



# Inhabit creation differently

Weekly meditation  
booklet 2026





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Shared action 2024-2028

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# PREFACE

*Receiving and sharing the Word: a weekly journey to cultivate the hope given by God to today's world.*

Every week throughout 2026, at the heart of our communities scattered throughout the world, a meditation is offered to you by Cevaa. It comes from a brother or sister, pastor or lay person, young or old, rooted in a culture, a language, a history. These words, modest and profound, are windows onto the way the Gospel is understood in the different contexts of our world.

They fall under a banner that deeply challenges us: **Inhabit creation differently**. This theme, chosen for the Community's Shared Action, is not just a slogan. It is an invitation to convert our outlook, our lifestyles, our way of being in the world.

This collection brings together the meditations received by the Activities and Youth Pole in response to its call to bring community dynamics to life. They do not claim to be exhaustive or uniform. On the contrary, they bear witness to the living diversity of the member churches, their spiritual sensitivity, their struggles and their hopes. Each text is a pause, an invitation to prayer, reflection and commitment.

In a world marked by crises, injustices and upheavals, these meditations are beacons. They remind us that the Word of God continues to resonate, to console and to awaken. They encourage us to listen to the many voices that make up the song of Christian faith today.

This booklet of weekly meditations, bringing together texts written on the theme of the Shared Action **Inhabit creation differently**, responds to another desire expressed by member churches: to receive topics for prayer for worship services, meetings and gatherings.

Our hope is that this booklet will inspire new ideas and other activities around the Shared Action.

May it be for each and every one of us a companion on our journey, a catalyst for communion, a call to live out our mission in joy, hope and faithfulness.

*Tehuarii PIFAO*  
*President of Cevaa*

*Claudia SCHULZ*  
*General Secretary of Cevaa*

# BEAR MORE FRUIT

## FOR A CHURCH THAT BEARS FRUIT AND INHABITS CREATION DIFFERENTLY

Churches are living witnesses to God's love in the world. At the 2025 General Assembly of the Cevaa, held in Torre Pellice, Italy, delegates from the 36 member churches of the Community gathered around the theme **Bearing fruit**.

It was an opportunity to discern how, in a world marked by social, economic and ecological crises, churches can be credible witnesses to God's love and contribute to the transformation of communities.

In the Bible, the expression **Bearing fruit** occurs many times, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. It is used as an agricultural image to evoke spiritual life, faithfulness to God and the visible effects of a living relationship with Him. In the Gospel of John (15:1-5), Jesus uses several symbols—the vine, the vinedresser, the vine stock and the branches—to illustrate this essential relationship.

Each of these symbols has a particular meaning and sheds light on the relationship between God, Christ and believers.

- **The vine-dresser**

This is the person who cultivates and cares for the vineyard. The profession of vine-dresser is a true art that requires patience and dedication, following the rhythm of the seasons: preparing the soil and planting, maintaining, protecting, harvesting... He prunes and trims the vine as needed.

The vine-dresser is God the Father. He is the one who cares for the vine, who watches over the vine with attention. He is a God who is a gardener, attentive and patient. Pruning, cutting away, and waiting for fruit is therefore an image of divine discernment.

- **The vine stock**

It is the foot of the vine that nourishes and supports the whole plant. It remains in place year after year and allows the branches to grow and produce leaves and bunches of grapes. The vine transmits sap to the shoots. It does not exist for itself. It lives to nourish the shoots so that they bear fruit. Without it, the branches cannot live.

The vine is Jesus, the unique, reliable and living source of the Christian's spiritual life. All those who want to bear fruit must be grafted onto Him.

Thus, Christians do not live by themselves, but by the sap that comes from Christ, the Vine.

- **The branch**

This is the branch that grows from the vine and bears leaves and, above all, grapes. It is therefore the living and visible part which, if well nourished by the sap of the vine, produces fruit.



The branch is the image of all those who have faith in Christ. However, the most important thing is not to declare our belonging to Christ but to bear fruit worthy of the Vine. We are connected to one another: the Church is the community of branches, united to the vine, called to bear fruit in the world. This image is part of a long biblical tradition, used to teach essential truths that enlighten our Christian life.

Fruit is therefore much more than a symbol: it is the visible reflection of an inner transformation wrought by the Spirit of God.

John's text thus recalls the centrality of Christ in the lives of believers and in the gift of grace, for all life passes through Him. Even when we live righteously, we need the Gardener who knows us completely and sees beyond what we can see; He can therefore prune or trim us and purify us.

**Bearing fruit** refers to what we produce in the midst of others. Fruit fulfils its destiny when it enters into a life-giving relationship, when it satisfies the hunger of another, whether material, emotional or spiritual. Biblical fruit is never insignificant; it alludes to growth, faithfulness, love, judgement and grace. It mirrors what God does in the human heart and the actions that result from it. Just as the fruit of a tree is the result of its identity and nature, the fruit we bear must reflect our identity in Christ.

The Church that bears fruit becomes a blessing to the world and manifests the reign of God in all dimensions of life. Since 1971, the churches of the Cevaa have been united around a vocation: to carry out concrete joint projects, exchanges of people, theological reflections and joint actions for social justice and peace, because they have this desire to bear fruit.

**Bearing fruit** requires time, patience and faithfulness despite difficulties. On the ground, social conditions, the current ecological crisis, and political and financial problems make the Community's work increasingly difficult. From local parishes to national and international gatherings, Christians face multiple challenges that complicate their mission. Just as a plant needs time, constant care and favourable conditions to bear fruit and allow it to ripen, the Community's actions require investment, patience and perseverance.

**Bearing fruit** is not a performance or frantic activism, but a consequence of communion with Christ and with others. It is a call to be, to grow spiritually and to shine, which speaks to the heart as much as to the hands. For fruit, in the Bible as in the life of the Church, is not a theory: it is something that is felt, experienced and touched. It invites us to sow, water and harvest... to perform concrete acts of love, justice and solidarity. It offers the members of the Community a precious opportunity to collaborate, to renew themselves spiritually and to build together a future of transformation and hope.

As a Community of Churches, as Christians, we hope to bear fruit worthy of our Father. With this in mind, and in order to remain committed to the Cep, the Activities and Youth Pole encourages the entire Cevaa Community to gather each week around the Word to meditate on the theme **Inhabit creation differently**.

This resource, developed by authors from member churches, is one of the fruits of Cevaa's activities on Shared Action. It conveys their reflections and understanding, enriched by a careful consideration of the realities experienced by the Community.

Let us meditate, place this Shared Action in the Lord's hands so that it may bear the fruits of the divine Vine, and act to **Inhabit creation differently**.

*Omer Gbokanle DAGAN*

*Executive Secretary of the Activities and Youth Pole*



## In the beginning, the Alliance

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

*Genesis 1:1-3*

There has been much talk of ecology and sustainable commitment in our Churches for nearly a decade. Civil society in Europe did not wait for the Church to take action on ecological issues. But neither did the Church wait for fervent defenders of the environmental cause to bang their fists on politicians' tables before reflecting on creation. Others before us, in centuries past, were pioneers. Think of the Basel conference of the World Council of Churches at the turn of the 1990s and its programme «Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation».

In the turmoil that sometimes sweeps through our world, and our Churches with it, it is important to resist what I would call eco-worship, that is, an ecology elevated to the status of a religion, which ousts God, an eco-worship that ultimately renders our actions fruitless and our prayers anxious.

We will return to Scripture to see what it says about our relationship with creation and how it enlightens our life of faith and prayer. And this begins with the stories of Genesis.

We will remember, in fact, that at the beginning of Scripture, even before opening the great historical fresco recalling the founding event of the Judeo-Christian tradition, namely the exodus from Egypt, there are these accounts in Genesis, and with them the accounts of creation in these very first pages.

Scripture does this not for historical reasons, but primarily for theological and spiritual reasons. The account of creation, and all the accounts that follow—up to the great frescoes of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—do not claim to depict in a historical and journalistic way what happened at the origins of the world. They simply recount the genesis – precisely – of the people of Israel, explaining their origins and how they function. And in doing so, they address the different facets of their identity: where do we come from? Who are our ancestors and why are we in this corner of the world? Why is there evil? etc.

The Book of Genesis, with all the stories it contains, is secondary to the story of the Exodus. To put it another way: the God of the Covenant, the God of the Exodus, precedes the God of creation, the God of Genesis. This is the first face He shows of Himself, before revealing Himself as the God of creation.

What does this change in terms of faith and our relationship with creation? Faith invites believers to contemplate creation, not only as a space that amazes and enchants, but as the place par excellence where the story of God with humans and all creatures is played out and incarnated. A place, a space, permeated by God's passion, the passion of one who bends over his suffering people and remembers!

Creation, in this first account in Genesis 1, recounts and magnifies the Creator God, who establishes, orders and names. A God who also marvels and blesses.

«To place», «to order», «to name», «to marvel», «to bless»... these are verbs that speak of creation, that much is certain. But they are also verbs that speak, perhaps even first and foremost, of the work of salvation. Verbs that outline the Covenant. Verbs that run through the entire Scriptures and are found in the background of every page of the history of the Lord God with His creation.

Nature and everything around us are not left out of this fabulous adventure of God's history with us. Nature, and even more so creation, is driven and illuminated from beginning to end by the grace that emanates from this marvellous Covenant of God.

Amen!

## PRAYER

*God of the Covenant, God of History*

*You come to take Your place in our lives and slip into the joints of our bones, into the interstices of our hearts.*

*You inscribe your grace there and make Your call to Life resound within them.*

*Remind us that You are the God who creates by saving. And who saves by creating.*

*Help us to grow in Your image and likeness, and through Your Spirit, enable us to know ourselves ever more as your children!*

Sandro RESTAURI

EERV - Eglise Evangélique Réformée du canton de Vaud

## A beautiful flower in the garden !

*Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.*

Luke 12:27

Jesus invites us here to take a simple but profound look. It is not just a matter of talking about a flower, but of going into a garden and seeing for ourselves. For sometimes, in order to believe, we need to look. Look at a flower, a lily... and see God.

### **See a flower that grows on its own**

When we go into a field, we see flowers. And among them, lilies. Jesus says: *They don't work or make their clothing...* This is to explain to His disciples that they should not worry about life, just like the lilies. They do not worry about tomorrow, they make no effort, and yet they grow. How is this possible? Because God Himself makes them grow: without ploughing, without fertiliser, without watering, without human hands, but only by God and with God.

It is a silent miracle. As in a Malagasy song that says: «Voninkazo adaladala, voninkazo tsy misaina fa maniry samirery eo an-tany karankaina» (A «crazy» flower, a flower without thought, growing alone in a desert). But it is not madness: it is divine will. And this flower is beautiful, delicate, fragrant... It is a divine work of art. Who could do the same? No one. So why not respect it? Why waste it? Why throw it away without even admiring it?

We have a mission: to honour the flower that God has grown and to plant other flowers, to continue His work.



### Seeing God's glory through a flower

Glory is attributed to a worthy person, someone in a high position, an executive. Here, Jesus compares the lily to the glory of King Solomon. This king, rich and powerful, undoubtedly wore sumptuous clothes... But none of them could match the beauty of a lily. Why? Because the lily is clothed by God Himself. This flower is the image of God, its Creator. We can see God's goodness and glory through a flower.

No one asks to glorify a flower; it happens all by itself because glory cannot be bought, imposed or earned.

In Malagasy, the word for «glory» is «voninahitra». Literally, it means «flower of a herb».

A simple flower has more glory than King Solomon because it reflects the goodness, wisdom and creativity of the Creator... It is a divine creation; no one can clothe themselves in the glory of a lily. It is God who has clothed it in glory, by His will.

So why would we want to take away that glory? Why destroy it? Why miss out on what it tells us about God? Without taking the time to look at it, appreciate it, admire it.

This creation that God has given us is a glorified creation; let us allow God to reclaim his glory through flowers; the passage in Isaiah 48:11 only emphasises this: *I will not share my glory with idols*. God grants His glory to whomever He wishes, and flowers are the first to benefit from it.

### A call to each and every one of us

Dear children, dear young people, dear adults, be responsible.

Go to a garden. Look at a flower. And ask yourselves: «Who made it grow? Who took care of it?»

We are not only the guardians of creation, but even more so, the gardeners of God's garden. Let us continue to plant what God has planted. And let us give Him glory through His works and His creatures.

Let us trust in God and show Him our gratitude by taking care of what He has entrusted to us. Perhaps one day, in a damaged world, a simple flower will be enough to revive hope and change the world.

### PRAYER

*Lord,*

*We praise You, Creator of the Universe.*

*Thank You for the silent beauty of flowers, for Your grace visible in nature.*

*Forgive us for not taking care of them. Forgive us for despising or forgetting Your glory.*

*Today, we want to become faithful gardeners, responsible disciples, and amazed witnesses once again.*

*Help us to continue Your work with humility. Help us to bear Your glory and give it back to You.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*

Riana Lalasoa RAZAFINTSALAMA

FJKM - Fianganon' I Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## Let God be GOD, Let the Earth be EARTH, let Man be MAN

*O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers the moon and the stars you set in place what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?*

*Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!*

Psalm 8:1-9

I read and reread this passage from Psalm 8 more than a dozen times and wondered if the Psalmist was sober. Is this a utopia?

