultures that the contributors represent, they all call out, each with their own distinctively Christian voice, something deep and sacred within our bodies and souls. Together, they express our common spiritual longings, our struggles, and our loves – our common humanity.

This is important – our common home and our common humanity – because the key to our survival, for people of faith everywhere, is in finding a sustainable, just, and spiritual foundation of our “life together” as quickly as we can. We don’t have much time.

We sincerely thank the six contributors to this Lenten series for their heart-felt work, and the Trinity Institute of Trinity Church, Wall Street (The Episcopal Diocese of New York) for making this possible.

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Produced in association with Trinity Church Wall Street. For more resources on water justice, please visit: TI2017.org • JustWater2017.org
The First Sunday in Lent

Living with the Abundance and Scarcity of Water

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Helen-Ann Hartley
The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

“as the deer longs for the water brooks…” (Psalm 42:1)

Opening Prayer

O God, the birds sing of the new day,
the sun bursts through,
and people begin to awaken,
humanity stirs, spirits are alive.
Implant within us the gifts
of wisdom and discernment
so that the everburning fire
of the Holy Spirit might shine forth
like the rays of the sun.
Hail to you O Christ, the navigator
and guide of our waka* of faith. Amen

Prayer written by the Venerable Dr. Hone Kaa, 1941-2012

* A waka is a Māori canoe, guiding its people over the waters to new lands.

Water is a finely balanced issue for farmers. Too much of it, and the ground becomes drenched and unproductive, too little means that the grass doesn't grow and livestock starve. I have learned to think twice before commenting on what the weather is doing. In parts of the South Island of New Zealand, average rainfall can vary between nine metres on the western side of the Southern Alpine range, and next-to-nothing a few miles away on the eastern side of that mountainous range. I live near the mighty River Waikato, the longest river in the country. Its name means “full flowing water” in Maori, and it winds its way from the volcanic plateau in the central North Island out to the Tasman Sea to the northeast. To the north, sisters and brothers of the Pacific struggle with rising sea levels, loss of land, livelihood, and home. Closer to home, political debate rages over who has rights to the water and to controlling it. Water is a constant, we cannot escape it, nor can we ignore its force. The Psalmist compares the search for God to the deer longing for refreshment in the wilderness. It is a powerful image as we journey through Lent. Where do we catch glimpses of God at work?

The coach journey to Milford Sound in the Fiordland National Park of Aotearoa, New Zealand’s South Island, takes us through a mountainous landscape with high peaks topped by snow, past chasms of rock hewn out by water creating a cheese-like texture over millennia, onwards towards the fiord itself, crafted by glacial movement creating a majestic inlet that leads out to the ocean. On either side of mountains that are so high you cannot but look upwards, cascades of teeming water flow down crashing into the depths below. How can such abundance...
be placed alongside scarcity? The many different expressions and experiences of water in Aotearoa, New Zealand remind me of the challenges faced by my sisters and brothers throughout the Anglican Communion. Drought can have a devastating impact, flooding equally so. So often those who are affected the most are the least able to access help, and are forgotten by a world beset with procrastination and denial over climate change.

Surrounded by water in its many forms, and in the many conversations that I have with farmers in my Diocese where the rural economy is central, I understand the urgent need for advocacy and justice that goes further afield than my own immediate context. The deer’s eternal search for God is our search too, and we cannot hope to find glimpses of the divine unless we care about God’s Kingdom and all who dwell in it.

**Questions for Reflection**

How do you catch glimpses of God’s work in the water around you? Which of your senses do you primarily use?

When you think of water, do your thoughts bring to mind abundance or scarcity?

Have you ever experienced serious thirst – a genuine longing – for water? Have you experienced it for more than a few hours, or more than a day? If not, can you imagine what it would be like?

**Recommended Resources**


“To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life” (Revelation 21:6)

Opening Prayer

Lord, help us to honour the intrinsic value of water, the purpose of water, how it has been connected with all things in nature, and to hear the voice of water. Lord forgive us, if we have negated the divine blessing of Water. Let your heavenly blessing – the Water of Life – flow abundantly to quench the thirst of all. Amen.

Many wars of the 20th century were fought for oil. Wars of the 21st century will be fought for water. In 2016, three hundred and thirty million people, more than a quarter of India’s population, were hit by drought. High temperatures plagued almost all parts of India, with scores of deaths reported from heatstroke. This year, temperatures have risen earlier than normal, increasing concerns about the rising death toll. The whole creation has been groaning for water due to desertification, which is an irreversible process. Migration of poor people and wild animals is now common. The people of India who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change have done the least to cause it. Because climate change is a global phenomenon, we are asking developed countries to stop the morally wrong and misguided development paradigm they are following.

