



World Environment Day 2003

Water - Two Billion People are Dying for It!

Developed by *Rev. Jason John*, Brisbane,
on behalf of
UnitingJustice Australia
for
World Environment Day 5 June 2003

see disclaimer at end of document



Greetings to you from UnitingJustice!

Water- Two Billion People are Dying for It! That is the theme for World Environment Day 2003. This resource is offered by UnitingJustice to aid congregations to commemorate World Environment Day in their worship.

World Environment Day is held on June 5 each year. It was established by the United Nations in 1972 to stimulate worldwide awareness of the need to preserve and enhance the natural environment. It is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations enhances political attention and action on environmental issues.

World Environment Day is an important day for us, as Christians, as we celebrate the wonders of God's creation and reflect on our connection with the natural world.

In reflecting upon the theme of World Environment Day the United Nations asks us to examine the state of our environment, consider carefully the actions we must each take, and then address ourselves to our common task of preserving all life on earth. The theme *Water- Two Billion People are Dying for It!* reminds us that we are dependent on nature and that valuable natural resources need to be shared justly, both with people now and with those who will be here in future generations.

This year World Environment Day falls on a Thursday. The resources have been developed with the lectionary readings for Sunday 8 June (Pentecost 1) in mind but we invite you to use these resources at any time which is suitable for your congregation or small group. You may choose to use all the resources as the basis of a whole liturgy, or some of them in a service of worship.

We offer the attached resources as a practical and meaningful way for us to celebrate God's creation and acknowledge the importance and fragility of our relationship with the environment.

Additional resources are also listed at the end of this document. **To cut sections out of this liturgy for pasting into another document, use the text-column select tool in Adobe Acrobat Reader** [not the default text select tool].

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elenie Poulos".

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Introduction- stewardship or web of life?

Are we divinely appointed stewards of creation? Are we alone the bearers of the image of God, fundamentally unique amongst all creatures? Or are we an integral part of the web of life, one species amongst many, different only in degree from the other animals?

Is the primary story that between God and humanity, or God and life? Did pain and death enter creation through human action, as told in Genesis 1-3, or are they essential ingredients of life- God's good gifts to us? Are we the pinnacle of creation, or just a part of the ebb and flow of evolution?

The dominant stream of ecotheology in the Uniting Church, and indeed the whole western church, is *stewardship* theology. It accepts the theology of Genesis 1-3 whether or not it accepts the historicity of the accounts of creation. In this resource, stewardship theology is represented by the *outstretch, caring hand*.

A second stream might be called *biocentric* theology. It is represented by the *web of life*. What stewardship theology often sees as negative consequences of human sin, web of life theology affirms as good, and essential for life. What stewardship assumes to be God ordained, for example human agriculture, web of life theology may critique.

If you took advantage of the World Environment Day liturgies produced for UnitingJustice in 2001 and 2002 you might have noticed that prayers and reflections inspired by these two different streams appeared. At some points humans were described as fundamentally separate from creation, which was often an 'it.' We were called to exercise our God given dominion responsibly. At other points we were encouraged to cast aside the false dichotomy between ourselves and other creatures. A similar tension exists, unacknowledged, in the Social Justice Sunday resource for 2002- *Sustaining Creation*. All of these resources are available for downloading at the UnitingJustice web site.

In this document you will find an edited version of the recently released statement on the environment by the National Council of Churches, *Sustaining Creation*. It, too, appears to contain stewardship and web of life theologies in tension. For example, is it true that,

all its [creation's] resources are entrusted to human beings
or that,
human beings are part of the created order and not separate from it?

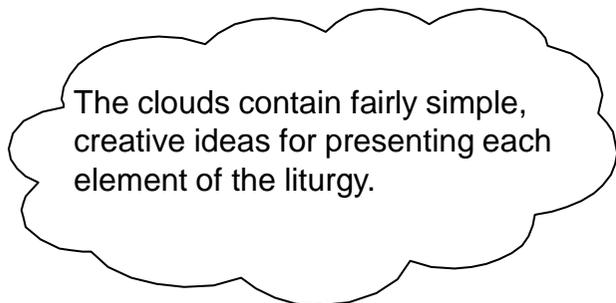
It does not seem possible that both are true, yet both appear within the same short document.

This resource for World Environment Day 2003, includes and acknowledges both streams of theology. Each element in the liturgy contains at least one alternative from each stream. It is of course possible to take alternatives from both in the worship service you create. There is some overlap anyway, since both are Christian reflections on God and creation. Mixing the streams may also help to reflect the theological diversity of your worshipping community, or to provide a mixture of recognisable, and challenging concepts.

Both streams are presented as valid, coherent systems. Judging between the correctness of the two needs to take place on a number of fronts. The thesis I am currently undertaking is an attempt to make academic judgments. The *Basis of Union* reminds us that as we gather in worship our faith is awakened, our attention commanded, and we hear Christ the Word of God as we appropriate the Scripture. It is, then, to some extent, in the practice of worship itself that we discern the truth or otherwise of the affirmations made in worship, reassured that we have the gift of the Spirit that we may not lose the way, and challenged to continue in the pilgrimage of faith to which the whole church is called.

Unless otherwise stated the following material was prepared for SJS 2003 and may be freely reproduced in other resources, if duly acknowledged.
Songs by Norman Habel may be downloaded free from the UnitingJustice W.E.D. site, but require a CLL or "Word of Life" licence to perform in church.

using this resource



Maybe use a fluoro pen to highlight the bits you will use on each page. You can mix and match, and add your own sentences or whole prayers.

The web of life

The contributions near this corner of the page tend to express a more biocentric point of view.

***Please send feedback to
UnitingJustice. See front page
for contact details***

Because of the different options, you can hopefully use this resource more than once. Keep it as a study resource for groups.

Humanity's caring hand

The contributions near this corner of the page tend to reflect stewardship theology

Songs to follow with...