Not at all. Why ask this question? Just open your eyes and look around you. When you look up at the sky, it is difficult to contemplate the dance of the stars or admire the majesty of the moon. It is as if they want to play hide and seek, or simply that they are afraid to show themselves, afraid of us.

Faced with this kind of discourse, we can only feel nostalgic and ask ourselves, what have we done? If we were to take stock of the situation today, it could be summed up in two words: «Disappointment» and «Desolation». Why? Why? Did we really need to come to this? Can't you hear all those mysterious cries? Can't you hear the cries of the ocean, the cries of the sky and of Mama Fenua?



We live in a society where considerable progress has been made in recent years to meet needs that, for some, seemed necessary, essential, and fundamental, filling us with delight. But have we thought about Mama Fenua?

We cannot ignore the results of this progress. However, by choosing the easy way out, we have forgotten that this harms God's creation; we have forgotten that the resources at our disposal are not inexhaustible and that harming God's creation means harming ourselves, the whole of humanity and future generations.

Several conferences and seminars have been held around the world, and we are still waiting for results. So many fine speeches! It is time to stand up. It is time to act. And it starts with our own homes, our own parishes.

Brothers and sisters, I wanted to share with you a word of wisdom from our Māōhi ancestors: Let God be GOD, let the Earth be EARTH, let Man be MAN. In the Māōhi Protestant Church, we have added this word of wisdom at the end of every service. Not to replace the Lord's Prayer, but to remind everyone that without God, without the Earth, we are nothing.

*E ia outou atoà na te Aroha mau o te Fatu. Te aroha ia rahi.*

## PRAYER

Lord,

*We thank You for the breath of life You give us each day. Thank You for all the wonders that surround us and remind us of the immensity of Your Love. Grant us serenity and peace in our homes. In Your goodness and mercy, forgive us for our faults and give us the strength to overcome the trials of this world and serve You diligently. You know the depths of our hearts and we praise You in the hope that Love will reign supreme. We thank You for all that You have given us on this EARTH.*

*Amen !*



## United together

*How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe. Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting.*

*Psalm 133*

Psalm 133 is a song of ascent, attributed to David. It celebrates the harmony, unity and joy of a people long scattered, finally gathered together.

In this Psalm, David highlights the importance of brotherly bonds, especially in a world where divisions and conflicts can easily arise. He exclaims: *How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!*

This Psalm speaks of brotherhood among human beings. However, while God created man, He also fashioned other creatures, many of which are living beings in their own right. Yet the relationship between man and the rest of creation is often conflictual. Our activities – the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas), deforestation, intensive agriculture – testify to the destructive impact we have on our environment.

Today, we are suffering the serious consequences of our actions: global warming, soil depletion, the disappearance of many species... All this is due to our reckless exploitation of nature. It is therefore urgent that we adopt a new attitude, a new mindset, in order to better protect our environment.

Humans occupy a special place in creation, but we must remember that we are all part of it. Trees, animals and other creatures play a fundamental role in our well-being and deserve to be considered our brothers and sisters.

Let us protect them, care for them, preserve them and, above all, actively engage in reforestation.

Too often, planting trees is seen as a purely utilitarian gesture: they will later be used to provide wood for construction or heating. But trees are much more than that. They are essential to our health, purify the air we breathe and contribute to ecological balance. Science teaches us the importance of photosynthesis and the role of CO<sub>2</sub> in the climate, yet some remain sceptical about the environmental emergency, retorting: «So what? The climate has always changed.»

It is time to raise awareness and change the way we view creation. We must inhabit the Earth differently by learning to respect and love our surroundings.

Let us meditate!

Let us pray!

## PRAYER

*Lord our Father,*

*Thank You for the beauty of creation that You have entrusted to us. Forgive us for mismanaging this heritage. Help us to change our attitudes and to care for our common home. Teach us to consider every creature as our brother and to act responsibly.*

*Amen.*

Jean NGNESLONG

EELC – Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun

## Creation, a divine gift to be safeguarded

*When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers the moon and the stars you set in place what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!*

*Psalm 8:3-9*

**Inhabit creation differently** commits humanity to preserving this gift from God. Man is called to be its guardian, adopting a responsible attitude.

### **Creation: God's work**

Verse 4 of this Psalm presents worship of the Lord, motivated by the majesty of His Name, His Power and His Ingenuity reflected in the immensity of creation. It inspires the deep conviction that the creation of the world is the work of God, the reflection of divine splendour. It deserves respect and protection. This requires a change of mindset to manage resources carefully and renounce destructive practices such as excessive deforestation and pollution. Preserving creation means recognising God as creator and honouring Him.



### Man's privileged position in creation

Faced with the immensity of creation, the psalmist reflects on the smallness of man and then exalts His dignity. Although small, man, created in the image of God, holds a central position in God's plan. This implies an ethical awareness of his sacred mission and an obligation to live in harmony with nature, while showing solidarity with the most vulnerable, who are frequently affected by the perverse effects of the destruction of nature. His privileged position does not give him the right to destroy but rather obliges him to respect all existence in accordance with his divine calling.

### Man's responsibility towards Creation

Verse 6 emphasises that God has entrusted man with control over His work, not to abuse it, but to protect it. This task obliges him to maintain biodiversity, respect ecological balance and adopt sustainable practices.

Faced with today's environmental challenges pollution, deforestation, climate change it is imperative that humankind recognise its duty and engage in civic action, while mobilising communities of believers to establish a link between faith and ecological justice.

This Psalm of David encourages us to reconnect with our mission: to inhabit the earth with respect, to protect creation as a priceless gift, and to honour the Creator. This implies a deep ethical and spiritual commitment, where humankind, conscious of its dignity and responsibility, becomes the guardian of nature. Safeguarding creation is no longer an option, but a sacred calling that places our existence in a certain harmony where faith and responsibility come together to maintain the beauty of creation and the balance of biodiversity.

### PRAYER

*Lord,*

*You are good, powerful and awesome, I adore You. As I contemplate creation, I realise Your greatness, Your power and the beauty of Your love. My privileged position reveals to me how much You love me. My responsibility to preserve creation makes me understand Your plan for it. Thank You for Your magnificent gift. O God, You are great, You are magnificent, I adore You! Give me the love and strength to respect and uphold creation.*

Huguette Blandine MOUANDA  
EECo - Eglise Evangélique du Congo



## Blessed are the meek !

*God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.*

*Matthew 5:5*

To dwell gently in creation is, for me, the invitation of this verse from the Beatitudes.

Nature is not just a backdrop, a pantry, or a reserve of wood. We are part of it as creatures. When I look at the bird, it looks back at me. When I touch the tree, it perceives me too. Everything is connected, and we are not the only beings endowed with intelligence, emotions, sensations, needs and desires...

The Psalms constantly remind us of the glory of God, to whom the earth belongs. Yet God chose to make a covenant with us and entrusted us with the responsibility of cultivating and preserving His creation. When we garden, we do ourselves good, we marvel. Admiration opens us to praise the Creator, and the landscape comes alive! We have spiritual work to do to reconnect with life, to perceive it in its gentleness, its wonder, its sense of oneness, by learning to look at it gently and protect it. If we do not feel touched, affected, concerned, we cannot be moved or mobilised by a commitment to more life.

### **A network of relationships**

Ecology is a word created to refer to the «study of relationships» between human beings and the environment. A relationship is something that is built and maintained. Did you know that today, some city children go out for walks less often than prisoners, who have their fixed walking times? And we, faced with the prison of our schedules, our jobs, our obligations, how much time do we take to walk, to contemplate, to connect and to marvel? Everywhere in the landscape I meet other beings, created and loved by God, like me. I can also learn from them.

*God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth* Through the practice of gentleness, through our mutual connection, we can live an ecology of relationships with living beings. Gentleness is a sensitive experience that passes through our senses and our

hearts, through the way we connect with others. We can touch the bark of trees, learn from their strength, their flexibility, their deep roots and their reach towards the sky. Or the fresh, living water that gives life. Or the dense, rough stone that has been there for millennia. Or the coats of animals and the textures of plants, so varied... Our planet originally exuded a gentle way of life, balance and beauty. But human appetite knows no bounds and is damaging this gift.

### Divine gentleness

Yet the Gospel affirms that there is something divine in gentleness. In Matthew, the term «gentle» is attributed to Christ himself. Jesus says: *Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Mt 11:29)*. And when Jesus enters Jerusalem, we find this link with a prophecy of Zechariah: *Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey riding on a donkey's colt. (Mt 21:5)*. Gentleness is also one of the fruits of the Spirit, according to Paul's list (Gal 5:22-23). All this encourages us to cultivate it, to ask for it, to be inspired by it... Even if it is not possible every day, nor with everyone!

The Beatitudes evoke a paradoxical happiness, the horizon of a new justice. Their radical message goes against what society tells us to do. It is the way, the path that Christ offers us. We can anchor ourselves in His gentleness, which was not without firmness in questioning injustices, bad practices, or the lack of relationships. Limiting our consumption, travelling less, saving water and electricity, picking up litter in the street or on footpaths, recycling and repairing rather than throwing away, avoiding purchases that involve the exploitation of workers far away or the use of pesticides, etc.: these are indeed acts of gentleness, of offering for life. Whatever others, industries, or governments may do, with Christ, let us choose to embody this gentleness as much as possible in our relationship with the world and with others, humbly taking our place in the service of God, others, and creation, out of love.

### PRIÈRE

Lord,

*Help us grow in Your divine gentleness and enable us to live it out through our actions, choices and daily deeds. Inspire us to live simply and soberly in memory of You.*

*Teach us to be guardians and gardeners, respecting You, the earth and all creatures. May we make our commitment an offering for life!*

Amen.



## Limits and obedience

*The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. And the Lord said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." But Noah found favor with the Lord.*

Genesis 6:5-8

Throughout the Scriptures, beginning with Genesis, God sets limits on human action and habitation in creation. Limits between water and land, between light and darkness, etc. The first limit: do not «consume» from the tree of knowledge. After this boundary was violated, violence entered the world with the murder of Abel by his brother Cain; and every time these boundaries are crossed, there are consequences.

After a long period of human excess, God decides to destroy humanity, because: *The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. (Gn 6:5)*

This is where the character of Noah (rest, consolation) appears, a figure of incredible richness and relevance for our world today. Think of our era, where the dominant ideology is gain, enjoyment, comfort, domination, and possession, at any economic, ethical, and environmental cost. A world without limits, a world without God.

But God seeks consolation and hope by giving man a new chance, and He designates Noah as the instrument of this new beginning: *But Noah found favor with the Lord. (Gns 6:8)*. Noah is the righteous man who obeys God in every way, after man's original disobedience. He builds the ark with perseverance, over many years, exactly according to God's instructions: *So Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him. (Gn 7:5)*. God always gives very precise instructions: for the construction of His tabernacles, the ark of the covenant, the temple in Jerusalem. God wants us to obey Him in every way, because this obedience is the source of life.

Noah is also the first saviour of humanity and of the whole of creation, before the definitive salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ. Noah is therefore the new representative of creation, the one who obeys God and respects limits. Noah, the «consolation», then becomes the recipient of this new covenant.

Do we not have a responsibility to respect limits? Limits, when we destroy and pollute nature, when we compromise future generations. Where are the limits of offshore drilling, biotechnology, greenhouse gases, deforestation, etc.? There are also ethical and spiritual limits, when creation and humanity are disfigured.

God is a God of boundaries. He sets limits that must not be crossed, lest we die: *Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! (Dt. 30:19)*. After the Fall, man is driven out of Eden but enthroned as guardian of the earth. God gives us laws, rules for living, and sets strict and precise limits within the framework of this new covenant in Noah: *And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. (Gn 9:5)*. God gives Moses a law to enable His people to survive in the desert and then to enter into his history, until the coming of the one who will fulfil this law, Jesus, the Christ.

Thus, man's relationship with creation is not subject to human will alone but remains governed by the Torah and the Gospel. As soon as this relationship is distorted, becoming plunder, devastation and exhaustion, a relationship of sin is established: the earth has become cursed because of man (Gn 3:17). Most Jewish institutions and festivals have their origins in respect for and communion with creation: Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, was originally a celebration of the harvest of fruit and wine; the Sabbath was a day of rest and re for animals, the soil and humans; the Jubilee established a time of reconciliation between humans, with God and with His creation.

## PRAYER

Lord,

*You invite us to a true conversion of our view of the world and our ways of life. You have given us everything, the Torah and the Gospel. We confess our sin and our disobedience; but strengthened by hope in Your Word, help us to become effective workers in Your creation, according to Your will.*

Jean-Philippe BARDE

EPUDF - Eglise Protestante Unie de France/membre du réseau Espérer pour le vivant



## Creation: a treasure to be savoured responsibly

*The blessing of the Lord makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.*

*Proverbs 10:22*

When I walk on the beach and see the rainbow, I remember and think back to God's «never again» in Genesis... and I come to the passage where «everything was so good»... and then, of course, I stumble upon a plastic bottle filled with dirty sand and sticky oils. And I remember this sentence I read: «We need creation; it doesn't necessarily need us.»