We think globally and act locally. Locally, we fight against those who raze the hills, destroy wetlands, and clear the forests, while ignoring the sanctity of those same hills, wetlands and forests which are the storehouses of water. We are networking with other environmental NGOs who resist development activities that disturb the rhythm of nature. Recently, we declared our solidarity with an agitation against the construction of an airport on 2.8 km² of land. We declared that we do not need an airport by denying the basic right of water to the eighty percent of people of that area. Due to this mass agitation of the people, the government had to abandon their “development project.” In addition, we are promoting rain water harvesting in each of our parishes to preserve and enhance the groundwater table; and we are propagating a wonderful plant, Vetiver, which is a very effective means of soil and water conservation, sediment control, land stabilization and rehabilitation, and phyto-remediation.

The Holy Bible assigns attributes of divinity to water by relating it to Yahweh, God, heaven, and even Jesus himself. Innocent Jesus, who was persecuted and crucified by the people with vested economic and political interests, said, “I am thirsty.” The meaning is symbolic, but it also speaks clearly and directly. The innocent poor people of India and other living beings are suffering due to scarcity of water, which is one direct and terrible result of climate change. Like Jesus two thousand years ago, they are now saying, “We are thirsty.”

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink...” (John 7:37). Divine blessings are showered upon all creatures on this Earth, and it is the right of living beings to get the heavenly gift of water – abundantly. That is why Revelation states that “to the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life” (not only to human beings, but to all creations that thirst). The Church must resist investing in unethical human activities and unjust development paradigms. Both go against the rhythm of nature. Instead, we must collaborate with God for the redemption of nature. As we go forth in Christ, let us remember that water is a divine blessing to be treasured, to be shared with all creations, and to be protected for future generations.
Questions for Reflection

How do you feel about water as a reason for going to war? Would you be willing to share limited water supplies, if a neighboring community had no water?

An executive of a large multi-national corporation has said that water is a right, but not a free good. What do you think he might mean?

Could the same principle apply to the air we breathe?

Recommended Resources

For further reading and study on conditions of ongoing drought and the water crisis in India, – as well as responses by the church:

https://www.google.co.in/search?q=drought+in+india+2016&espv=2&biw=1600&bih=775&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiAy_Cyla_OAhVktY8KHdF0BEwQsAQIGg


http://www.ndtv.com/topic/india-drought?browserpush=true


Earth Bible Sermons (three volumes 2015, 2016) edited by Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad, published by CSI & ISPCK www.ispck.org.in

The Third Sunday in Lent

The River of Life

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Mash
The Anglican Church of Southern Africa

“A river watering the garden flowed from Eden” (Genesis 2:10)

Opening Prayer

Spirit of Living Water
You hold all of creation in your womb
And spring us forward onto the earth at birth.

Spirit of Tides,
Remind me of the rise and fall of your rhythms
So that I may discover them deep within my own being.

Spirit of Greenness,
Bring moistness and vigour to my life
So that I might savour the experience of your energy
Moving through me out into the world.

Blessings of water be upon me.
May I be carried by the flow of the great river of life.
May I discover a hidden spring within, gushing forth.
May I be carried to the shores of the sacred and renewed.

From Christine Valters Paintner, Water, Wind, Earth, and Fire, the Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements, Sorin Books, 2010

In the beginning, God placed human beings in the Garden of Eden to be earth keepers of this beautiful blue planet. The biblical story of Eden first appears with a rural image of water – “a river watering the garden flowed from Eden” (Genesis 2:10).

Rivers are signs of hope, symbols of life. The Land of Israel was a dry land, with no great rivers like Egypt or Mesopotamia. Because their only major river was the Jordan, the people of Israel were dependent on rain for their water. As people who had lived through drought and famine, they knew the pain and anguish of those days of calamity when the streams would run dry.

How much, then, does this biblical yearning for water and springs in the desert resonate in the heart of Africa? Africa’s agriculture is characterized by a high percentage of smallholder farmers (80 percent) who cultivate low-yield staple food crops on small plots. These farms depend on rain. Lack of rain brings drought and poverty.