Here you can write your own choice, or circle on of the suggested songs.

acknowledgment of country ^[1]

Indigenous We the ... people of Australia declare our custodianship over this region/land.
Everyone else We acknowledge that the ... people are the traditional custodians of this region/land.

And/or

We live in an ancient land,
Long loved by those who first crossed the water to live here in ages long past.
Those who listened to the water's ways, and followed the water's cycles of drought and
downpour.

We live in an ancient land,
Recently invaded, often by those who would rather not have come.
Who came from lands of plentiful water.
Who dammed and channelled and pumped the water to bend it to their will.

We live in an ancient land,
Which suffers this legacy, and survives it.

We worship an ancient God,
Who demands justice for those who listened to the water,
Justice for all creatures that depend on the water,
Who calls us all to listen, so that renewal and reconciliation may flow in this land.

^[1] Many acknowledgments of traditional ownership assume that the congregation is non-indigenous, and do not provide an alternative affirmation for indigenous worshippers. Since the Uniting Church in Australia has many indigenous members and congregations, we hope that the above acknowledgment will be useful to all. Please modify it, as with all parts of this liturgy, to suit.

some creative ideas for the whole service

Play a CD of thunderstorms or rain in the background during the whole service, or for part of it. Such CDs are cheap and available in most music shops. The internet has a wealth of sound effects you can download and use (check for Copyright restrictions though!).

See if somebody has one of those mini relaxation fountains which could be plugged in for the service, preferably out of site. An aquarium pump in a bucket would do the trick too.

A glass bowl of water on an overhead projector can give an interesting wave effect.

If your baptismal font is not fixed in place, perhaps move it to where it traditionally sits during baptisms (and fill it!).

Can you get outside, preferably to a creek or lakeside, but even just around the church pond, or just anywhere at a pinch!

What if the flowers for the service were left without water once arranged? The limp, sorry looking things would be a great symbol of our need for water come Sunday morning!

Have a sprinkler running in the lawn or garden near the entrance to the church.

If you have tea and coffee after the service, perhaps just serve water?

How about a large, beautiful bowl of water at the entrance, inviting people to dip their finger in and bless themselves as they enter?

call to worship

If you are featuring the baptismal font, or a bowl of water, fill it from a jug as part of the procession to indicate the start of the service

Non-responsive

Creator God, whose spirit brooded over the waters.

You called us out of the earth and breathed life into us.

We your servants gather here,
Reminded of your glory revealed in your creation-

In raging rivers and still waters,
Thunderstorms and morning mists,
In the waters of our birth and baptism.
Reminded of our calling to serve and care for your creation,
We come and worship you,
Confident in your presence within us and amongst us.

Responsive

Leader: Holy God

Response: the oceans roar your power

L: the rivers whisper your peace

R: the rain offers your hope

L: come rain on us today.^[1]

(for a short version use lines 1,2,7,8)

Creator God,

Within whose waters life erupted,

Onto whose land life wriggled,

We gather here as creatures of the water.

Our cells are full of it. Our lives depend on it.

Our souls are drawn to it.

We come as part of your creation to worship you,
Confident in your presence with us.

You might like to preface the call to worship with, *A poetic evolutionary version of creation* (the appendix), or you could use that in the introduction.

Psalm

You could use part of Psalm 104
or Psalm 19:1-4

Songs to follow with...

Song of Sky (Habel 1999)

Together in Song #65 (based on Psalm 104)

[1] From *International Year of the Ocean* (SJS 1998), National Social Responsibility and Justice.

introduction for a *stewardship* themed service

Get somebody to deliver *Sustaining Creation* dressed as an important church official delivering a speech to the church.

Specific water theme:

Welcome to this service which commemorates World Environment Day.

The theme this year is Water- two billion people are dying for it. Water is an essential element of our faith- the Spirit brooded over the waters at the beginning of creation. Israel was a land short on water and many biblical stories reflect that.

Psalm 23 uses the image of green pastures and still waters to convey deep serenity. Jesus mentions water a lot, and used the metaphor of the Spirit's coming at Pentecost being like rivers of living water flowing out of the disciple's hearts. We mark our entrance into the Christian community with water.

Yet half of the world's wetlands have been lost, with most of the destruction taking place over the past 50 years.

If current trends persist, by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will be living with serious water shortages or almost no water at all. Australia faces water crises in every state, and we need billions of dollars to rectify our past misuse.

So as we worship God today we reflect on this essential and amazing resource called water, and our obligation to be good stewards of it for all creation's sake.

Extracts from *Sustaining Creation*, A statement of the National Council of Churches in Australia 2003:

The environment is one of the key issues of our time! We believe that Christian faith can and should be a major force for change towards sustainable development, sustainable communities and a healthy environment.

[Yet] one billion people now suffer from a shortage of fresh water. Scientists have said the web of life is unravelling.

Certainly, these matters are political issues. They are economic issues. But at a deeper level, they are much more. At their core, they constitute a spiritual and moral crisis, touching all that we hold sacred. We desperately need a change of spirit and attitude.