Of course, that «never again» came from God. The world keeps turning, and so-called humans do everything possible and impossible to get almost everything wrong, trying to avoid God and His proposals, choosing to appropriate, conquer, violate, win by destroying... And so on and so forth, it seems. Almost nothing suggests or believes in significant changes in human life... Pessimism? Realism?

Meetings, statements, scientific warnings continue, and we hear reports: the climate has changed, where there used to be trees, there is now a desert, many people do not eat every day, violence is on the rise.

Our home is sick, and so are those of us who live in it!

However, there is good news: our God continues to be «faithful as a sulky dog» and calls us again and again, constantly inviting us to inhabit His creation differently. His blessings are a treasure... because that is not enough for us, we want more people.

I propose that we vaccinate ourselves with «joy»! As a hiking friend used to say, «joy in the blood»! To obtain this vaccine, we need healthy, living land, healthy plants and animals... so that people will be healthy, with *A glad heart (that) makes a happy face (Pr 15:13)*. This is the same ancient theme of Shalom, of harmony in creation. And this can be experienced if we allow ourselves to be imbued with this breath of God that inspires and renews hope... and if we act accordingly.



## PRAYER

O God,  
 May all people enjoy fully the life You give us... may the way of Jesus, Your Son, touch us  
 and may we commit ourselves to the necessary search for commitment and love to which  
 You invite us.  
 So be it.

Ariel CHARBONNIER  
 IEVRP - Iglesia Evangelica Valdense del Rio de la Plata

## Losing weight for the narrow gate

*Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he went, always pressing on toward Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?" He replied, "Work hard to enter the narrow door to God's Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail. When the master of the house has locked the door, it will be too late. You will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Lord, open the door for us!' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' And he will reply, 'I tell you, I don't know you or where you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil.'*

*"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you will be thrown out. And people will come from all over the world from east and west, north and south to take their places in the Kingdom of God. And note this: Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then."*

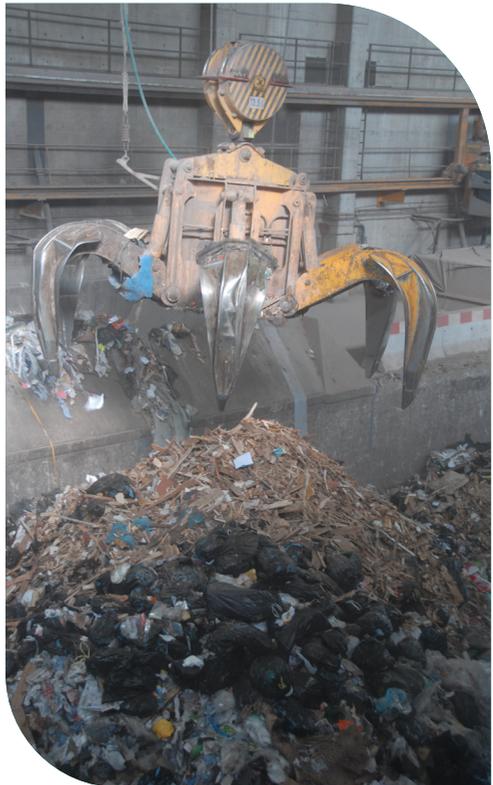
Luke 13:30

You have to bend down to enter the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. This low doorway forces everyone – tourist or pilgrim, tall or short – to be humble. But Jesus does not speak of a low doorway, He speaks of a narrow doorway. It is not quite the same thing. While one invites you to bend down, the other asks you to slim down. Spiritually speaking, that is.

Passing through the narrow gate is not a question of waist size. It is an invitation to shed the superfluous.

In the Bible, fat often has a symbolic function. It represents what belongs to God in sacrifices – what we offer, what we give up. But it is also associated with arrogance, injustice and contempt for the weak. A heart that is too fat becomes insensitive, hard and closed.

Jesus does not ask for a feat, but for inner purification. To lighten our lives of what clutters them: devouring ambition, the quest for image, excessive consumption. To become simple. Sober. Lighter to move forward. Clearer to love. Freer to choose good.



Such a door will not widen to let us through. It is up to us to adjust to it. It is a matter of finding a path of voluntary simplicity. Not out of moral duty, but because it is more alive that way.

Freed from excess, we become capable of listening, serving, praying with simple words, acting without making a sound. Faith, prayer and charity can also be slimmed down: not in intensity, but in ornamentation. ourselves from ambitions that exhaust us. Reconciling with ourselves without always wanting to appear different. Decluttering ourselves of what we possess without needing it. Simplifying our hearts.

This is the programme of this spiritual diet. Not to punish ourselves, but to pass through. To enter. For the door is narrow, yes. But it is open.

## PRAEUR

*Lord,*

*You invite us to pass through the narrow gate, the one that does not widen to accommodate our desires but lightens us of the superfluous. Deliver us from our inner clutter, our overly heavy ambitions, our overly fat hearts. Teach us simplicity, sobriety of heart, the joy of loving without appearing. May we become free enough, true enough, to enter Your Kingdom of humility and peace.*

*Amen.*

Redouane ES-SBANTI

CERFSA - Conférence des Eglises Réformées Francophones en Suisse Alémanique



## Let us bear one another's burdens

*Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone especially to those in the family of faith.*

*Galatians 6:10*

At the heart of the spirituality that encourages Christians to be careful when weariness sets in and discouragement threatens, Paul recalls the principle of life in a community where love reigns.

In a world of slavery, accumulation of material goods, selfishness and greed, lust for gain, stifled spiritual life and senseless and pernicious desires, God desires that those who have abundance share with those in need, so that equality may reign among His people (2 Cor 8:14-15).

Paul encourages Christians to lead a life of service and love towards others, showing kindness and generosity to all. Each person should be a source of blessing to other members of the community by reflecting God's love. This capacity for generosity is not an option but an obligation. It requires us to be sensitive, doing something perfect and appropriate for the well-being of others.

**Inhabit creation differently** means first and foremost being a witness through a life of constant kindness and love towards others. It means caring for members of the community through an active presence and attentive listening. Let us honour our heavenly Father with integrity. Let us build a harmonious society in unity and reconciliation, constantly seeking to be in accordance with the divine will in our words and actions. Let us take into account the needs and aspirations of other members of the community. Let us live in the joyful certainty that it is God's will that governs all the events of our lives. Let us encourage open and honest dialogue between individuals to understand each other's points of view in order to find the right solution.

**Inhabit creation differently** also means building trust by establishing healthy relationships based on transparency, responsibility and fairness, promoting cooperation and solidarity among members in order to achieve community goals. It means basing ourselves not only on love, but also on compassion and mutual understanding. It means working for the spiritual growth of our communities by serving others, expressing gratitude and appreciation towards them, recognising their contributions and efforts, and offering opportunities for learning, reflection and sharing in the practice of intercessory prayer (Eph 4:11-13).

**Inhabit creation differently** also means promoting a culture of peace that encourages and values non-violence, mutual respect and peaceful conflict resolution. It means putting in place mechanisms to heal the wounds of the past and promote national unity. It means building a harmonious society in unity and reconciliation, in which everyone works towards effective coexistence. It means teaching members about peace, reconciliation and sacrificial love.

**Inhabit creation differently** is ultimately an invitation to stop clinging to what we possess as if it were our personal wealth, our security, our reason for living, but to surrender ourselves by placing our resources in the Lord's hands for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. As mere stewards of God's goods (Lk 12:31-48), let us be generous and excel in good works (Eph. 4:28). Everyone must follow the Lord's example in their daily lives. We must therefore be attentive to the needs of others.

**Inhabit creation differently** is to live a life of generosity that honours the God we serve through the universal priesthood. It means doing everything possible to ensure that others understand that sharing, charity and love honour God and bless others. Generosity is an important quality for all Christians; it has a positive impact on the community and on the world. So let us live differently in creation while we have the opportunity, working for the good of all.

## PRAYER

*Lord of the universe,  
We bless You for our humanity. You have placed each of us in an environment that we must impact for Your glory. Make us generous stewards, ministers of love and promoters of a holy and appropriate diaconate for the happiness of all. May our actions promote good crisis management. Make us wise so that we may build a harmonious coexistence in a testimony that prepares others for Your imminent coming. May each one draw from the Holy Scriptures the elements necessary to promote unity in our socio-cultural diversity. May all draw from the divine Trinity the holy anointing to build harmonious communities in this inevitable globalisation.  
In Jesus' name, Amen!*



## My people have no understanding

*Even an ox knows its owner, and a donkey recognizes its master's care—but Israel doesn't know its master.*

*My people don't recognize my care for them.*

*Isaiah 1:3*

### **Broken relationship with God**

In some countries of the world, particularly my own, Togo, it is not uncommon to see domestic animals roaming the streets. Many breeders or «masters» of these animals let them out of the house at dawn. What may seem paradoxical is that these animals, even though they travel long distances during the day, return to their homes at nightfall. They know their home, the home of their master. They do not mistake one house for another; they recognise where they came from.

The parallel with humans is not necessarily accurate in every respect. But let us ask ourselves a few questions. Do we know the manger of our master, this God who created us in his image? Do we really know God, whom we want as our Lord and Saviour? Do we know how to go to Him?

A few years ago, Cardinal Robert Sarah wrote «Dieu ou rien», a book in which he questions, among other things, our relationship with God, emphasising how God has been killed in the Western world. With the development of technology – and even more so with artificial intelligence conquering our digital spaces – the sin of pride is becoming increasingly rooted in mankind. Humanity no longer seems to depend on God. Is it useful to ask for our daily bread when we have a full refrigerator? Why pray for safety when my car can recognise dangers? Why pray for a miracle when medicine and science have all the answers? Why ask for God's guidance when artificial intelligence tools can tell me what to do and why?

Our relationships with each other, with creation and with the Creator are changing considerably in a free world. In Africa, in certain contexts, we are losing the value of the sacred. Increasingly, we are denying God in our daily lives, simply refusing to worship Him as we should. Society seems to have moved beyond taboos, mysticism and the sacred. What once aroused fear or restraint no longer frightens us. Red lines are being crossed. Humans continue to establish their own rules and detach their positions from divine thought. What God thinks no longer means anything to us, but we still need to recognise God Himself and distinguish

His thoughts.

The serpent said to the woman: *God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil. (Gn 3:5).* We agree with him, pride swells within us and we defy God by considering ourselves to be like Him.

### **Finding the way back**

We can simply, as the book of Job says, ask the beasts, the birds of the sky, and the earth, and they will instruct us (Jb 12:7-8). Nature is an open Bible. Ants teach us perseverance, the seasons remind us of God's faithfulness, the stars sing of his greatness (Ps 19). Yet, in our modern frenzy, we have forgotten this language. Let us learn to listen again: to the whisper of the winds, the resilience of the deserts, the balance of ecosystems.

This comes through prayer and spiritual exercises, but also through reconnecting with creation. Listening to creation also means preserving it, tending the garden (Gn 2:15).

Let us seek to listen to the Lord. And from this attentive listening, let us draw meaning to worship him, to recognise his sovereignty.

### **PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Nature speaks to us and teaches us to worship You. Help us to better perceive these messages, these signals. Teach us to devote ourselves to You faithfully and totally. Teach us also to care for creation, to pay faithful attention to it.*

*At a time when creation is suffering from the effects of climate change, we want You to help those who are suffering. Save these climate refugees, help those who can no longer find food because of the deterioration of our environment. Lord, hear the groans of Creation and give us the strength to work for its restoration.*

*Amen.*

## Living in creation with humility and care

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.*

*Psalm 24:1*

*For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

*Romans 8:22*

At a time of environmental upheaval, such as climate change, the collapse of biodiversity, and social and humanitarian crises, we are invited to revisit the way we inhabit the world. Inhabit creation differently is not simply an ecological invitation but a call to convert our outlook and our habits in the light of the Word of God.

Psalm 24 reminds us of a fundamental truth: the earth belongs to the Lord, with all that it contains. We are only temporary tenants on this planet. We are neither its masters nor its owners, but its guardians. Every tree, every river, every living being bears the imprint of God. Yet too often we have turned this mission into domination. Our lifestyles and excessive consumption too often leave deep wounds on the earth. The way we consume, produce, travel and discard reveals our relationship with creation... and with God. And the question we can ask ourselves is: Is this relationship positive or negative?

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul speaks of creation groaning in anticipation of renewal. We hear this groaning in the cries of people affected by drought or floods, in the silence of extinct species, in the anguish of those who no longer have clean air to breathe. But these pains are not sterile: they herald a birth, a hope for a new world.