Parishioners in the northern part of the Diocese of Namibia expressed their anguish last year after a devastating drought. The government had told them that their only option was to bring their cattle in for slaughter before
they died of starvation. The cattle are their future – their family’s education, the money for the daughter’s wedding. All this was lost as the slaughtered cattle flooded the market and the price of meat crashed. When the rains fail, the rivers dry up and families are thrown into short-term disaster, and long-term poverty.

In this biblical picture of water, we see a river flowing from Eden. The river brings life: it does not flow as a raging torrent, destroying topsoil and carrying away homes in floods. Rather, it provides water, food, trade, and a place for recreation and joy.

Today, rivers have become polluted, if not dried up, because of climate change, the construction of mega-dams, alien plant growth and deforestation. The fish are dying and the birds have fled. Every day 1,400 children die from diarrhea caused by dirty water. This is just a portion of the 4 million deaths from water-related diseases and poor sanitation each year. Worldwide, more than 700 million people lack access to safe water and more than two billion do not have adequate sanitation.

In the face of this bleak picture, the Bible ends with an urban vision of a new river of life, of Eden restored:

“There angel showed me the river of life-giving water, shining like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the city’s main street. On each side of the river is the tree of life, which produces twelve crops of fruit, bearing its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:1-2

On my way to work on a busy freeway in urban Cape Town, I cross a polluted river filled with junk and toxic waste. A few months ago, the traffic slowed to a crawl on the same road. At first, I thought it was an accident, but I then realized that the cars had stopped because a flock of over fifty flamingos was taking off from the river. Flashing pink and black, their wings beat as they took off into the sun. Efforts to clean the river though local clean-ups and banning factories from dumping chemicals had restored the water quality – and the flamingoes had returned.

May the flamingo be a symbol of creation restored – a sign of the river of the Water of Life flowing out to bring life and hope. And may the cattle grow fat on a thousand hills.

Questions for Reflection

Baptism brings the element of water into our sacramental life in a tangible and visible way. The water of baptism represents the seas, rivers, lakes, marshes, snow, clouds, mist, and streams of the whole earth. We know the river where Jesus was baptized – the Jordan river. But often we don’t know from which river our baptismal water flowed on its way to the font! How would our attitude and relationship to that river, and its preservation, be changed, if we could discover our baptismal river and remind ourselves of its sacredness?

Closing Prayer

Teach us to live in you as fish live in water.
Teach us to be borne of the Spirit as the birds are borne of the wind.


Recommended References


http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/issues-we-work-on/water
“Send your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back” (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Opening Prayer

Jesus, you are the Source of Living Water, our Friend, and our Salvation. We pray for all those who do not have clean water to drink. Purify, protect, and multiply their sources of water that they may – without fear of harming themselves or their children – find nourishment. Amen.

Adapted from “Prayer of the Day: Clean Water” by the Web Editors of Sojourners.”

Our diocese is located in the arid Chaco region of northern Argentina, which is mostly covered by dry tropical forests. The majority of the 150 widely dispersed congregations are made up of indigenous hunter-gatherer peoples. The rest are campesinos, known locally as criollos.

Sitting with some criollos in a community deep in the forest, I asked how many wells they had managed to drill as a result of a recent water project. “I have no idea,” said one man. “We learnt to make wells,” he continued. “Some taught others, and one or two went on to drill wells in other communities, for a fee. So we have no real idea how many wells have been drilled.”

I found this encouraging, as it is not often that you come across such successful development projects in this region. My enthusiasm dampened when I learned that the water from most of the wells is either salty or biologically unfit for human consumption. There is “sweet water” in the Chaco, but this can only be accessed through the deep-bore holes of commercial drilling, which these poor families cannot possibly afford.

The poor in the Chaco have to make do with whatever water they can gain access to, even if it is of marginal quality. They collect rain water and store it in discarded plastic bottles for drinking. They use the salty water from their wells for the rest of their needs, especially for their cattle and goats when there is none left in the rain-fed lagoons. As a last resort, they may buy water from people with deep wells.

In the eyes of the poor, marginal water is better than nothing. In a manner of speaking, they make do with the bread-crumbs that fall from the table, but like millions of others around the globe, they often pay with their health. Joseph Treaster, writing in the Harvard Review of Latin America (Winter, 2013), put it in a nutshell: “People suffering from water-borne diseases take up about half of all the hospital beds in the world. And each year the diseases carried in water kill nearly two million people, mostly children under five years of age.” I doubt that people with clean, drinkable water realize what the situation is really like for those who don’t.

