

Christians unite in Season of Creation

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Christian leaders encourage participation in Season of Creation

Joint message gives new impetus to ecumenical season of environmental protection

This week Christian leaders signed a letter of support for the Season of Creation, an annual celebration of prayer and action to protect the environment.

This represents the **first joint statement of support** for the season reaching across denominations and including the Catholic Church, and Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed signatories. Ecumenical organisations, including the Conference of European Churches, have also endorsed the message. It is a sign that Christian leaders increasingly see environmental protection as an essential expression of their faith.

The Season of Creation is celebrated annually from September 1 to October 4 in hundreds of events on six continents. The full text of the letter is below and **available as a PDF here**.

September 1 was proclaimed as a day of prayer for creation by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989. Many Christian churches started celebrating the Season of Creation between that date and October 4, which is the date of the feast many western traditions observe for St. Francis of Assisi, who is widely associated with nature.

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said “As Pope Francis tells us in *Laudato Si*, ‘living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience’ (217). As caretakers of God’s creation, we must choose between tending to its richness and neglecting it to impoverishment. For the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters, our choices have profound implications. Let us embrace the Season of Creation in all its joy and depth, and fully enter into our role as caretakers of the Earth, our common home.”

Most Rev. and Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, said, “In the beginning, God said...’ These words usher in the most extraordinary account of

creation: an account of abundance, of multiplicity, of creativity. Creation is God's intricate work of art, and human beings are privileged to be placed within it. In this Season of Creation, we celebrate God the Creator, we thank God for the extraordinary riches of his grace. But we also come in sorrow for the way we have defaced creation and misused it for our own ends. In this Season, let's find again a true vision of what being made in the image of God, caring for creation can mean, and commit ourselves to action."

More information is available at the Season of Creation website, SeasonOfCreation.org.

Letter in support of the Season of Creation

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?" (Job 12:7-9, NRSV)

Once every year, from September 1 to October 4, members of the Christian family set aside time to deepen our relationship with the Creator, each other, and all of creation. This is the Season of Creation, which began in 1989 with the first recognition of the day of prayer for creation by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, and which is now embraced by the wider ecumenical family.

During the Season of Creation, we join together to rejoice in the good gift of creation and reflect on how we care for it. This season offers a precious opportunity to pause in the midst of our day-to-day lives and contemplate the fabric of life into which we are woven.

As the environmental crisis deepens, we Christians are urgently called to witness to our faith by taking bold action to preserve the gift we share. As the psalmist sings, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1-2) During the Season of Creation, we ask ourselves: Do our actions honor the Lord as Creator? Are there ways to deepen our faith by protecting "the least of these," who are most vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation?

We invite you to join us on a journey of faith that challenges and rewards us with fresh perspective and deeper bonds of love. United in our sincere wish to protect creation and all those who share it, we join hands across denominations as sisters and brothers in Christ. During this season, we walk together towards greater stewardship of our place in creation.

"O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent." (Psalm 104:1-2)

With you, we give thanks for the community of believers around the world that is bringing love to creation this season, and we praise the Creator for the gifts we share.

In God's grace,

- Archbishop Job of Telmessos, Permanent Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the WCC, on behalf of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
 - Most Rev. & Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
 - Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
 - Dr Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of World Council of Churches
 - Rev. Dr Chris Ferguson, General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches
 - Bishop Efraim Tendero, Secretary-General of the World Evangelical Alliance
 - Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary, Lutheran World Federation
 - Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, General Secretary, Act Alliance
 - Fr Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary, Conference of European Churches
- About the Season of Creation Steering Committee

As the urgent need to solve the environmental crisis grows, Christian churches have been increasingly called to strengthen their united response. The Season of Creation ecumenical steering committee came together to provide resources to empower Christians respond to the call of faith, each in the way of his or her own denomination, during this shared season of reflection and action.

The steering committee is comprised of Act Alliance, Anglican Communion Environmental Network, ARocha, Christian Aid, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Lausanne/World Evangelical Alliance Creation Care Network, Lutheran World Federation, and World Council of Churches.

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[Missionaries of St Columban have created liturgical Resources for celebrating a Catholic Season of Creation based on the Catholic Lectionary available on their Australian website]