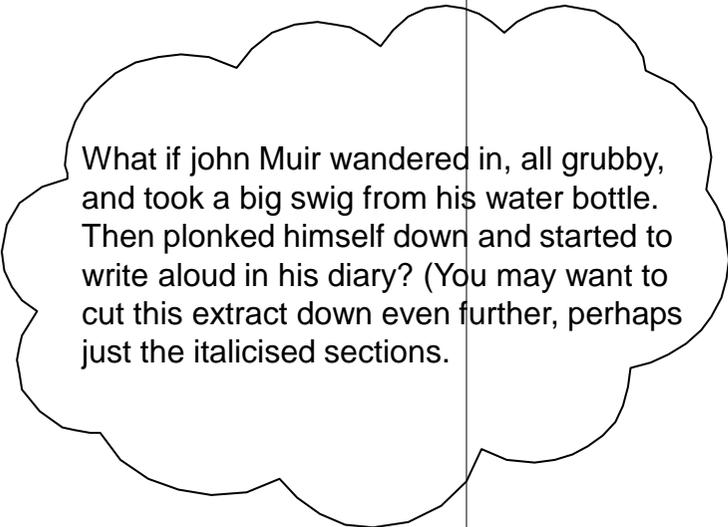
[We encourage the whole community] to act consistently in ways that affirm the intrinsic worth of the whole creation, recognising that all its resources are entrusted to human beings to be handed on responsibly and faithfully to future generations

We believe that a better, more holistic, understanding of the Earth, which recognises that human beings are part of the created order and not separate from it, will make a major contribution to the transforming change that is essential for the well-being of the Planet in the third millennium.

http://www.ncca.org.au/publications/gensec/Sustaining_Creation.html

Songs to follow with...

introduction to *web of life* theme



What if John Muir wandered in, all grubby, and took a big swig from his water bottle. Then plonked himself down and started to write aloud in his diary? (You may want to cut this extract down even further, perhaps just the italicised sections.)

Specific water theme

Out of the primordial waters we came.

Our mothers recreate the primordial waters for us in their womb.

We bring the water with us, it still makes up most of our body mass.

Water is the glue that holds all creation together
And the one fluid able to dissolve everything.

<you might like to insert some facts about water here>

We gather to worship the God who is the rivers of living waters flowing out of our hearts, to reflect on our place in creation, and our relationship to the physical and living water that sustains it all.

Feeling cheeky?

"Human beings are a disease- a cancer of this planet. You are a plague." Agent Smith, the Matrix.

Extracts from *Man's [sic] place in the universe* by John Muir^[1]

The world, we are told, was made especially for humans - a presumption not supported by all the facts. A numerous class of people are painfully astonished whenever they find anything, living or dead, in all God's universe, which they cannot eat or render in some way what they call useful to themselves. They have precise dogmatic insight into the intentions of the Creator... He is regarded as a civilized, law-abiding gentlemen in favor either of a republican form of government or of a limited monarchy...

But if we should ask these profound expositors of God's intentions, How about those animals - lions, tigers, alligators - which smack their lips over raw human flesh? Or about those myriads of noxious insects that destroy labor and drink our blood? These are unresolvable difficulties connected with Eden's apple and the Devil. Why does water drown its ruler? Why do so many minerals poison us? Why are so many plants and fishes deadly enemies? ... Oh, [they say], all these things are satanic, or in some way connected with the first garden.

Now, it never seems to occur to these far- seeing teachers that Nature's object in making animals and plants might possibly be first of all the happiness of each one of them, not the creation of all for the happiness of us... The universe would be incomplete without us; but it would also be incomplete without the smallest transmicroscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge.

This star, our own good earth, made many a successful journey around the heavens ere we were made, and whole kingdoms of creatures enjoyed existence and returned to dust ere we appeared to claim them. After human beings have also played their part in Creation's plan, they too may disappear without any general burning or extraordinary commotion whatever.

...venomous beasts, thorny plants, and deadly diseases of certain parts of the earth prove that the whole world was not made for us. When an animal from a tropical climate is taken to high latitudes, it may perish of cold, and we say that such an animal was never intended for so severe a climate. But when we betake ourselves to sickly parts of the tropics and perish, we cannot see that we were never intended for such deadly climates. No, we will rather accuse the first mother of the cause of the difficulty, though she may never have seen a fever district; or will consider it a providential chastisement for some self-invented form of sin.

The text has been modified for inclusive language.

http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/mans_place_in_the_universe.html.

World Environment Day Liturgy 2003, <http://uca.org.au/unitingjustice>

^[1] John Muir was a botanist who walked one thousand miles across America almost 100 years ago and kept an extensive journal as he did so.

adoration and confession

Are you outside? Why not a silent minute of adoration for the creator, invite people to focus on whatever they like as an icon of the creator. This could work inside too of course, either with eyes closed, or looking at the water feature, OHP or the day's flowers.

Adoration: **Psalm 104:24-34, 35b**; Song of Sky (Habel 1999)

Lord in the garden you gave us dominion over the works of your hands,
Calling us to loving stewardship of your creation.
After the flood you made a covenant with all flesh, that never again would
the waters destroy it.

Through the waters of baptism we participate in your covenant through
Christ, and his call to us to love our neighbour.
Yet the creatures of the earth give their testament against us. We have
made poor stewards indeed.

It is now we ourselves that all flesh fears. We ourselves who have the
power to destroy all life on the face of the earth.
And many are baptised in water not safe to drink.
Two billion humans are dying for clean water,
And countless billions of other creatures.

We live in the driest inhabited continent on earth- and through our actions
it becomes ever dryer.

Whether wasteful industrial and farming practices, or the obsession of so
many of us for a green lawn and english plants.
If we have been poor stewards forgive us. If we have been good
stewards but unable to stem the tide of destruction of others, help us
forgive them.

Renew the streams of living water within us so that we may live well in
this dry land.

Adoration: Song of Sky (Habel 1999)

God who's Spirit is present in all things and who holds all
things together. God who is living water.

Our lives are full of water.

In the womb of the primal oceans you brought life into
being.

Water flows in the rivers, swells in the oceans and sails
majestically in the sky.

It swells the soil beneath our feet, infuses the air we
breath, and courses through our veins.

Water is present in all and nurtures all. Water is for all.

Yet we humans have tried to seize it for ourself.

We impede its movement and harness it in the service of
just a few.

We horde it and pollute it. The soil, the plants, and
creatures around the world languish for the lack of clean
water.

Forgive us of our abuse of water and of the earth
community so dependent on this precious member.
Let us be the living water of Christ, not the water that
flowed from his side.