**Inhabit creation differently** means recognising that we are part of creation, not above it. We are dust from the earth, shaped by the same creative hand. It means adopting simple



but meaningful actions: taking care of water, choosing purchases we really need over overconsumption, favouring local and sustainable products, protecting living things. But it also means living our human relationships differently, learning to rejoice in the essentials, to live in harmony with our brothers and sisters, choosing justice, peace and kindness. It means understanding that every small act, done in love, contributes to the restoration of the world as God intended it.

Finally, and above all, it means returning to a spirituality of gratitude and praise, as the psalms invite us to do: seeing in every flower, every bird, every breath of wind, a trace of God's tenderness. And allowing ourselves to be transformed by this beauty.

By closing our eyes and listening to the groaning of creation, by responding to God's call for our lives as ambassadors, we can rediscover our rightful place: not above, but at the heart of creation, as loving and grateful servants.

## PRAYER

*Lord,*

*Teach us to inhabit creation differently from the way we live it every day. Fill us with Your love and humility. May we learn day by day to inhabit creation differently, putting You at the centre of everything, and to preserve it as You desire. Make us faithful guardians of your earth, witnesses of Your peace for Your divine mission here on earth. Inspire us with simple gestures in Your service and teach us to respect the beauty of Your work.*

*Amen.*



## Caring for creation

*And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?*

*Matthew 6:30*

It is Jesus who declares this, so we need not worry: God will provide us with everything we need!

That's not quite how we should understand this text...

By telling us not to worry about food, drink and clothing, Jesus wants to redirect our focus to something else.

God already takes care of your basic needs, which leaves you with the time and energy to worry about what is essential.

So try to worry about something else: not primarily about yourself, but about others. That is your mission.

Do we care about others? Do we care about those who have less than us? About those who suffer because of wars? Do we care about those who live in our country but are accused of all kinds of wrongdoing because they are migrants, because they are different? Do we care about women who suffer violence?

Do we care about creation? About leaving our children a habitable earth? Do we care about the animal and plant species that are silently disappearing?

Brussels has decided to postpone the anti-deforestation law under pressure from the agri-food industry and timber traders.

This law, adopted in 2022, was supposed to ban the importation into Europe of products directly linked to deforestation, such as timber, and all crops grown on large-scale cleared land, such as coffee, cocoa and beef. Intensive livestock farming is also a cause of forest destruction.

Do we care about this?

How can we deal with this vicious circle that humanity imposes on nature, on creation, and that it has imposed on itself? How can we care for these animals, these plants, these human beings caught up in the cycle?

The task seems immense, which is why we must not remain alone: it is important to come together, caring a little less about ourselves and participating in the celebrations and actions proposed by our churches, devoting our gifts, our prayers and, better still, our time to concrete commitment.

Caring for others and for creation does not mean having the solution in your pocket, but choosing to be part of a great movement of solidarity and mutual aid, whose members affirm their faith in the future and in life stronger than anything else.

Do not worry about tomorrow, but join us in caring for others who are suffering, who are afraid, who are mistreated and persecuted, far away or close to home. Care about the future of our home, the earth and its inhabitants: they have only you to defend them.

## PRAYER

*We pray for humans, especially children who are directly threatened by climate change and the irresponsible behaviour of multinational corporations. For those who already suffer from malnutrition, hunger and water-related problems. For those who cannot go to school because of excessive heat.*

*We pray for the animals and plants that have only the voice and action of humans to defend them. For those species that are disappearing amid general indifference. For those animals that are penned up and killed in appalling conditions, for all those living beings that are mistreated, those pets that are abandoned, forced to follow human whims and fancies.*

*We pray for all those who are left behind, in our countries or elsewhere, migrants, exiles. For all the innocent people and soldiers killed in wars waged by the powerful, for the victims of terrorism and lack of care, for women who are ridiculed, degraded, raped and killed.*

*We pray for all actions in favour of the preservation of creation, for parishes and churches that are committed to this path, for all those who open their eyes, change their outlook and care about the future of their fellow human beings and living creatures, placed together, face to face on this earth.*

Lilian GERBER

UEPAL - Union des Eglises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine



## Creation called to resurrection

*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

*Colossians 1:15-20*

Nature suffers and sometimes even rebels. You don't need to be a climatologist to realise this. Scripture, whether in the books of the prophets or even the epistles, shows how creation has always been impacted by human history. It suggests that creation and the creatures that inhabit it share the same destiny.

But what is this destiny? A collapse of creation? Total annihilation? Catastrophic scenarios abound on screen and feed our collective unconscious with predictions that in turn frighten us, keep us in suspense, or at least comfort us in the idea that we are heading straight for disaster.

Faced with these questions, believers are invited to broaden their horizons and look beyond the visible reality of the present; to observe life again and again from the events of Good Friday and Easter. For since that first morning of the Resurrection, something has changed in the order of things.

Indeed, the Gospel accounts emphasise first and foremost that when it comes to collapse and destruction, there is nothing worse than the story of Good Friday. Through His sordid and infamous death, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, was Himself branded with a hot iron.

Just as Christ allowed Himself to be destroyed by our terribly human reality, so He returned radiant with life through his resurrection, opening the royal path to a life that is more than alive. Since that Easter morning, a new story has been written. And Christ draws in His wake not only those who are given to Him as brothers and sisters in humanity, but also the entire creation and all creatures. Yes, the whole of the created world is thus impacted by this power of resurrection! We with him, and he with us!

It is not for nothing that Christ on Easter morning is proclaimed as *supreme over all who rise from the dead*.

*So he is first in everything. (Col 1:18):* Yes, Christ draws in his wake, through His death and resurrection, the multitude of all rebirths and all resurrections to come. There is something universal in the approach to resurrection that goes beyond mere human becoming. It concerns the whole of creation: the animal, plant and also mineral worlds. Everything is called to this resurrection, to this reconciliation, as the rest of the text says (verse 20). A reconciliation that heralds the Kingdom in all its splendour, a space and time where violence and rivalry will no longer have any place or reason to exist. For only Love and Grace will prevail! It will be the Shalom of God in all its splendour.

So no, there is no collapse, there is no annihilation. There is simply the pain of childbirth, which at times seems to go on forever, but which will one day come to pass! Death, collapse and annihilation are no longer before us, but clearly behind us. For since the Resurrection on Easter morning, both creation and creatures have been caught up in this process of birth, of transformation to true life, of pacification!

## PRAYER

*Christ of a thousand faces,*

*You radiate Your goodness and Your more-than-living life throughout the world! You draw the entire universe in Your wake. Small creatures and sea monsters, birds and wild animals. Earth and Heaven... Everything is called in You, by You and for You! May we all, together with You, O Christ, pass from death to life! Grant us then the grace to walk together on the paths of life with all the creatures around us and the whole of creation! Give us your Peace and grant us the grace to pass with You from this life here below, marked by our limitations and our wanderings, to Your life in us, fully accomplished for us! Amen!*

Sandro RESTAURI

EERV - Eglise Evangélique Réformée du canton de Vaud

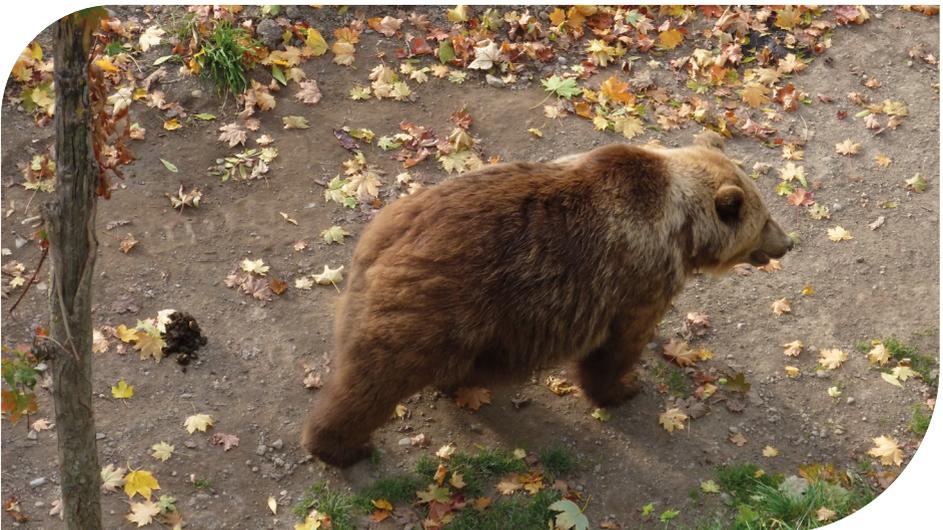
## The Cosmic Christ: All for all !

*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

*Colossians 1:15-20*

The actions of Jesus Christ are usually related to humans. He died and rose again for me, for you, for us... for humans. His teaching guides humans, His salvation is for you, for me, for us. But have you ever thought that this salvation could also apply to all living things? Think of a place in nature that you love. Is this place also affected by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Are this lake, this forest, this mountain, this vast plain part of God's salvation accomplished in Jesus, His Christ? From the smallest insects to the largest mammals in the animal kingdom, but also your cat, your dog, your farm animals, do they benefit from God's grace? And if so, does that not lead me to respect much more radically all living things that Jesus has also saved?

Following Jesus' resurrection, the early Christians reflected on the significance of the Easter event. They put their discoveries into poetry. A hymn born of their reflections and



taken up by the author of the Letter to the Colossians presents the risen Jesus as the reconciler of all things. The effect of the resurrection goes beyond the salvation of human beings. The assurance of life in Christ beyond death is not the only message of Easter, but a cosmic vision emerges from reflection and contemplation of the Resurrection. This is how the poem begins: «He (the Risen One) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him everything in heaven and on earth was created.»

We must question our very anthropocentric understanding of the Resurrection. The biblical text invites us to see in Christ a cosmic significance of His work. Everything, animals, plants, humans, everything is carried in the life of the Risen One. Benefiting from reconciliation through His blood, Jesus leads us to be reconciled with all creation. As a result, creation is also a «Paschal» place; the effect of Easter on all living things is reconciliation.

*For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself.*

*He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. (Col 1:19-20)*

A reconciled world is the horizon of salvation. Christians, rooted in Jesus Christ, are invited to continue unceasingly this new reconciled creation that He initiates. And thus to believe that another world is possible. This reconciliation takes on a universal scope, including all creation; between torn and divided humans and all living things on earth. Such is the significance of Easter through Jesus crucified, who became the cosmic Christ. But beware, this cosmic Christ who precedes and accompanies the new creation is not an absolute and almighty master. His glory and cosmic dimension are part of His humiliation and crucifixion. His glory is marked by non-domination and self-giving love. This is the path of Jesus of Nazareth, raised up as the cosmic Christ by the one who is all in all.

In celebrating Jesus Christ, am I beginning to understand the world around me as also benefiting from God's grace? What should I change in my thoughts, my attitude, my actions in the world, if I welcome and love this cosmic Christ and His work of reconciliation of all living things, opening up to a new creation?

## PRAYER

*Jesus,*

*You precede all things and reign, with crucified hands, over the vast cosmos. Your grace reaches the most distant star as well as the most insignificant insect. And I have my place there, no longer at the centre, but in the coexistence of all living things. I am so happy to know that everything, and the word «everything» is so powerful in Your Word to the Colossians, everything can be in Your love. Everything is connected, You have reconciled everything. What a beautiful perspective in my sometimes tense existence, in this fragmented world, in the daily struggles. What a God who, in Christ, opens up spaces of peace, reconciliation and love for all living things! Glory and praise to God. In You, Christ beyond all things, cosmic Christ, I find myself at peace and well.*

*Alleluia. Amen.*

Martin BURKHARD

EERF - Eglise Evangélique Réformée du canton de Fribourg

## Creation in suffering

*Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved. If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it.*

Romans 8:18-24

The current ecological crisis, if we want to call it that, has the merit of bringing to the forefront what has always been there, namely that the earth is suffering, and has been doing so long before we really realised it. It is suffering, and the tragedy is almost as old as the world itself. A suffering earth, whose destiny is closely linked to that of humankind, which is also confronted with evil, as both perpetrator and accomplice, or simply victim. An earth that is shaken and stirred by human folly and sometimes simply by human stupidity.

And indeed, a detour through the stories of creation, always them, will lead us to discover at the very beginning of chapter 3 of Genesis, these surprising words: **The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made.** (Gn 3:1). Strange and surprising, isn't it, that the serpent was present from the beginning, as desired and created by God!



It is as if the presence of this most cunning of animals were the guarantee of true freedom: the freedom to counterfeit or not, to undo or not, creation. It is as if this mysterious presence showed that nature was not good in itself because everything in it was wonderful, but that it was good because it was desired and seen as such in the gaze and the word that God chose to place upon it.

Yes, creation is judged to be good because God desires it to be so, and He therefore invites the humans who inhabit it to constantly take His side, the side of the living God, to be His partners and safeguard creation, by keeping and cultivating it, by choosing life and trust in Him.

What does this mean? Well, and this is probably where the originality of the Judeo-Christian tradition lies, the language of faith allows believers to integrate, through prayer, both the mystery of good creation and the mystery of evil that pervades it. Believers dare to hold light and shadow side by side, without opposing them, while leaving the rest to God. In short, they accept that nature is not only beautiful but can also be terrifying at times.

