



# **SEASON OF CREATION**

## **CELEBRATION GUIDE**

**2019 Theme: Web of Life**

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## 2019 Season of Creation Theme: Web of Life

Each year, the ecumenical steering committee that provides resources to celebrate the Season of Creation suggests a theme. The suggested theme for this year is “the web of life: biodiversity as God’s blessing.” We suggest this theme because it helps us meditate on two essential facts about creation: it comes from God, and we play a part in it.

*Genesis 9:12-13 “God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the Earth.”*

The book of Genesis begins with God’s affirmation that all of creation is ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:30). We are part of a complex, delicate and interdependent web of life which is valuable because it is created, sustained and redeemed by God. Humanity is called to reflect God’s image through godly leadership within the community of fellow creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). The story of Noah includes God’s redemptive purposes for, and covenant with, not only humanity but the earth and all its creatures (Genesis 9:8-17). In the New Testament we learn that all things were created by and for Christ, giving particular value to each creature (Colossians 1:15-20). God’s ultimate purposes from creation to re-creation encompass all that we today call biodiversity.

The biblical witness is that the web of life - biodiversity - matters not only because human well-being depends on stable and thriving ecosystems and the services they give to us, from clean water and food, to oxygen, clothing and climate regulation, and all the ‘resources’ we use from nature. Biodiversity matters firstly because God gives value to every creature that is created. As the Papal Encyclical Laudato Si states, “It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. ... Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right” (Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home, 33).

Today, human behaviour is destroying the fabric of God’s creation at an unprecedented rate. According to the Living Planet Report 2018, there has been a 60% decline in global wildlife populations between 1970 and 2014. There are

multiple causes, from deforestation, habitat destruction, climate change, and pollution of soil, water and air, including the tide of plastic pollution filling the oceans.

Biodiversity loss matters both because all God’s creatures have value in themselves and also as an issue of justice. It is the poor and marginalised who depend most immediately on the health of ecosystems and are affected most severely by the collapse of the natural systems that sustain all life. Billions of people today face the loss of productive soils, clean water, forests, fish and coral reefs, and biodiversity loss is a major driver of human migration. As Kenyan botanist and Christian Dr Stella Simiyu states: “The rural poor depend directly on the natural resource base. This is where their pharmacy is, this is where their supermarket is, this is in fact their fuel station, their power company, their water company. What would happen to you if these things were removed from your local neighbourhood? Therefore, we really cannot afford not to invest in environmental conservation.”

Under the theme of ‘The Web of Life: Biodiversity as God’s blessing’, Season of Creation 2019 encourages participation of churches and Christians worldwide through:

- Celebrating the goodness of God’s gift of creation in worship, drawing on the Psalms and other scriptures to rejoice in the Creator’s glory
- Reflecting on our mistreatment of creation, repent of the decisions we’ve made, and commit to new practices and habits.
- Learning more about the wildlife and ecology of our communities
- Teaching our communities about God’s web of life, and convey the truth that we can protect both people and our planet
- Practicing nature conservation in our homes, schools, churchyards and community spaces
- Giving voice to the voiceless by advocating for nature in our home communities and beyond
- Preparing for global events that protect nature, such as the World Conservation Congress in June, the UN climate summit in September, the Catholic synod on the Amazon in October, and the UN climate change conference in November