Wash us clean in the living waters of your spirit
Remind us of our mother's womb
Of your womb, in which all life is one.
Amen^[1]

^[1] Slightly modified from a prayer by Rev. Paul Chalson

Songs to follow with

Song of Waters (Habel 2000)

*All Things Bright and Beautiful- Australian
Version* (TIS # 135)

assurance

We are held in the waters of God's womb
"...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come, nor
powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else
in all creation, will be able to separate us from
the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

and/or

God will not en flesh the dry skeletons in our inland.

But God offers to all Australians the wisdom given to its
original inhabitants.

The wisdom to know our limits. To follow the water.
To rest, to be at peace.

Jesus came that we might have abundant life, hearts full
of rivers of living water.

Our sin is forgiven.

Songs to follow with...

As the dear pants for the water (TIS #703)
As pants the hart for cooling streams (TIS # 25)
In water we grow (TIS # 494)

children's addresses with an ethical message

****TEAR Australia's children's short talk**[\[1\]](#)

Main Idea: dirty water is the world's biggest killer and source of disease.

Have a doctor's bag/first aid bag. Show bag to the children, and ask,

'What would you expect to

find inside it?' Accept children's responses.

'When you are sick and go to the doctor, what kind of things might the doctor give you to help you get better?'

Pull items from the bag that might help you get better — pills, medicine, bandages, ointment... and...a bottle of water!

*'Did you know that this is the thing that most people in the world need to stop them from being sick — **clean, safe** water. In the world today, this many people are sick and maybe dying from diseases caused by lack of clean water.'* Show a large card with 2,300,000,000 written on it in big numbers.

'Every year, this many children die because of diseases spread in water. (Show card with 2,000,000 on it in big numbers.) Water that many people have to use to drink, cook and wash with is often polluted from sewage, animals and environmental pollution. Many communities lack sanitation: no toilets, so sewage (toilet waste) gets into their water supply.

'So, if we are able to help people get more clean water (point to bottle), they will need less of these, (point to the medicines), and more children will live to be adults.

'Jesus told us in Matthew 25:31-46 (The Sheep and the Goats) that giving people who are thirsty something to drink is giving Jesus himself a drink; that is how much he loves people. If they are hungry, or thirsty or lonely, he feels it too. Jesus wants us to care for those people who are thirsty in our world.' Read Matthew 25:34- 40.

Talk about actions that you want the group to take.

TEAR Australia's children's interactive talk[\[1\]](#) This is a more complicated affair, but all the resources to print and prepare are available on the TEAR web site for free.

The Lorax, by Dr Seuss, Random House 1971

The Once-ler laments his days of greed and environmental vandalism, but gives his young visitor the final truffler tree seed, hoping that they might undo his damage.

A key message of the book is, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing's going to get better- its not!"

Whadayamean, by John Birmingham, Random House 1999.

God and two children look around the world and see how polluted it has become. God tells the children to make the adults change their ways.

Amazingly, they do! God comes back to see how lovely the world is.

It ends with, "Go and show God the world, for it is a lovely world. But don't be late for bed. Remember its school tomorrow."

Songs to follow with...

[\[1\] http://www.tear.org.au/resources/water_for_life/index.htm,](http://www.tear.org.au/resources/water_for_life/index.htm)

more children's addresses or Sunday school activities

All of the resources on the previous page are suitable for either stewardship or web of life services, but we have provided some more active or interactive web of life ideas here because there do not seem to be many available.

The activity could also be done in a stewardship service where people were comfortable with introducing evolutionary themes, or easily adapted to be a Genesis style account of the arrival of the animals.

You will need a bit of space, and enough children who are old enough to understand you. Only the framework is provided here.

You are going to tell the children a story from long, long ago, and you need them to do the actions for the adults. When they hear the name of an animal, you need them to act it out (expand or contact the list as needed).

Long, long ago there was no life on earth. Then one day it all *began*. Soon there were tiny little *plankton* everywhere. Then *Jellyfish... crabs... starfish... seahorses... octopuses... tiny fish... big sharks*.

Meanwhile, on land things were getting going too. First the *frogs*, then all kinds of *lizards*, even dinosaurs like the *brontosaurus* and *tyrannosaurus rex!* Then there were the feathered *birds*. Don't forget that there were tiny mammals running around with the dinosaurs, which went on to become everything from *horses*, to *elephants*. Some of them even went back to the water, like the *whales*. Not so long ago, the *chimpanzees* and *gorillas* arrived, and of course the hairless monkeys. Does anyone know what they were called? How do they behave?

And do you know what, if you look really closely inside the cells of every animal on earth, you can see how they are all related to each other, even us! (expand if the children are old enough). And another thing relates us all- every single animal on this planet, and that has ever lived, is full of water, and needs water to live.

You are about three quarters water, and your parents are about half water. That's why we're spending today worshipping God, who gave us water, and who brought us out of the water to live on the land. Ok waterbags, off you go...

A quick interactive discussion-

Ask the children to list all the animals they can think of that live in water. Keep saying there is one more. When they are stumped, tell them its us- humans!!

We start our lives in a bag of water inside our mothers, and even after we are born we live in water, except we carry the water around inside us. That's why they can hear the ocean if they hold their hands over their ears ;-)

You might want to mention the valley of dry bones reading- its what happens to us if there was no water.

Finish with a reflection on Jesus as offering us living water

Songs to follow with...

a few notes on the readings

Acts 2:1-21 (the day of Pentecost). The John reading has a much more watery metaphor for the coming of the Spirit than the tongues of fire in Acts. Ezekiel, the alternative suggestion to Acts this week, also invokes rich watery imagery:

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (the valley of dry bones). This passage evokes images of a dry, desolate place of death, devoid of the water so necessary for life. Think of the contrast of dryness, or drought, with living water. Perhaps rewrite the metaphor to speak of water rehydrating the bones. In Australia- to what extent should we pray that God will restore the 'dry bones' of farms experiencing drought, and to what extent should we simply stop farming in drought prone areas, leaving them to the other creatures of Australia and the few humans who know how to survive there? Or to what extent should we reduce our free ranging European stock to make room for free ranging and arid adapted indigenous stock?