We then return to the attitude of the person praying, with their hands turned towards the sky and silence on their lips in the face of the mysterious presence of evil when it splashes them; that evil whose presence was already threatening through the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

Two hands joined, stretched out in hope towards this God of grace and Covenant. Two hands turned towards the One in whom the believer resolutely chooses to trust and in whom he surrenders himself with confidence.

For does not the Lord of the Covenant, the God who is master of history, have the last word on the mystery of all things? Is this not what Jesus, His Son, our Lord and our brother, came to tell us and to show us through His life and even through His death?

This is what Paul's words to the Romans suggest.

Hope is at the heart of prayer and animates our struggle against evil. Hope that strengthens our journey alongside the risen one, the More-than-Living.

## PRIÈRE

*Your resurrection, Lord Jesus, on Easter morning has given birth to this crazy hope in us! Death will never again have the last word over life in this world. Your power of resurrection brings forth in us the cry of childbirth, which gives birth to us into a new world, in which evil and violence no longer have a voice! When the veil of death and hatred darkens over us, when the paths that lead to You are covered before us, come and let Your light and grace spring forth in us. Through Your Spirit, come and inspire our words to whisper these simple words to You: Lord, come soon!  
Amen!*

Sandro RESTAURI

EERV - Eglise Evangélique Réformée du canton de Vaud

## Listen to creation, honour the earth

*“Just ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you. For they all know that my disaster has come from the hand of the Lord. For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being.*

Job 12:7-10

Job teaches us that nature is a school of wisdom. Animals live in harmony with their environment, following the laws laid down by the Creator. They do not seek to dominate, but to integrate themselves into the balance of life. By observing them, we learn simplicity, patience and interdependence.

**Inhabit creation differently** means adopting an attitude of respect and responsibility. This involves rethinking our lifestyles, reducing our ecological footprint, favouring sustainable practices and protecting fragile ecosystems. In the face of today’s environmental challenges, this theme calls us to a profound conversion, not only in our actions, but also in our hearts. It is not just a matter of preserving nature for our own benefit, but of recognising in it an expression of God’s glory.

The precepts of King Tetunae of Tahiti Nui resonate strongly in this context: «You must honour your land, the mother who gave birth to you. Let everyone watch over their mountain, the sacred symbol of the homeland. « This exhortation reminds us that the earth is much more than a physical place. It is our Mama fenua, our refuge, our heritage. To watch over the mountain, and a sacred symbol, is to watch over everything that connects us to God and our roots.



From a Christian perspective, honouring the earth means recognising its spiritual value and acting to preserve it. It means living in communion with creation, respecting it as a divine gift and protecting it for future generations.

Brothers and sisters, Job invites us to listen to creation, and Tetunae exhorts us to honour the earth. By inhabiting creation differently, we bear witness to our faith and our commitment to God. May every gesture, every choice, every prayer be an expression of our love for the earth and for the Creator.

Let us watch over our mountain, our homeland, our fenua, with humility and devotion.  
Mauruuru

## PRAYER

*Almighty Lord,*

*We come before You, marvelling at the beauty and wisdom of Your creation. You have inscribed in every living being a testimony to Your greatness. Help us to open our hearts and minds to listen to these silent lessons, to learn Your glory from the earth that patiently bears our footsteps.*

*We remember the words of Your servant, honour this land, mama fenua, our common mother. Lord, help us to watch over our mountains, our fields, our rivers, our forests and our oceans, to protect what is sacred, not only for us, but for generations to come. Guide us, Lord, that we may be faithful stewards, artisans of peace and ecological justice, and witnesses to Your infinite love for all living things.*

*Amen.*



## Stewardship to the Creator and the creation

*You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God: Your towns and your fields will be blessed. Your children and your crops will be blessed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be blessed. Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be blessed. Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be blessed.*

*Deuteronomy 28:2-6*

God created the earth with all the support systems for our lives and livelihood: earth, air, water, plants (fruits and flowers), animals, reptiles, fishes and birds, insects, creeping creatures. Day and Night, Sun, Moon, Stars and other heavenly bodies.

God blessed the earth and gave human beings the ability to manage the earth and its environment to sustain the creation and life.

We are to obey God's orders to remain blessed. We all love to be blessed, progressive, advanced in knowledge and achievements, promoting human dignity, knowing God through His creation. To habit and occupy the earth, humanity create homes for themselves; get a new house, a new car, feel loved, love and beloved, rejoice and be happy enjoying the creation; hills, rivers, lakes, islands, mountains and valleys. With every blessing comes a burden of responsibility and accountability. The mistake we make is that, we want the blessings without the associated burdens (work).

You are never going to get to the place where you are problem free. Life is a package of contrasting situations and experiences.

We are to inhabit the earth, live and enjoy God's blessings, while we maintain, sustain and care for God's creation including ourselves, yourself as a creation and a creature of God, made in God's own image; having Intelligence to think, plan and do things. Have Emotions to love and to hate. Have the will to make responsible choices. These divine qualities in every human makes us possess, dominate and rule the earth. In this regard, man is responsible for whatever happens to the earth, our actions affect the earth positively or negatively. In this regard we are to Inhabit creation differently but not destructively. We are to make life worth living, funny, interesting and lively. Make the best from everything God places in creation, do well to sustain it and keep life going on from generation to generation. We must occupy the earth in trust for posterity.

All of us, let's find a way to honor and appreciate God and creation. Do well to appreciate ourselves as part of the beautiful, wonderful and lively creation of God. Rejoice! Count our blessings see how much God loves and cares for us. To what are you, to what am I thankful to God?

What have you rendered, what have I rendered myself to God in appreciation of His love, creation and care? We must worship God with our head (thinking), with our heart (feeling) and hand (working). Let everything that we do bring glory and honor to God. Be a good Earth Keeper.

## PRAYER

God,

*Help me to see and know You better, such that I can worship You in truth and in Spirit. Let the life I live on earth reveal Your nature, presence and power in me. Help me to be conscious of my divine task to keep the environment good, healthy and beautiful as You want it to be.*

Amen.



## Creation, an expression of God's love

*"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*

*John 3:16-17*

The natural world encompasses everything we see around us. It reflects the universe created by God, nature, people, in short, all beings. However, in some places today there is neither grass nor trees, because they have not been planted or have been completely destroyed. In other environments, the increase in the amount of waste and smoke polluting the atmosphere is becoming uncontrollable. Our planet is in danger of becoming dry and turning into a place where human beings are considered enemies of creation, a place where the image of God is almost erased, invisible.

We then wonder how, in such a world, creation can once again become an expression of God's love. If God loves the world, it is not because it is lovable, but because God is love. God's love is unconditional and will not fade away as long as creation exists. Even when we do not understand it, it is there for us to embrace and embody through our actions and our daily lives.

The expression *God loved the world* means that God has a deep and infinite love for human beings and their environment. He took steps to offer them salvation. This love is so great that it transcended the condemnation that sin brought upon humanity. God's love can transform the lives of believers, enabling them to live a life full of joy, peace and meaning. Human sin introduced separation and disorder into creation, resulting in suffering, death, and evil.

By turning away from God, humans also damaged the relationship between humanity and the rest of the natural world. The need for restoration is the basis for the necessity of salvation, *but to save the world through him*. It is a process of restoring creation to its original state. It includes healing the relationship between man and God, as well as restoring nature itself. Salvation is therefore an invitation to communion, joy and peace.

Although salvation is a divine gift, it also involves a human response. Faith and consent are necessary to receive the salvation offered by God. Christians are therefore called to live in Christ and to participate in the restoration of creation in all its beauty. Believing in Jesus implies a responsibility towards creation, for Jesus, as Christ, is the Creator and Saviour of creation. By believing in Jesus, we recognise his sovereignty and central place in the universe, which can inspire respect and protection for nature and all creatures. Jesus is the Creator of all things (Col 1:16). He was sent to save creation from the grip of sin and destruction. This belief can inspire a greater awareness of the beauty and importance of nature, encouraging us to protect and respect it.

To this end, believers everywhere are now called to care for the world and its resources, as creation is seen as a gift from God that must be protected and preserved. The protection of creation is an act of faith that we must promote because it reflects gratitude for the gift of life and a call to responsibility towards creation.

## PRAYER

*God our Father,*

*Out of Your love, You created a beautiful earth, full of everything necessary for the well-being of humankind and other creatures. But instead of preserving it, we humans are destroying it through our behaviour, our consumption patterns and our wastefulness. Forgive us, Father.*

*Grant us the wisdom and intelligence to take care of all that You entrust to us from day to day, to protect human life and the environment. Teach us to prevent pollution of all kinds and to gradually repair what has been broken. Make us workers in the new creation founded on Your love, instruments that act for the sustainable well-being of the earth and all who inhabit it.*

*Amen.*

## Creation participates in eternal praise and gives glory to God

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise him from the skies! Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all the armies of heaven! Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you twinkling stars ! Praise him, skies above! Praise him, vapors high above the clouds! Let every created thing give praise to the Lord, for he issued his command, and they came into being. He set them in place forever and ever. his decree will never be revoked.*

*Psalms 148:1-5*

The stories in Genesis remind us that creation and creatures are shaped by the dynamic of the Covenant, by the dynamic of a Lord who wants to offer a full and abundant life, a life free from all constraints. That is why he shapes, separates, orders and blesses!

This dynamic of the Covenant runs through Scripture and the history of God with Israel. God's plan is for a beautiful and abundant life, to His glory! This dynamic is at the heart of the Psalms, especially the Psalms of praise such as this one.

By praising God, celebrating and proclaiming His goodness and greatness, the psalmist and the believers after Him participate in the work of salvation that God has been doing since eternity. And this salvation frees the world each time from the leaden blanket that tends to resurface, the blanket that was present on the first morning of the world, when it covered the surface of the waters with darkness.

So yes, human beings marvel at creation, and rightly so! And they do so not out of a taste for aesthetics or romantic sentiment, but out of devotion, almost out of duty. For praise is a power that transfigures the earth. Praise re-enchants life and contributes to the salvation of the world!



Psalm 148 recounts this intention and invites believers to join in praise. And what is surprising in this text is that praise is not only the lot of humans, or at least of believers alone. This praise concerns and calls upon the whole of creation.

The first verses of the Psalm attest to this: they invite the entire celestial sphere to praise. And the rest of the biblical text is no exception, as the psalmist continues, inviting the inhabitants and creatures of the earth and the seas to join in the praise, all together: *Praise the Lord from the earth, you creatures of the ocean depths, fire and hail, snow and clouds, wind and weather that obey him, mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all livestock, small scurrying animals and birds, kings of the earth and all people, rulers and judges of the earth. (Ps 148:7-11).*

So yes, everything in nature celebrates God and speaks of Him. But even more than that, everything in creation sings and blesses God, proclaims the Lord of the Covenant, and participates in this eternal praise, which makes God present and active in the world we inhabit.

Praise, and even more so worship, remain the most noble and pure act of Christian life. And the whole of creation joins in our prayer to increase our voices tenfold and add theirs to ours. Together with creation, we then allow the glory of God to be manifested everywhere and in all places.

This is what we are destined for in the afterlife: to celebrate and honour the living God, so that everything on earth and in heaven may give Him glory!

So why not begin here on earth to associate all creatures and the whole of creation with our prayers and the impulses of our hearts? And with them, let us raise our thanksgiving to God! For it is praise, in communion with the whole of the created world, as we have said, that sustains life in its foundations and makes it unshakeable forever!

Alleluia!

## PRAYER

*Lord of the Universe*

*Yours is the world and all that You have created:*

*Sun and moon, earth and fire, gentle breeze and morning dew! With them, with all the creatures You have fashioned, I celebrate You and proclaim Your goodness on the face of the earth.*

*You are always creating and renewing life!*

*To You be the Glory, the Power and the Honour, You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, O God who is, who was and who is to come! For ever and ever!*

*Amen!*

Sandro RESTAURI

EERV - Eglise Evangélique Réformée du canton de Vaud

## Eager for trust

*Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. Look at the ravens. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things? "Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? "And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things. These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need. "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.*

*Luke 12:22-32*

Faced with global warming and the loss of biodiversity, we realise our powerlessness. We are either in denial what is happening is normal, natural, there is nothing we can do about it or in hyper-activism that often makes us feel guilty (punitive ecology), or even in anxiety and torment.

Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Luke offers us ways to find a sober ecological position that is compatible with the dimensions of the planet.

### **Beyond hoarding**

Asked to intervene in an inheritance dispute, Jesus refuses to act as a judge, but seizes the opportunity to introduce His listeners to the real issues at stake in our relationship with possessions: the temptation to accumulate and hoard is greed. The Greek word *pléonexia* – found in English in the word *pleonasm* (redundancy) – affirms this forcefully: greed, accumulation, hoarding, that is the problem. And Jesus affirms it: it is not because a man is rich that his life is guaranteed by his possessions (Lk 12:15) Jesus continues with the famous story of the rich man who lives and works only to accumulate wealth, and accumulates only for himself (the pronoun «I» appears 12 times). And then he dies before he can enjoy it!