Tragically, the situation for these campesinos here in northern Argentina, like that of millions of poor around the world, will probably worsen. Rainfall has become erratic. Deforestation by commercial farmers leads to the salinization of ground water. These changes in land-cover have immediate consequences. They mean that rain
does not collect in the lagoons that the campesinos use for their animals. And what little surface water remains is being contaminated with agrochemicals.

As I drove home along dry dusty roads, reflecting on what I had heard, two thoughts struck me. The first was the fact that a project that had failed to deliver clean water could, due to their dire circumstances, still be put to good use by these campesinos. Second, a long-term and sustainable solution to their problem is unlikely to be found in shallow wells. But, a political process aimed at ensuring the ecological integrity of the Chacos’ landscape could be the answer they need.

I wondered, as I sometimes do, whether the Church can realistically respond to this type of challenge – dire and urgent as it is. The writer of Ecclesiastes encourages us to push forward in doing what we can, but the growing complexity of the problem demands that we must ensure that the “bread” we send is appropriate to the needs.

Questions for Reflection

Do you know where the water that you use comes from? Do you know where your waste water goes?

If you were to reduce your consumption of clean water, who might benefit from your actions?

What might Ecclesiastes 11:1 mean with regard to helping people who do not have access to clean drinking water?

Recommended Resources

To learn about the “hidden water” we use every day, without realizing it, see http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/embedded-water/

The Water Footprint Network helps us become aware of water usage in everyday consumption, and it provides a good starting point for sharing clean fresh water in order to sustain communities across the world and all God’s creation.

http://waterfootprint.org/en/

https://sojo.net/articles/prayer-day-clean-water
Brokenness, Healing, Wholeness: Water Connects Us All

Michael Schut
The Episcopal Church

“The burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water” (Isaiah 35:7)

Lent derives from the Old English word *lencten*, meaning “springtime.” It is often associated with renunciation – a time of fasting and repentance. Springtime, on the other hand, is a season of abundance, renewal, and hope.

Isaiah’s images move in a hopeful direction toward a kind of springtime: thirsty, burning ground transformed to pools and springs. But, when I look at the data concerning our use of water, abundance and renewal are not the first words that come to mind. Let me share a few recent vignettes from the United States of America, where I live.

The Colorado River provides water for 30 million people, coursing through some of our more arid states. It is so tapped for agricultural, industrial and municipal use that its waters now rarely reach the Gulf of California. The burning sands are not always transformed into pools of life!

Flint, Michigan, is home to almost 100,000 people. Nearly half of them live in poverty. Over half of them are black. In order to cut costs, the city switched its water source to the Flint River – but neglected to treat the water sufficiently, leading to very high lead levels in municipal drinking water. Children’s health and development have been affected. Government officials are under investigation; some have been charged. It is a unique story and yet somehow familiar — low-income and marginalized communities continue to be more negatively impacted by environmental degradation than anyone else. Here, the ground, and the people, are not thirsty for water, but for clean water.

My hometown is Seattle in Washington State, in the northwestern corner of the United States. We are known for our gray, wet weather. But for the three summer months, we receive very little rain. During those arid months, our water comes as snowmelt from the Cascade Mountains. Snow is our water security, like a vast vat of water slung over the mountains’ prodigious shoulders. As the climate warms, however, annual snowpack is decreasing: between 20-80 percent since 1955, depending on where in the State you look. That mountain moisture is still there – it just falls as rain more often than it once did, leading to more winter floods, and less summer snow melt. The snowpack turns our thirsty ground into springs of water – but those springs are significantly threatened by climate change.

Among all these profound interconnections, signs of hope are emerging. In 2014, for the first time in 16 years, the Colorado River reached the Gulf of California. A political agreement between Mexico and the United States (known as Minute 319) is credited for reuniting river and sea. When wrongdoing is discovered, as in Flint, government officials can be held accountable. And, in Washington State, one of our governor’s top priorities is addressing climate change.

Mexico and the US agree on a policy change, and a river is partially restored, an estuary replenished, and numerous species given hope for survival. Flint officials cut corners and babies and children get sick, even die. A Washington governor seeks to establish strong climate policy and all the world benefits, at least a bit, from reduced carbon emissions.