Psalms 104:24-34, 35b (a reflection on the glory of creation). This reading specifically omits verse 35a- "Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more." Its inclusion may open up an invitation to reflect on the degree to which we share the faith of the psalmists, and how we should, as Christians, relate to Jewish faith poetry. If you have time it might be good to read the whole psalm. Not only is it a stirring reflection on creation, but it reveals an understanding of the world which is not shared by those of us with even a modest knowledge of science. This might be a starting point for reflecting on how best to carry on the theological purposes of the biblical witnesses, without being bound to their actual expression, which we can no longer affirm. Alternatively, a discussion about genre, and the inadvisability of taking poetry literally might ensue. Certainly the psalmist may not have taken their own work literally. You may like to read the psalm responsively, following the *Uniting in Worship* people's book page 324. Alternatively, you could insert a refrain for all to say at several points in the psalm, as Normal Habel has in the, "song of waters."^[1]

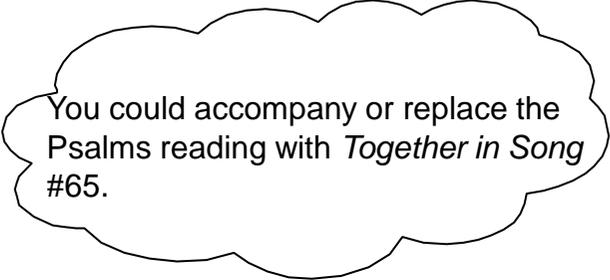
Romans 8:22-27 (all creation groans). It would be better to include verses 18-21, as they introduce the theme of creation groaning. This passage neatly expresses theological anthropocentrism. It may launch an interesting discussion about what exactly we hope for creation, what the "Freedom of the glory of the children of God" means.

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 (speaks of the advocate coming to the disciples)

In keeping with the W.E.D. theme, you might like to preface some or all of the John reading with:

John 7:37-39 (let anyone who is thirsty come to me). Jesus is here pictured as comparing the reception of the Spirit at Pentecost to having rivers of living water flowing out of the believer's heart. In an arid country, the link between Spirit and Water as sources of life is very evocative- here no less than in Israel.

The story of Jesus and the woman at the well (**John 4:7-15**) repeats the living water metaphor. It could also introduce a reflection on our tendency to reject our basic unity with the 'other'. In the story Jesus ignores the otherness of this woman, a Samaritan, which stuns the disciples. He communes with her, affirming their union or unity. Perhaps in the same way, we reject our basic unity with all of life, we see otherness when at a deeper level that is a unity or union amongst diversity.



You could accompany or replace the Psalms reading with *Together in Song* #65.

[1] Habel, N. *Earth Bible: Liturgical Resources*, due for publication late 2003

sermon

or...

The *Earth Bible* project, coordinated through the Centre for Theology, Science and Culture now has five volumes of articles with a wealth of material to reflect on in a sermon. The tables of contents are at, <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/theology/institute/earthbible/>

You might like to investigate the theological *purposes* of Genesis 1-3, and consider how best to satisfy those purposes in the light of recent scientific knowledge.

You could reflect on the two theological streams in this resource, using the various introductions as a starting point.

Could the “children’s” address be expanded into something which includes everybody, perhaps with a brief reflection on the readings to follow?

Perhaps with so many new concepts and so many words in the rest of the service, the sermon slot would be a good place for people to be given an opportunity for silence- for their own prayer and meditation. A background CD of rain, streams etc may help here, or the three minute power point presentation, available free form the UnitingJustice WED web site.

There is ample in this resource to form the basis for small group discussions- which theological stream do people warm to; what in the worship has spoken to them the most thus far; what is their most powerful memory of water; do they feel full of ‘living water’, or dry and in need of refreshment...

prayer over the offering-

The prayer for the offering is usually a straightforward affair. Rather than provide some prayers, a couple of thought provoking reflections are presented instead. You might like to share them with the congregation before the collection; shape a prayer in response; or simply chew them over.

What is the offering?

It might be interesting to look at your church budget. Most of the 'offering' is probably actually payment for services rendered to ourselves (the minister's stipend, church upkeep, worship resources, office costs etc).

What fraction of the fraction of our income we put in the offering actually ends up being available to God to use in mission, in service of others? Surely it is actually only this small fraction which ought to be called our offering, we should expect to pay for our ministers, buildings, and worship resources.

We often hear prayers such as, "Thankyou that we can return some of the gifts which You have given to us in this offering..." Are we really saying that God has given us money?

Why does God keep giving money to relatively affluent Uniting Church members in Australia, knowing that more of it will be spent on luxuries than will be returned in the offering bowl to pay for mission? Why doesn't God just give the money to the people who need fresh water in the first place, rather than filtering it through us first?

What are we really saying when we thank God for giving us things? Is it really God, or colonisation and unjust global trade relations that give Christians in the west money? If God, why keep giving more to upper-middle class church members than poor ones who really need it? Is it really God who is increasing the gap between the rich and poor in Australia?

Songs to follow with...

to accompany or replace the Lord's prayer

From a biocentric perspective, 'people' includes all creatures, or at least all creatures with 'personality'. It may be more explicit however, to replace 'people' with 'all creatures' in the liturgy.

We believe that in time beyond our dreaming God was.
From God, creation in all its beauty was born.

We believe that through the ages God has called (people/all creatures)
To be a community that experiences and expresses God's love.

We believe God became one of us.
Jesus' life, death and resurrection show us the depth and breath of God's love.

We believe that today God's Spirit equips us
To be a community that experiences and expresses God's love.
We believe that in time beyond our dreaming God will be.