Here we have a series of arguments that strongly advocate a spiritual rather than a materialistic outlook, but this can remain at the level of guilt-inducing moralism and ultimately prove ineffective.

### **An invitation to trust and contemplation**

This is undoubtedly why Jesus (in one of the most beautiful passages in the Gospels!) goes on to invite his disciples not to worry about their lives.

But the invitation may still be difficult advice to follow. Jesus does not simply state this; He provides the means to do so: observe creation!

This contemplation will create confidence in our hearts, which will, from within, change our

fearful behaviour and allow us to adapt our lives by seeking only what is necessary and, in fact, considerably reducing our carbon footprint. Adjusting our lives to the dimensions of the planet and pushing back the famous «overshoot day».

The right attitude lies in a silent sense of wonder, in meditation on the beauty of nature, and the rest will follow. Today, as 2,000 years ago, the famous verse *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need* remains as relevant and effective as ever in addressing the issues we face today!

Trust changes behaviour; fear is a bad advisor: *Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. (1 Jn 4:18)*. It is the contemplation of creation and its beauty that spiritually induces an ecological behaviour capable of reorienting humanity not towards greed but towards sobriety, not towards avarice but towards generosity!

### Acting together

A path is opening up for Christians, and its consequences are not insignificant. Between North and South, there are many of us, and we can act like Mother Teresa of Calcutta who, faced with masses of destitute people, said she would take care of them «one by one». Thus, our passage ends with an invitation to act collectively: *So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom. (Lk 12:32)*.



### PRAYER

*You know me, You know that sometimes I feel discouraged by all that needs to be done and all that I need to be in order to reduce my carbon footprint on the planet. The problem is so immense, so few of us are aware of it, and I feel so alone.*

*Help me to become aware of the beauty of creation and the care You take of all things, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small. Help me to penetrate this awareness by sharpening my gaze on beauty, opening my eyes to observe, and may this produce in me infinite respect, a desire to protect and love all living things.*

Virgile ROCHAT

EERV - Eglise Evangélique Réformée du canton de Vaud



## The confidence of plants

*Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."*

*Mark 12:41-44*

### **Trees to change our perspective**

Near my home, there are three large, old chestnut trees by the side of a path, which remind me of the woman Jesus looked at in the Temple.

What makes me draw this connection is the humility of these trees. One of them has a bare crown, echoing the loss, the scar that this widow bears.

And yet it bears fruit, tirelessly.

Just as the widow, despite having experienced difficult times in her life and despite being poor, continues to give to the Temple and to the community, this tree tirelessly continues to produce a harvest that brings joy to a multitude of living creatures: from mushrooms to wild boars to humans, from starlings that perch there to spend the night to foxes that hunt for larvae.

With this widow and these chestnut trees, we can take a fresh look at the Kingdom of God, that is, at our relationship with God in our daily lives.

This woman's attitude encourages us to hear Jesus' words as something other than a moral

lesson. She gives «from her lack» with a confidence that seems crazy to us and which is a winning bet on the fertility of God's love. The abundance of her gift is not in the volume but in the confidence that makes it possible. Just as the seed in the ground gives everything, transforming itself completely to the point that we no longer recognise its form in the adult plant. This woman's gift is not intended to gain anything in return. The gift that Jesus highlights on this day allows for a transformation of the being, of the person.

**To give, to be transformed and to be fulfilled.**

For this woman, perceived in her time as a bearer of poverty, weakness and harbinger of death, gives herself the power not to suffer, not to depend on the economic choices of others. She decides what to do with her possessions. She escapes the gaze of those around her to perform an act that affirms her freedom and autonomy.

We usually say that this widow is humble because she does not proclaim the justice of her action. We can now also speak of her humility in the original sense of the word, which means being close to the earth.

It is because she is close to the earth, because she understands its language and shares its perspective, that she is able to fulfil herself. The Gospel invites us to engage in a genuine conversation with the world, a discussion with other living beings that can transform us, the result of which we see in this woman's attitude of trust. She was able to see in the world around her the promises of hope and renewed life that come from God. Jesus shows us here an example of what a life of trust in God as spiritual nourishment looks like.

He shows us that giving is a powerful tool for transformation, given by God to connect us with our brothers and sisters, the earth that nourishes us, and God from whom we receive everything, from whom all life comes.

This relationship with the world is what the Gospel proposes. It is the relationship we have with the Lord, who completely emptied himself on the cross and who acts humbly within us, without consuming us. We ourselves benefit from this gift and are called to make it grow.

Plants are more than images of human life with God; they speak to us of God, of the relationship He wants with us, of the Life He gives us. Could it be that plants are wiser than we are and that by following their example our journey with Christ becomes easier? At the very least, we can understand them as excellent partners in our relationship with God. May these three chestnut trees, generous even on poor soil, guide you on your journey with Christ.

**PRAYER**

*Eternal One,*

*Grant us a new perspective on Your creation. When we look away, when out of comfort or ignorance we do not stand up against the damage done to Your creation and its wonderful balance, forgive us and give us the confidence we need to live differently in relation to other creatures. We pray this in the name of Your son Jesus Christ, who walks peacefully on the waters.*

*Amen.*

Magali GIRARD

EPUDF - Eglise Protestante Unie de France/membre du réseau Espérer pour le vivant

## The Tree of Life

*Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit*

Revelation 22:1-2

In the biblical imagination, the story of creation and God's grace begins in a garden created by God for human habitation, irrigated by a river that is the source of the great rivers of the world. At the centre of this garden are the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, surrounded by all kinds of other trees. The fruits of all the trees in the garden are permitted for human beings to eat, including the tree of life, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We all know the story: humanity chooses to taste the fruit of this forbidden tree, suddenly learning the difference between good and evil by sinning, which deprives Adam's descendants of access to the tree of life and causes them to suffer the consequences, in exile from Eden, consequences that affect not only humanity, but also all of earthly creation.

In the Islamic imagination, a tree also features in the story of the sin of Adam and Eve, who eat the forbidden fruit; this sin leads to their expulsion from the heavenly Paradise, even though they repent and God shows them mercy, which emphasises the responsibility of every human being for their actions.

Another tree awaits believers who, like Adam and Eve, repent and assume their responsibility for creation. This is the tree of Tuba, which means 'repentance', but also 'bliss' or 'blessing', and is so vast that it would take 100 years to travel the width of the tree. According to tradition, the leaves of Tuba provide clothing for all the inhabitants of Paradise. It is the opposite, or perhaps the redemption,



of the experience of Adam and Eve/Hawa who tried to cover their 'shame' with leaves (from the fig tree in the Bible); those in Paradise are symbolically 'covered' by their repentance, made possible by God's mercy, which grants them eternal bliss and blessing.

According to John's vision in the Book of Revelation, the story of God's grace and salvation will end with the establishment of a new Jerusalem on a renewed earth, which is now irrigated by a river of living water; a new tree of life grows on both sides of this river, a vast tree that bears fruit throughout the year and whose leaves are «for the healing of the nations.»

Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions instil in their followers a desire for life under the tree of blessing, a life marred by our own sin, but still possible through God's grace and our choice to respond to that grace.

Each semester, as part of our interfaith and intercultural activities programme, I take a group of Moroccan and international students from Al Alkhawayn University in Morocco on a hike through the large Ifrane National Park. We follow the trail of the Oued Tizguite, which was once a river but is now only a small stream. Together we see the beauty of creation with all kinds of trees around us, and at the same time we witness the devastation of climate change and drought that threatens our lives. This shared experience creates in us a desire to work together to reverse the curse of our human sin by returning to our vocation to care for the garden, for the creation around us, our original blessing.

We always end our walk by quoting a Hadith that tells us that the Prophet Muhammad said, «If the Hour (of the Last Day) came and one of you had a young tree in his hand and had enough time to plant it, let him do so.»

## PRAYER

*O Most Merciful, Most Compassionate God,  
Teach us to walk together with all believers by committing ourselves to caring for our earth, planting together trees of life and living together for the healing of nations and the flourishing of all creation.  
Amen.*

Karen Thomas SMITH  
EEAM - Eglise Evangélique au Maroc



## Acting for a healthy environment

*Each of you must have a spade as part of your equipment. Whenever you relieve yourself, dig a hole with the spade and cover the excrement.*

*Deuteronomy 23:13*

This text teaches us the importance of managing our waste by disposing of it outside the camp, in an appropriate place, and covering it up. For the camp is the dwelling place of the Lord and must remain holy.

Moses, the author of this text, draws a parallel between this biblical instruction and modern environmental conservation practices. In our current context, the «camp» represents our habitat, the earth, our being (body, soul and spirit) and our neighbour. Despite widespread pollution and climate change, we still have a responsibility to act for a healthy environment. This passage reveals a profound theology about the relationship between divine presence and environmental responsibility. In the Deuteronomic context, these practical instructions establish enduring spiritual principles that resonate with contemporary ecological challenges.

Thus, we can draw four main lessons from this text:

- **Cleanliness**, which beyond physical hygiene, has a profound spiritual and moral dimension. It makes us responsible for the spaces we occupy and share. As anthropologist Mary Douglas defines it, dirt is «matter that is out of place.» We must distance ourselves from physical and spiritual defilement, especially religious syncretism.

- **Inner purity**, which frees the mind from negative thoughts, prejudices and unhealthy desires. It is achieved through the recognition of our wrongdoings, repentance and the absolution of sins. Through introspection or meditation, we purify the soul of impurities such as material attachments. *God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. (Mt 5:8).*

- **Spiritual discipline**, or self-discipline, begins with the fear of the Lord and the hatred of evil. It requires us not to dump our «rubbish» on our neighbours, whatever their condition. This vigilance protects us from corruption and creates a healthy environment for all. Discipline is essential for living together harmoniously in the assembly of saints.

- Personal and collective responsibility is a state of consciousness before God, to whom each person will give account (Ga 6:5; Rm 14:12). Poor waste management contributes to the destruction of God's creation. Revelation 11:18 warns us that *It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants the prophets, as well as your holy people, and all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. It is time to destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth.*

- We are temporary stewards, not owners, with moral responsibilities towards creation.

We can therefore say that sins, symbolised by excrement or rubbish, must be rejected because they compromise our relationship with God. Waste management particularly affects vulnerable populations, calling on our intergenerational responsibility.

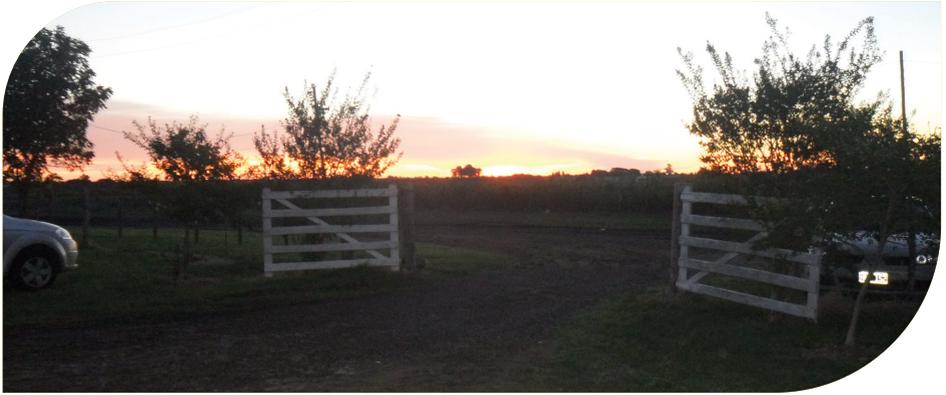
A holistic approach integrating physical, moral and spiritual dimensions is necessary to preserve biodiversity, human health and the integrity of ecosystems. The Lord instructs us not to live with waste out of mercy, thus allowing us to inhabit creation in harmony.

## PRAYER

Lord,

*We pray that You grant us the grace to live in the harmony that You have desired since creation. Help us to be worthy of this grace and to pass on a more beautiful world to future generations.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,  
Amen.*



## Now more than ever

*O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers the moon and the stars you set in place what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.*

Psalm 8:1-5

«The night is starry, and the stars in the distance shimmer blue.»

That night last summer, the first time I looked up at the sky from the ground in Patagonia, made me embrace Pablo Neruda's verses. The earth seems like an immeasurable immensity and a solitude full of life. The night sky shines as few places are allowed to do. Some anthropological theories (I don't know if they have a scientific basis or are purely folkloric) say that human beings adopted the upright position in Patagonia in search of a horizon that is not only inaccessible but also seemingly impossible.

That same night, I felt closer than ever to the anonymous author of Psalm 8. I was overcome by the same question: Who am I in the midst of this grandeur? And I admit that I have much more reason to be surprised than he did. I now know that the sky, the moon and those stars that I knew to be inaccessible are only a tiny part of this universe that cannot even be imagined.

I should also feel called to 'rule' over works that are not my own, but with a much greater sense of gratitude, with a much keener awareness of the undeserved nature of the act. How could he even imagine what a light year is, or suspect anything about the structure of the atom or the sequence of DNA? We have learned, or should have learned, that there is much more we do not know than we can possibly imagine.