In the Western world we tend to think of the self as a skin-encapsulated ego. Indigenous peoples know otherwise; their sense of the interconnection of everything is “readily demonstrable and irrefutable scientifically.” The water within us becomes water vapor, rain, tree, frog, fish, and ocean: all interconnected self, again. Water evaporated from your home becomes water vapor; becomes rain falling on the Pacific Ocean; becomes vapor again and falls as snow over the
Cascade Mountains; becomes melting snow, joining the Cedar River Watershed which supplies Seattle’s water; and, finally, the water from your home becomes the water in my home, next to me, in a glass, as I write.

**Closing:** It strikes me that Isaiah’s verse could also be read spiritually, claiming that a parched soul can indeed be filled again. Could it be that the transformation of our relationship with water, and indeed with all of God’s creation, is intimately tied to the healing of our parched and thirsty hearts?

The promise of the waters of baptism is that we are made whole again. Perhaps humanity is waking up to the fact that wholeness, the restoration of relationships, is not only with God or our human neighbor, but also with creation, with those very baptismal waters.

**Prayer**

Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer,

We take for granted that which we have always had without realizing its preciousness until it is gone, or threatened. We confess that our relationships often reflect brokenness: in how we treat our neighbor, in how we love our families, in how we pollute our waters, air, and soil.

May our hearts be soft and open that we may so fall in love with the beauty and gift of life that those very hearts might break at the brokenness, rejoice at every sign of healing, remain resolute to act for justice, extend mercy to all, including ourselves, and find hope in you and the love which flows from your heart to all of creation. In Christ’s name, Amen.

**Questions for Reflection**

Do you ever feel or sense that a transformation in our relationship with God’s creation might also heal part of that which ails our hearts? How so? What words would you use to describe that?

What are some of the signs of hope in your part of the world in terms of how we treat water?

How do you think your faith calls you to respond to concerns connected to water, or other “environmental” realities around you?

Do you think faith communities broadly, and the Anglican Communion specifically, have an important role to play in the water crisis? How would you describe that role and why it is important?

Think back on your life. Have you ever had what you would call a mystical or deeply profound experience connected to water? If so, and if you feel comfortable, share that story with your group. What does it teach you about yourself and about God?

**Recommended Resources**

Food & Water Watch [http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org) champions healthy food and clean water for all.

The Children and Nature Network [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org) is leading the movement to connect all children, their families and communities to nature through innovative ideas, evidence-based resources and tools, broad-based collaboration and support of grassroots leadership.
In Death He Gave Living Water

The Rt. Rev. Ellinah Wamukoya
The Anglican Church of Southern Africa

“So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands…” (Matthew 27:24)

Opening Prayer

God our Father, your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth; it washes away our sins and brings eternal life. Remember your mercies, O Lord, and with your eternal protection sanctify your servants, for whom Christ your Son, by the shedding of his Blood, established the Paschal Mystery. AMEN.

Water has always played a prominent role in religion, mythology and art. It is seen as a symbol of life, for both humans and nature, and a means of cleansing and purification (Exodus 15:23-35). The water at Ngome in KwaZulu Natal, offers an example close to home. There, seven springs come together and form a pool. A shrine was erected after Sister Reinolda saw a vision of Mary, who promised that in that place she would let her graces flow in abundance. Many consider the water to be sacred with healing powers. As a purifying element, the water at this shrine destroys evil.

Among the Jews, a palm branch was a symbol of joy and rejoicing. In Roman culture, a palm branch was also a symbol of victory. On the other hand, a palm tree represented survival and life, since it was (and still is) one of the few trees to grow in arid environments. Palm trees in the desert mean either an oasis or water below the surface. In his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus is presented as a different sort of “king,” rejected in speeches by the local elite but welcomed by the crowds who were, unknowingly, confirming his victory. Jesus, the Servant King, enters Jerusalem ready to be the sacrificial lamb and, in the process, bring life to the world. He arrives as the humble Messianic King to restore both the nation and the land as described in Zachariah (14:8):

“On that day life-giving waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half towards the Dead Sea and half towards the Mediterranean…”

The Divine blessings extend both east and west, flowing continuously and bringing healing and new life. This King, coming into Jerusalem to be slain and cleanse us from our sins, comes to redeem us and nature.

A river brings joy to the city of our God... (Psalm 46:4).

Jerusalem had no actual river but it had God who, like a river, sustained and continues to sustain the people’s lives. The rivers flowing through the cities sustain lives by making agriculture possible and facilitating trade with other cities. Flowing water is the sign of God’s restoring presence in the earth.