God will make all things new^[1].

Songs to follow with...

God Part 1 (NCYC, *God Part I*)
The Pilgrims' Song (Rev. Paul Chalson, in
The Red Album, the song book for NCYC
2003)

[1] 1997 NCYC Liturgy Task Group.

notices and sharing

Here's your chance to share any local water facts you have gathered. There are a number of resources at the end of this document for groups wanting to reflect more on water, or get involved in practical action. Now is the perfect time to advertise them! Make some notes in all this free space, or write down people's prayer requests...

Songs to follow with...

Mother Earth, our Mother Birthing (Habel 1999)

Song of Healing (Habel 2001)

prayers of intercession- stewardship theme

We come as your stewards to worship you.
We come asking for strength and gifts for the task
We come asking that your fruits will grow within us-
Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control.

Help us love your creation
Find joy in its abundance and diversity
Bring peace to its ecosystems
And Have patience with its ways

Help us act kindly to its creatures
Be generous with our sharing of resources
And faithful to our calling as stewards.

Make us gentle as doves with the earth
And give us the self control to meet our needs but limit our
greeds.

Hear us now as we bring our concerns for the earth and for
each other to you,
Then speak to us as we listen for your reply.

You might like to take some of the facts from the TEAR Australia *Water for Life* web site to begin the intercessions, for example,

- 1.1 billion people lack access to clean drinking water.
- 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation.
- Currently, one third of the world's population live under 'water stress'. With the rate of consumption of water at twice the rate of population growth, two thirds could be living under water stress by 2025.
- 1.6% of aid and development funds are spent on water and sanitation.
- 220 million urban residents in the developing world lack a source of safe drinking water near their homes.
- In the next two decades, it is expected that 17% more water will be needed to grow food in developing countries and that total water use will increase by 40%.
- 90% of the developing world's water waste is discharged (untreated) into local rivers and streams, contributing to the fact that water & sanitation diseases are the largest cause of deaths in the developing world. Two million children die yearly^[1].
- Agriculture consumes 60 to 80 percent of the fresh water resources in most countries, and as much as 90 percent in others.
- In Africa and Asia, an estimated 85-90% of all freshwater used is for agriculture.
- Only 30% of water used for agriculture is actually used on crops – the rest is wasted.
- By 2025, agriculture is expected to increase its water requirements by 1.2 times, industry by 1.5 times, and domestic consumption by 1.8 times.

[1] From the TEAR water facts leaflet, the original source is <http://www.jhucop.org/pr/m14edsum.shtml>

prayers of intercession- web of life theme

Loving God, Lover and sustainer of all things,
We offer these, our prayers seeking healing and wholeness.
In this moment,

We are aware- of our mind, our thoughts, our consciousness.

We are aware too of our bodies, our warmth, our heartbeat, our breathing.

We seek healing, not for our bodies, but with our bodies - no longer "me" and "it",
But "we" - one whole of being.

We are aware- of this body of people gathered in this space, at this moment,
gathered in your name.

Each one unique and different.

We seek healing with this body of people,
No longer "me" and "them", but "we" - one whole.

We are aware- of all people alive in this moment,
Busy, lonely, joyful, struggling, resting, searching hurting.
All people breathing.

We seek healing not for these people, but with these people.
"We", all people at one with life and each other.

We are aware- of the other creatures with whom we share life.

The trees and shrubs and grasses,
All animals, birds and insects,
The forests, the oceans, the fields.

All living things at this moment.
We seek healing with this living throng,
"We", all life as one.

We are aware- of the Earth;
Mountains, plains, water and air, the foundations of all life.
We seek healing not for this Earth, but with this body of Earth.
We seek to live no longer as "me" and "it", but as "we".
We are aware of the greater universe - stars, space, energy, infinite dimension,
All that is.

We are aware- of us, this small blue globe, suspended and held with this eternity.
We seek healing at this local time, in this local moment,
With All that Is.

We are aware- of Jesus, the one who first showed us fullness of life and love as a human being.
We seek healing with Jesus,
No longer "us" and Him",
But "we" at one with love,
Alive in the body of God
Amen^[1]

You may need to abridge the above prayer. Or, you could pause at points to insert specific prayers, or to allow people to offer their prayers. You could include the facts and figures from the stewardship page.

You might like to print this on OHP or similar, and invite the congregation to start each section (**we are aware**)

[1] Prayer for Wholeness by Margy Dockray, from *Worship in the Styx*, used with permission.

blessing

You could use a branch dipped in water, as is sometimes used in the affirmations of baptism, to sprinkle the congregation as you issue the blessing. If you got the water from a bowl which was a centrepiece for the service, so much the better.

May the Spirit of God, who was with the waters in the beginning, be with you and remain with you always.

The web of life blessing should also be appropriate, or use a traditional blessing.

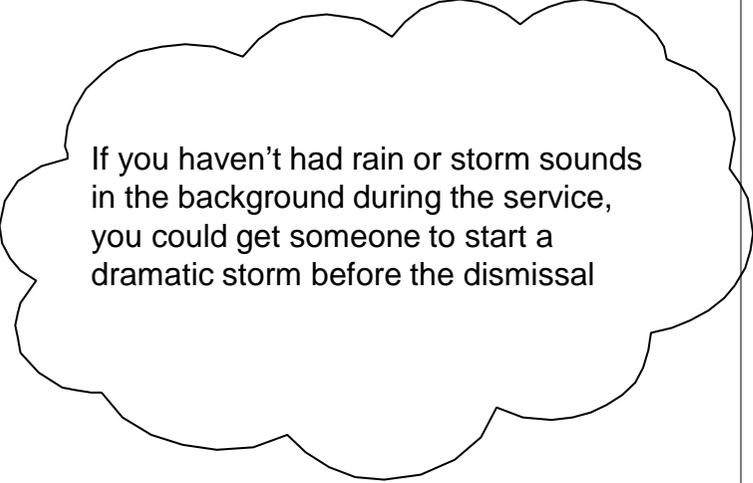
Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the Son of peace to you^[1]

^[1] An ancient Celtic blessing, collected from the Hebridean Islands, off Scotland, by Alexander Carmichael. Public domain.