In situations like this, when one feels like a piece of earth, a moving landscape, I have come to feel not only that I am part of creation rather than its owner, but that I am entering it as a guest who has the privilege of a balcony overlooking this wisdom that far exceeds him.

When I think about the impact of my walk on earth, I come to believe that my presence is not really a contribution. I need only think of the positive impact that the temporary halt of the world caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has had on flora and fauna for this idea to develop. And the question in the Psalm becomes even more pressing: *what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?*

We come from the earth, it is from the earth that we were created, and into it the Lord breathed the breath of life. This is not an innocent story to tell ourselves as a fantasy on a winter's night. It contains a conception of human beings in the world that connects them to everything that, in more secular and scientific terms, we call the ecosystem. We are part of it, and in response to the psalmist's question, which I often make my own, I would say that we have been placed in this special position of 'lordship' by the grace of God alone. And I put quotation marks around the word because we have arrogantly interpreted it as permission to feel like its absolute owners. The last verse of the poem puts things back in their place: *O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! (Ps 8:9)*

Never before have we had the opportunity to know this. Never before have we had the information that allows us to measure the impact of our presence in the world. Never before have our gratitude and responsibility been so great.

## PRAYER

*We ask you, Lord, for the wisdom to recognise with humble gratitude the place in which You have placed us and to live seeking Your will to be done in heaven and on earth.  
Amen.*

## Between strength and fragility, living things teach us to struggle

*The world stands firm and cannot be shaken. Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice! Tell all the nations, "The Lord reigns!" Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy! Let the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. Cry out, "Save us, O God of our salvation! Gather and rescue us from among the nations, so we can thank your holy name and rejoice and praise you."*

1 Chronicle 16:30b-35

In spring, trees bursting with sap celebrate life! Every year at the same season, trees emerge from their winter slumber and remind us that life is stronger than death. **The trees of the forests cry out with joy**, through their leaves and flowers, but also through all the animal and plant life that coexists with them. The unique song of the nightingale ( ), especially in the middle of the night, is for me a source of wonder and commitment in the darkness of the world.

Observation and contemplation are part of the relationship with nature that the Bible teaches us. But what reaction does this trigger in us? Some will retort: «Nature is stronger than man. I can do whatever I want, nothing will destabilise it anyway. « Others will respond, «It's too late, the planet is doomed, no one can change anything anymore.» These opposing reactions both lead to disengagement. Yet the coexistence of strength and vulnerability in nature can guide us.

**The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.** Creation is immutable, strong and stable. But it is just as dynamic, fragile and threatened. The two realities coexist. What if we found a source of hope precisely in this strange mixture of life and death, fragility and strength? Human life, like that of the planet, rests on this duality, which can either strengthen or destabilise us. If we only perceive the fragility of life, we despair and allow ourselves to be overcome by anxiety. If we only see the strength of life, we feel all-powerful and lose sight of the consequences of our actions.



Then comes the announcement of judgement, of God's rule on earth.

What is our attitude towards this judgement? Do we accept our share of responsibility? Putting the government of Earth in God's hands is not a way of absolving ourselves or giving up. On the contrary. In a positive way, it means accepting to shift our focus away from ourselves. We cannot continue to see ourselves, as humans, as the centre of the world to be saved at all costs, or as the saviours of the world. In both cases, this would lead the planet to its doom, and humanity with it.

Seeing life as governed by God forces us to be humble and clear-headed. Life has its own resources. Yet it is becoming increasingly fragile, and we are largely responsible for this. Recognising that we have taken a place in life that was not the one God called us to is part of our duty as Christians.

But to find the hope and strength **Inhabit creation differently**, we cannot be content to look back. We must look at today's world with courage in order to denounce its excesses and abuses.

The conclusion of this passage is a request to God to bring us together and deliver us. In order to participate in freeing living beings from the forces of destruction that are within us and around us, it is essential that we do not divide ourselves or withdraw into ourselves. God invites us to ask Him for the strength to bring us together. To denounce both the fantasy of omnipotence and indifference, and to oppose the forces of death wherever they come from.

May God bring us together so that this resistance of life throughout the earth may be our way of **Inhabit creation differently**.

## PRAYER

*Living God,*

*Grant us the grace to see ourselves as trees, crying out with joy before You, the Creator, with humility and responsibility.*

*Our God, help us to gather ourselves inwardly, to accept that in each one of us, strength and fragility, life and death, creation and destruction coexist.*

*May we never tire of the beauty and intelligence of nature, which amazes us and on which we depend.*

*Give us the courage to be a force for change in the name of life and, when necessary, a force of opposition to all forms of destruction.*

Caroline INGRAND-HOFFET

UEPAL - Union des Eglises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine



## The guardians of the Earth

*A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.*

*Matthew 24:45-47*

*But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*

*[...] And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' [...] And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.*

*Matthew 25 :31-46*

### **Our responsibility as guardians in action!**

Sarah is a young child in sub-Saharan Africa who has to walk about 10 km on her fragile feet to bring water to her mother for the day's meal. Like her, billions of people do not have access to this basic necessity. In a few years' time, water resources will continue to decline until they are completely exhausted if nothing is done to raise collective awareness and take appropriate action.

Some countries known as «heavy consumers» or «heavy wasters» are exacerbating this decline due to rapid population growth, urbanisation and ever-increasing needs in the agricultural, industrial and energy sectors.

But how does water scarcity challenge our faith, our ethics and our way of inhabiting creation, God's gift?

In the Gospel according to Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus describes two categories of people, those compared to goats and those compared to sheep.

The life choices and actions of each category of people will determine their destinies.

What, then, are the implications for us of a lack of awareness and compassion towards those who are in vital need, such as equitable access to water?

Everyone is invited to become aware and take action to lead humanity towards spiritual justice in accessing and sharing the fruits of creation, God's free gifts.

The issues of water scarcity and its inequitable distribution, poor waste management and deforestation go beyond the ecological challenge alone and become spiritual questions: they touch on our relationship with God, His creation and His creatures, they touch on our human and Christian responsibility, and even more so, they challenge the fundamental right to spiritual justice.

Matthew 24:45-47 describes the blessings that will be bestowed upon the faithful and prudent servant who administers his master's house and all that he has entrusted to him in a just manner. This model servant is a great inspiration to all Christians. Like the psalmist who proclaims, *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. (Ps 24:1)*, this text reminds us of our own condition in relation to God and His creation.

### **What about our responsibility as stewards?**

Everything belongs to God: trees, animals, all human beings and natural resources are God's property. Ultimately, man is a temporary steward of nature. But are we aware of this responsibility?

Approximately 2 billion tonnes of waste are produced each year... And, according to scientists, nearly 15 billion trees disappear each year, or exactly 45% since the dawn of humanity... Man's irresponsible actions towards God's creation have ended up causing it a great deal of harm. These alarming figures challenge us and call us to collective and individual awareness as Christians of the 21st century, but also as guardians of the earth and all creation.

Do we adopt this attitude of gratitude and respect towards God, and do we truly experience creation as a gift and not as something to be taken for granted?

We are called to recognise creation as a gift to be respected and must develop a harmonious and protective relationship with all of creation.

### **PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*Renew in us the desire to respect Your creation and Your creatures, and make each of us an instrument of peace, a guardian of humanity and the earth, filled with compassion for those most in need.*

*Amen.*



## Let us preserve our biodiversity

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.*

*Psalm 24:1-2*

This Psalm is part of a group of songs from ancient Israel and is called the «Ascension Psalm». It was probably written by King David himself. The immediate context of its writing is the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem after years of captivity by the Philistine enemy.

This Psalm exalts divine sovereignty over the material and human world, because He (God) is its Creator. It is a creationist and ecological Psalm par excellence.

Through this passage, we can examine the serious problems posed by human actions on biodiversity, as well as the role or action that Christians should take in God's created. We can identify some avenues to help us understand how to inhabit our planet Earth, which in recent years has been affected by climate change.

Climate change refers to changes in the climate due to the increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This phenomenon is accompanied by a general increase in average temperatures worldwide.

In the Far North region of Cameroon, we have seen increasingly frequent heatwaves in recent years, as well as a decrease in rainfall or, conversely, an increase to the point of causing flooding. The country is experiencing an increase in storms and hurricanes, some of which have been known to blow the roofs off houses.

These changes are thought to be the result of a failure to respect the principles that govern the proper functioning of nature.

In our region, the actions taken by human beings that need to be rectified include: uncontrolled tree felling, unregulated hunting of animals (especially endangered species), bush fires, agriculture, livestock farming... and many others!

*The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. (Gn 2:15).* Through this verse, we understand that God, in creating man, entrusted him with the responsibility of keeping His creation and not destroying it. The earth and everything in it, the earth in all its fullness, the whole and each of its parts, belong to the Lord. And He gave man the task of safeguarding biodiversity. God placed the earth and everything in it under man's control so that he might enjoy it fully.

We can therefore conclude that human actions have led to climate change, since the principles that govern the proper functioning of nature have not been respected. But we must also remember that only human beings who have destroyed nature can save it.

We are all called upon, especially us Christians, to take action to protect nature, which is suffering the harmful effects of our behaviour. We must (re)commit ourselves to protecting and saving our planet Earth, which is slowly being destroyed.

But what concrete steps must we take to halt these changes that are negatively impacting our experience on Earth?

-If we want to stop the advance of the desert in our region, if we want to combat drought, we must plant trees. Christians, let us rise up and participate in the operation: one Christian, one tree.

-We must fight against bush fires, the uncontrolled felling of trees, the poaching of animals and, above all, the hunting of endangered species.

Dear Christians, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Our presence must make a difference in this world where evil is practised in all its forms. We must act effectively to solve the evils that are undermining our planet, such as climate change. It is time to act. Let us remember the drought that led to the end of the season of poor harvests.

## PRAYEUR

*O Lord, Creator of the earth and all that is in it, Receive honour, glory and majesty for Your creation. Everything You have created is perfectly good and worthy of praise. Everything You have created has its place and purpose, no matter how small. Thank You so much for Your wonderful work. We come before Your majesty to beg Your forgiveness, for we have destroyed Your creation through our actions.*

*Lord, forgive us and teach us to care for nature. Grant us the opportunity to rectify the situation by safeguarding biodiversity. With Your support, we will be able to overcome the current ecological challenges. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen!!!*

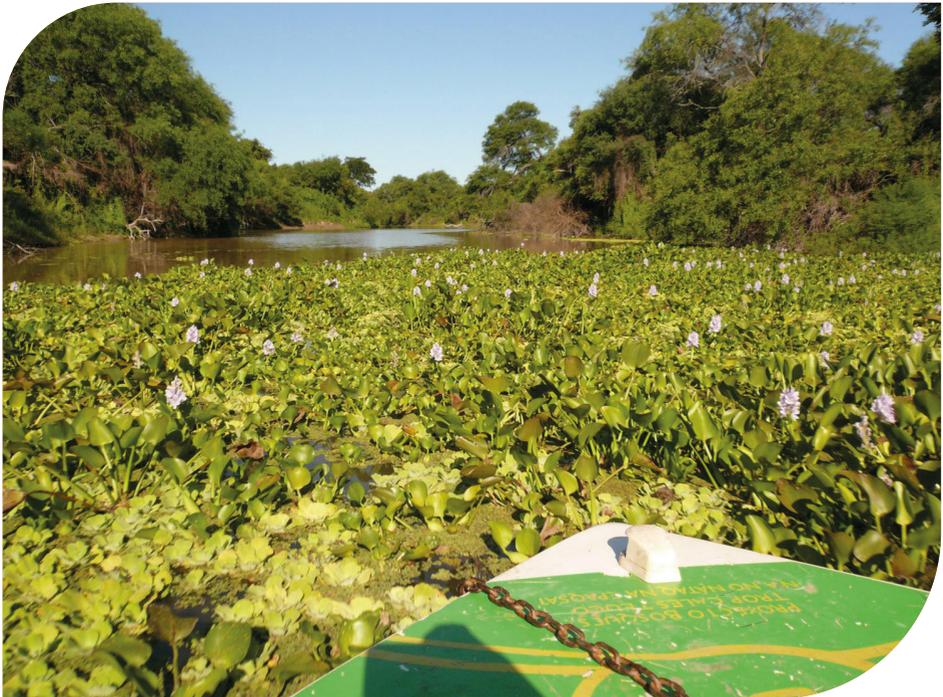
## Feel creation

*Have you no respect for me? Why don't you tremble in my presence? I, the Lord, define the ocean's sandy shoreline as an everlasting boundary that the waters cannot cross. The waves may toss and roar, but they can never pass the boundaries I set. But my people have stubborn and rebellious hearts. They have turned away and abandoned me. They do not say from the heart, 'Let us live in awe of the Lord our God, for he gives us rain each spring and fall, assuring us of a harvest when the time is right.'*

Jeremiah 5:22-24

Earthly life and human life constitute a whole that God created and considered very good. God entrusted humanity with the responsibility of cultivating and caring for it as stewards. This implies considering life on Earth as a gift from God to humanity and not just to a few generations among them.