In the Gospel according to Matthew (27:24), Pilate washes his hands of the responsibility for Jesus’ death; but, ironically, by denying responsibility, he declares that the Roman justice system has colluded with the religious elite, who have manipulated crowds to accomplish their own end. In the cause of justice, the water reveals the truth. Then, the people take Jesus’ blood upon themselves and their children implementing God’s plan of redemption (Matthew 23:39).

“Look, blood confirms the covenant...” (Exodus 24:8).
Moses’ sprinkling of the blood on the people was a foreshadowing of the sacrificial death in the atonement of Jesus Christ, re-uniting humankind with God. Thus, water and blood are signs from creation that this event bears truth and hope for all creation. The symbolism of water is significant. He came in water, blood and Spirit, witnessing to one God (1 John 5:6-8). In the watery baptism, he commanded that we die with him and rise and walk in newness of life. With a renewed life, we see the whole creation through the eyes of Jesus (Romans 6:4).

In John 19:34, when the soldier pierced Jesus’ side, blood and water immediately flowed out. The living water flowing from Jesus’ side resonates with John (7:37-39), who describes him as “living water.” In the Book of Revelation (22:1-3) the “river of life” brings redemption and healing to both humankind and nature. The flow of blood and water prefigures the Sacraments of Eucharist (blood) and Baptism (water), as well as the beginning of the church. As God fashioned Eve from the side of Adam, while in deep sleep, Christ similarly gave blood and water from his own side to fashion the Church after his own death (John Chrysostom).

The worsening global water crisis – that experts predict will be with us for generations to come – gives us the opportunity to reflect, as Christians, on the spiritual state of the world we inhabit and share together. While our physical water resources are ever decreasing, the spiritual water, which Palm Sunday represents, increases for those who drink from it (John 7:38). That spiritual water calls us to respond to the needs of those who lack water to drink.

**Recommended Resources**

For information on the severe drought conditions in Swaziland, a land-locked country in the southern part of the African continent, and efforts to respond effectively, see the following:


https://www.thirstproject.org/swaziland/

http://adaptation-undp.org/projects/sccf-swaziland

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Helen-Ann Hartley is the Bishop of Waikato in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, a role she has held since the beginning of 2014. Ordained initially in the Church of England, Bishop Helen-Ann served her curacy in a group of rural parishes in the Diocese of Oxford, before moving into theological education both in Oxford and then at St John’s College in Auckland, New Zealand.

Professor Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad has been actively campaigning for the Green Church Movement since 1990. As the Hon. Director of the Department of Ecological Concerns of the Church of South India (CSI), he initiated the idea of Earth Bible Sermons and published three volumes. CSI is the only Church in India with an ecological wing (functioning since 1992), and it is one of the mission mandates of the Church. The United Nations Environment Program honored CSI with an eco-award in 2009.

Dr. Andrew Leake is the Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN) representative for the Anglican Church of South America and Director of Land for Life (Fundación REFUGIO), a Christian conservation initiative in northern Argentina. He holds degrees in environmental sciences and rural development.

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Mash is the Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa’s Environmental Network (Green Anglicans). The Anglican Church of Southern Africa covers South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique and Angola. Dr. Mash is a member of the steering committee of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN). She is committed to promoting the inclusion of the Season of Creation into our liturgical calendars and to practical actions and advocacy through local congregations. She believes that transformation doesn’t happen when individuals change but rather when “networked individuals change”.

Michael Schut is the former Economic and Environmental Affairs Officer for The Episcopal Church. Prior to that, he served on Earth Ministry’s staff. Mike currently works for the Children and Nature Network. His books include Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective; Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread; and Money and Faith: The Search for Enough. For more about his work, visit www.mikeschut.com.

The Rt. Rev. Ellinah Wamukoya, Bishop of Swaziland, became the first Anglican woman bishop in Africa in 2012. She holds two Master’s Degrees: the first in Town and Regional Planning, and recently, in Church History and Polity, her Master’s thesis reflecting a passionate concern for environmental issues: A Historical Exploration of the Significance of the Environment in Eucharistic Worship: the Context of Authorized Liturgies in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa from 1850 to the Present. Previously, she served as Chaplain at the University of Swaziland, and is a firm believer in developing lay ministry across the whole life of the church. In 2016, she was appointed Chairperson of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network. Born in Swaziland, Bishop Ellinah and her Kenyan husband, Henry Wamukoya, have three adult children.