Songs to follow with...

For you, Deep Stillness, © 1996, Robin Mann & Julie Perrin, In *NCYC '99 Songbook*.

dismissal



If you haven't had rain or storm sounds in the background during the service, you could get someone to start a dramatic storm before the dismissal

You have been called to bear the image of God
You have been called to be stewards of God's creation

May the living water flow out from you, and may the fruits of the Spirit grow within you, in your relationship to all God's creatures.

This we know, the earth does not belong to us,
We belong to the earth

This we know, all things are connected,
Like the blood that unites one family

This we know, we did not weave the web of life
We are merely a strand in it

This we know, whatever we do to the web
We do to ourselves

Let us give thanks for the gift of creation
Let us give thanks that all things hold together in Christ^[1]

Now go in peace to bring peace to the web of life.

^[1] From *Worship in the Styx*, original authorship unknown, adapted from a speech attributed to Chief Seattle.

now what? resources for groups.

A meditation and short study on water was produced as part of Social Justice Sunday 2002, Sustaining Creation. It can be downloaded from UnitingJustice (<http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/resources/socialjusticesunday/2002/index.htm>) Look for the water link.

Although a Lenten study series, *Attending to the Sacred*, a Catholic Education resource produced ecumenically, touches on environmental themes, mostly with a stewardship focus. There is an accompanying CD and a video, *The Garden Planet*. More information from <http://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/pub/AdultLearning/documents/advancednotice.pdf>

Thinking Like a Mountain- Towards a Council of all Beings. John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, Arne Naess (New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, USA. 1988). Support rainforest protection in Australia and buy it from <http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/>

The *Council of All Beings* is a group workshop you might like to run to explore the biocentric, “web of life”, stream of this liturgy. An online workshop manual is at <http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/cabcont.htm>. You may want to search for an experienced leader. You may want to modify the workshop to suit the theological needs of your group.

Rev. Paul Chalson has been organising wilderness retreats in Tasmania for a number of years. We are working to get some resources from him onto the UnitingJustice web site, in the World Environment Day section, so keep your eyes peeled.

The liturgy itself could be a useful basis for study. Try working through the material as a group, comparing the alternatives presented, and discussing them. You could incorporate recent W.E.D and SJS liturgies from the UnitingJustice web site.

Rev. Jason John is considering producing a short study guide for groups to explore a Uniting Church model for integrating scientific discoveries into our Christian faith, based on his thesis in progress. If interested, contact him on jason.john@flinders.edu.au or c/- ACD, 34 Lipsett Terrace Brooklyn Park SA 5032 Australia.

more reading.

Is Christianity nature hating? Or is it green if properly understood? The picture is more ambiguous than people often realise. A good summary of this is in *The Travail of Nature- The ambiguous ecological promise of Christian theology*. H. Paul Santmire, Fortress Press 1985.

Just about every Christian bookshop will have something from a **stewardship** perspective on Christians and the environment.

Charles Birch is a scientist and Uniting Church member who wrote volumes on the interaction of science and religion, using an approach called Process Theology, which is one of the more biocentric theological schools of thought. Every library should have something of his.

Search for: biocentric; deep ecology; process theology; ecotheology; progressive Christianity to get some starters on web of life type theology.

Vegetarian? Convert your friends at <http://www.christianveg.com/> ;-). After resources for schools? Try the religious education and environment program (<http://www.reep.org/>).

that other web... international issues: get informed, get involved [1]

The United Nations World Environment Day web site (<http://www.unep.org/wed/2003/>)

The UN Environment Program fresh water projects page is at <http://www.unep.org/themes/freshwater/>

The UN has also released a *World Water Development Report: Water for People, Water for Life*

(http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr/ex_summary). According to the press release,

Faced with "inertia at the leadership level", the global water crisis will reach unprecedented levels in the years ahead with "growing per capita scarcity of water in many parts of the developing world", according to a United Nations report made public today. Water resources will steadily decline because of population growth, pollution and expected climate change.

The UN's International Year of Freshwater Official Site (<http://www.wateryear2003.org/>)

This site includes facts and figures, such as,

Over 1 million people die from malaria every year.

Approximately 70% of all fresh water withdrawn for human use is used for irrigation.

Half of the world's wetlands have been lost, with most of the destruction taking place over the past 50 years.

If current trends persist, by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will be living with serious water shortages or almost no water at all.

TEAR has produced the *Water for life* resource kit (<http://www.tear.org.au/>)

The Water Matters web site is another TEAR initiative (<http://www.watermattersaustralia.org/>)

Force Ten's *Simply Sharing 2003* (officially May 25th-June 1st) has a water focus (<http://www.forceten.org.au>) and would make a great lead up to World Environment Day on June 5th.

They have a Power Point presentation which publicizes their SS campaign on water. (**- hopefully will get link to short version

<http://www.forceten.org.au/PPt/water.ppt>)

[1] The UN, Tear and Force Ten sites focus on the impact on humans of scarce or polluted water, and practical measures to improve the lives of humans through providing better access to safe drinking water. The Non government organisations listed below pay more attention to the needs of other creatures for safe water.

that other web... Australian issues (non Government sites)

Go to your local library or jump on the web to search for key words directly relevant to your location. Remember that environmental issues are interrelated. Searching for land clearing or salinisation will provide more links than searching for water alone. In a rush? Here are some useful starting points. All links were current as of May 7th 2003.

state based

Queensland Conservation Council, *Rivers Alive!* (http://www.qccqld.org.au/rivers_alive/index.htm)

Conservation Council of the South-East region and **Canberra**, water issues (<http://www.ecoaction.net.au/ccserac/>)

Conservation Council of **Western Australia**, Perth's water supply (<http://members.iinet.net.au/~conswa/proc.htm>)

Conservation Council of **South Australia** (<http://www.ccsa.asn.au/>) The campaigns link has a number of water-focussed campaigns. Their *Environment* magazine also contains a number of useful articles, but they do not appear to be available for downloading yet.

The Nature Conservation Council of **New South Wales** has a large number of water related campaigns underway (<http://www.nccnsw.org.au/water/>)

The Environment Centre- **Northern Territory** (<http://www.ecnt.org/>). Type 'water' in the search engine and you will find articles like this one, on the threats to the Daly River from land clearing (http://www.ecnt.org/land_clearing/daly.htm)

Environment **Victoria** has media coverage of the Victorian river crisis (<http://www.envict.org.au/>), and a wealth of resources about their healthy rivers campaign (<http://www.envict.org.au/main.cfm?MenuId=2&SubMenuId=12>), be sure to go through the links available in the drop down box which appears.

The **Carins and Far North** Environment Centre (<http://www.cafnec.org.au/>) has a number of media releases about threats to rivers in the region.

The **Tasmanian** Conservation Trust has a section on local water facts and campaigns (<http://www.tct.org.au/rivers.htm#Tasmanian>)

Environs **Kimberley** (<http://green.net.au/environs-kimberley/>) talks about issues surrounding cotton growing in the area. It is out of date (2000), but has interesting historical information. For up to date info start with the Wilderness Society (below).

national

The Wilderness Society (<http://www.wilderness.org.au/>) has a mix of good and bad news stories on the state of the Australian environment, including their Wild Rivers campaign (http://www.wilderness.org.au/projects/Wild_Rivers/wildrivers.html). They also have information on the cotton irrigation issue- they cotton in the search box at the very bottom of their home page.

The World Wildlife Fund is involved in a number of river campaigns (<http://www.wwf.org.au>). There is an article on the link between the recent droughts and global warming.

Friends of the Earth have some facts about water, salinity and soil erosion (<http://foe.org.au/farid/fhome/fhome3.htm>). Their site includes the quote, "Ninety percent of Australia is dry land and you would think that with those credentials we would probably be world leaders in the development of techniques for irrigating dry lands. But that's not so. We have problems to equal the worst in Africa, Asia and North America," ([Professor Walker, Adelaide University 1997](#))

that other web... Australian issues (Government sites)

Environment Australia is the government portal for a whole range of environmental facts and issues, including the *State of the Environment* reports (<http://www.environment.gov.au/>). Click on the 'inland water' topic for a wealth of links to issues affecting every state in Australia.

Detailed Australian water facts and maps can be found at http://audit.ea.gov.au/ANRA/atlas_home.cfm. Find out all about your local river or catchment area.

The Inter-Government *Murray-Darling Basin Initiative* (<http://www.mdbc.gov.au/>)

Or go straight to the issues page (http://www.mdbc.gov.au/naturalresources/env_issues/environs_issues.htm)

The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists released a *Blueprint for a living continent*, which focuses on water use and land clearing in Australia, and can be obtained from (http://www.wwf.org.au/downloads/blueprint_for_a_living_continent.pdf). The Carr government has recently adopted advice from the group for its future land use strategies (<http://www.wwf.org.au>).

For more facts about Australian rivers, and ways to get involved in monitoring their health, go to the government's *Water Watch* site (<http://www.waterwatch.org.au/>). Your church or youth group could get involved in monitoring a nearby water course.

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Disclaimer

UnitingJustice makes this resource available to the Uniting Church and to anybody who cares to use it. UnitingJustice does not necessarily agree with all of the contents or opinions expressed within this document.

This resource was written and compiled by Jason John, who likewise does not necessarily agree with or endorse all of the contents.

The acknowledgment of the above individuals does not imply that they endorse this resource as a whole, or necessarily share the views contained within it.

appendix- a poetic evolutionary version of creation

Before the beginning there was God, God alone.
And God said, "Let there be." And there was. A massive explosion, billions of billions of degrees centigrade.
Energy screaming out in all directions, God's relationship to creation had begun.

And God waited, for thousands, and millions, and billions of years as the energy became matter, and matter became dust, and the dust formed galaxies and quasars and solar systems, and our sun, and our earth.

And God saw the universe, billions of billions of kilometres wide, and God saw that it was Good.

And God waited... for a billion years, as our planet cooled and brought forth life, and God's relationship with life began, and that relationship was good.

And God waited... for a billion years, as life became cells- the first complex creatures in our part of the universe, and God saw that they were good.

And God waited... for a billion years, as sexual reproduction emerged for the first time in our part of the universe, and God saw that sex was good.

And God waited... for another billion years, as the vertebrates emerged: fish, amphibians, dinosaurs, tiny mammals, birds.
Birth, sex, death.

God watched it all for a billion years as organisms and species came and went and related to each other. God watched the cycle of life, and saw that it was good.

And God stopped waiting. As the mammals grew smarter, developing languages and tools and a sense of something beyond them- the first stirrings of a response to the Word of God.

Some returned to the oceans and shed their hair and swapped legs and hands for fins. Some stayed on the coast, and shed their hair but kept their hands to hold tools, and their feet to walk. They stood up, they grew smarter. Perhaps too smart, perhaps not smart enough.

And the Word of God grew louder, and so did the opposition to it. So the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and was despised and rejected and killed.

And raised. And we have never been the same since.
Let us come and worship our awesome God- so far beyond us, yet who became one of us and dwells amongst us.^[1]

[1] Rev. Jason John, from an unpublished sermon on creation, covenant and baptism , http://uqconnect.net/~zzjohn/skinnypreacher/sermon_god-creator_19_mar_2000.html