If humanity is to survive, it cannot continue to passively allow the exploitation of the majority by a minority, of certain races by others, of men by women, of resources, of life on Earth.



Humans seem to be the only animals that do not realise that many of the disasters they call «the fury of nature» are caused by the devastation they themselves cause, the only justification for which is boundless greed. It seems obvious that we have disrupted the balance of nature.

Whether through deforestation, monoculture or pollution in its many forms, the loss of balance and harmony in the biodiversity with which God created all things is becoming increasingly evident. One need only look for a moment at what remains of this diversity to perceive God's plan, which humanity is determined to destroy.

As humanity, we have lost the idea and connection with nature, with the earth; and this means considering it as an inert, mechanical and mathematical reality or as a mere deposit of resources exposed to free human disposal.

In this sense, it is essential to establish a new covenant between the people and the earth, and for this, it is necessary to recover the sacred dimension. It is essential to reunite humans with nature. We cannot forget that we humans are part of all created life and that attacking creation is self-aggression, because our life is in the midst of nature, otherwise it would not exist.

Only by rediscovering a holistic understanding can we reconnect with nature in a healthy way and with possibilities for the future. And we say rediscover, recover, because in all peoples, especially ancestral peoples, there is the memory of a relationship of brotherhood with the earth.

It is simply a matter of becoming aware of this, of prioritising life in all its expressions and of knowing that this will only be possible in a healthy and vital environment.

## PRAYER

*God, who is life and who has chosen to share and multiply it,  
Help us to feel that we are part of this great miracle, and that we can connect in a new,  
holy and harmonious way with all that you have created.  
Amen.*



## God's generosity and provision for creation

*You cause grass to grow for the livestock and plants for people to use. You allow them to produce food from the earth wine to make them glad, olive oil to soothe their skin, and bread to give them strength.*

*Psalm 104:14-15*

Nowadays, environmental issues have become so pressing that they fuel all debates, even within the Church. The whole of humanity is facing the consequences of climate change: every voice counts in calling attention to the problem, condemning it, reflecting on it and proposing solutions. In this context, it is urgent to reread and rediscover the Holy Scriptures in order to meditate on how the Creator of the universe provides for His creation, to find hope there. These verses are an invitation to understand both God's generosity and man's responsibility towards the creation entrusted to him.

### **God's generosity in providing for creation**

God, in His goodness towards the earth and its creatures, provides for their needs. The environment is thus the fruit of divine provision. God created the earth and everything necessary for life to flourish. It is a perfect balance where each element of nature plays a specific role. However, there is one particular feature of God's generosity: the intrinsic link between creation and humankind. For God does not give only for the earth and the animals, He also gives for humankind, so that they may feed themselves and live. The plants that grow and multiply and the abundant harvests are thus signs of God's unconditional generosity. This Psalm invites us to see creation as a precious gift, a blessing given to us for our well-being. Furthermore, this abundance of provisions commits man, to whom God

entrusts the management of His creation, to responsibility. It is an expression of the trust that God places in humankind. The way we treat the earth, animals and plants reflects the respect and gratitude that humankind has for the one who has entrusted all these things to us. Faced with the problems associated with the environmental crisis, Christians must understand that they are called to be faithful stewards of God's many gifts.

### **Divine abundance even in times of crisis**

Wine, oil and bread are human necessities and symbols of divine generosity. They are gifts that go beyond mere survival. They speak of an abundant and joyful life given by God. In a world where natural resources are dwindling, God provides us with the essentials for a fulfilling life. These elements represent the divine grace that lifts us above mere existence. God is generous. Even in difficult times marked by the fragility of natural resources, when the future of the planet seems uncertain, we can remember with confidence that God does not abandon us; He always provides. Perhaps the earth is more arid, the harvests less abundant and the seasons more unpredictable, but God remains faithful. Our responsibility is to learn to receive these blessings with gratitude and to seek to be instruments of His generosity by sharing what we have with those in need.

This Psalm speaks to us of divine providence and invites us to take responsibility for safeguarding the creation He has given us, not treating it as an inexhaustible resource. We must change the way we consume, produce and live. It is a call to be aware of our impact on the environment and to engage in actions that preserve creation. God has entrusted this earth to us to be good stewards. Divine generosity, which is a model for humankind, also teaches us how we should live. It is not only a matter of caring for creation, but of generously sharing God's blessings with others. He calls us to be distributors of his grace and generosity through our actions in favour of the environment and our support for the most vulnerable. It is time to rethink our relationship with the earth and act accordingly to safeguard it. Let us be grateful for God's generosity and commit ourselves to preserving creation, not only for our own happiness, but also for that of future generations.

### **PRAYER**

Lord,

*Thank You for the splendour of Your creation, a reflection of Your glory and love, and for the generosity with which You provide for us. You have entrusted the earth to us as a gift and a responsibility. Give us grateful and vigilant hearts, aware of the impact of our actions. Teach us to cultivate, preserve and repair, rather than exhaust. May our management of resources be a praise to your wisdom. Make us artisans of justice, balance and life for future generations.*

Amen.

## The men who swarmed without a master

*How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen! "Violence is everywhere!" I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. [...] I am raising up the Babylonians, a cruel and violent people. They will march across the world and conquer other lands.*

*[...] They sweep past like the wind and are gone. But they are deeply guilty, for their own strength is their god."*

*O Lord my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal surely you do not plan to wipe us out? O Lord, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins. But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil. Will you wink at their treachery? Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they? Are we only fish to be caught and killed? Are we only sea creatures that have no leader? Must be strung up on their hooks and caught in their nets [...]*

*Then the Lord said to me, "Write my answer plainly [...] It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed. "Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.*

Habakkuk 1:1 – 2:4

Habakkuk calls for justice against the violence of the Assyrians. God sends the Chaldeans to punish them, but Habakkuk points out that the spirit has changed. Filled with pride, instead of sticking to their mission of maintaining international order, the Chaldeans believe themselves to be masters of the world. All human power, even when initially in the service of God, eventually drifts towards injustice and idolatry.

### **Daring to challenge God?**

How dare Habakkuk question God's attitude? Shouldn't he believe that God knows what He must do? In the face of injustice and calamity, shouldn't we ourselves submit to God piously?

Habakkuk shows us that waiting in faith is not passive. He is not afraid



to protest or to appeal to God against God: «If You are truly the Lord, You cannot remain silent in the face of all this injustice!» We too often see that evil has gone too far, and we say: but what is God doing?

Habakkuk cries out: «If You do nothing against all this evil, God, it is as if You were dead!» At the same time, he professes his faith: «God is very much alive. I do not know why He does not act where I so desperately want Him to intervene, but even if something escapes me, I trust in His faithfulness.»

Habakkuk believes, beyond his understanding, that God is greater than his reasoning: «I am not seeking excuses for you, God, I am only crying out to you. Come, do not delay any longer.»

*Are we only fish to be caught and killed?* Verse 14 evokes creation (Gn 1:26-28): the prophet describes a human being without a master, without God, easy prey for his adversaries who fish him out like small fry. We could understand here that the Chaldeans threaten, the very essence of creation... But today it is we, humans, who threaten creation. Yet Habakkuk speaks of evil, oppression, treachery...

Like the Chaldeans, we were entrusted by God with a mission: we were to take care of his creation. Like them, we became intoxicated with our power and forgot that we held this special responsibility from God and not from ourselves. We believed ourselves to be at the centre, at the summit of creation, in God's place. We betrayed Him. Like the Chaldeans, our strength became our God.

### **The righteous live by my faithfulness: what hope is there for humanity?**

Unlike human power, God's power does not enslave creation but liberates it. This renunciation of oppressive power can be seen in Scripture: God makes a covenant with a people of slaves, not with conquering peoples. His Messiah is born in a stable, humiliated, tortured and crucified by the leaders of the people with the complicity of the powerful... But Christ rose again. The primary meaning of the Gospel is «message of victory»! This victory won by God over death allows us to live in fullness. It is the fulfilment for which Habakkuk had prayed, and which God had promised.

### **PRAYER**

Lord,

*Humanity always falls back into its mistakes; even when warned, it cannot escape disaster. Shall we believe that You are dead, or shall we live by Your faithfulness, even in the midst of disaster?*

*You have made a definitive covenant with Your creation. But sometimes Your judgement seems to exceed the bounds of Your justice. Faced with ecological and climatic disaster, we want to cry out. You answer us: «I am the Lord of the universe, I am the Lord of life. I am faithful to my promises.» This is the foundation of our hope.*

Thank You, Lord.

Corinne Bernhard-Bitaud  
EPUdF - Eglise Protestante Unie de France  
membre du réseau Espérer pour le vivant



## What God expects of humankind

*Then Jesus told this story: "A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. Finally, he said to his gardener, 'I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down. It's just taking up space in the garden.' "The gardener answered, 'Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.'"*

Luke 13:6-9

The world, developing its own ideologies, does not allow us to understand and fulfil God's will: to bear fruit, to respect creation and to maintain it.

Industrial development, the manufacture of weapons to satisfy the desire for power, the uncontrollable advance of new technologies and the establishment of systems to subjugate human beings and good consciences. In this global social context, many Christians, having lost their courage and boldness, find it difficult to live and grow in faith in order to please God.

According to Luke, the Israelites, like Christians today, represent the fig tree. Despite the measures put in place to promote development and fulfil the will of the Creator, we prefer to follow the inclinations of our hearts.

The master of the vineyard finds pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of pride in the fruit borne by his plantation. The Lord's will is to reveal through his beloved ones his greatness, the faithfulness of his infinite love, the splendour of His glory, and the extent of His mercy. There is therefore an intrinsic relationship of dependence that shows that the fig tree does not exist for itself; its honour, its own glory, and the meaning of its existence are found in the fulfilment of its master's will.

The moral and ethical desert of humanity today challenges us. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ offer us the opportunity to rethink how we manage human relationships, natural resources, and the possibilities that God grants us.

The Apostle Paul, marked by the assistance of the Philippian community, emphasises that the intention that accompanies gifts is the fruit of the seed of the good news; intention is worth more than the gesture. *I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness. (Phil 4:14-17)*

The gift is only a consequence fertilised by intention. Man must learn to work on his inner being by submitting himself to God and His Word through faith. It is God Himself who works discreetly in the hearts of those who give themselves to Him. Man thus transformed is now in a good position to respond to the needs of his neighbour and to be the source of his fulfilment.

We are therefore invited to constantly work on our intentions, to work on our hearts. *Indeed, every tree is known by its fruit [...] (Lk 6:44-45).*

Like the fruitless fig tree, throughout the history of the world, man's ingratitude towards life has been reflected in the anarchic exploitation of nature. Those who do not work towards the effective management of natural resources contribute neither to the transformation nor to the fulfilment of society for the glory of God. Like the vine-dresser, we must serve while safeguarding our values, preserving our integrity and, above all, our mission on earth. The fruit-bearing fig tree will not be cut down, and the Christian who transforms the world for the reality of God's kingdom on earth will not be erased; he will live by faith.

God associates man with the fulfilment of His plans. It is an opportunity and above all a grace that offers man the possibility not to become, but to be what the Creator has made him by bearing the fruits worthy of repentance.

Do not let hunger obsess you. Do not let yourself be overwhelmed by the turmoil of the age, nor chained by the bonds of greed and the excesses of debauchery. You risk becoming estranged from the nourishment of wisdom that the messengers of the cross offer every day. If you allow yourself to be convinced by these messengers, you will find a place at the table in the kingdom of the Father, where you will eat from the tree of life (Rev 2:7) and drink the wine of the true vine (Jn 15:1).

## PRAYER

Lord,

*Renew our understanding so that we may accomplish what You have redeemed us for at the price of the blood of Your risen Son, Jesus Christ! O God, our light and our salvation, lead us to remain always close to You, directing our love more and more towards You. Submit our thoughts to the guidance of Your wisdom. Grant us to love as You have loved us, to desire only what You desire, and to act always as You have commanded us. Grant that we may thus live in communion with You and that the homage of our lips may be confirmed by our real consecration to the task You assign us each day.*

Amen!

## The Greatest Asset and Mandate

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.*

*Psalm 24:1*

As stewards of God's creation, we are reminded that everything we have and are is a gift from Him. The earth and all its resources belong to God, and we are entrusted with the mandate to care for and manage them wisely. This truth should shape our understanding of ourselves, our resources, and our purpose. The Scripture again reveals the ownership and sovereignty of God over all the earth. Our human existence largely depends on the ecology that is God's wonderful creation thus the adage "when the last tree dies, the last man also dies".

As recipients of God's creation, we have a dual mandate. Firstly, of stewardship to manage God's resources wisely, ensuring their sustainability and availability for future generations.

Secondly, of service: We are to serve God and our communities, using the resources entrusted to us to promote the well-being of all. It is always the case that any asset or treasure of ours is given the utmost attention, value, care, nurture and protection of which same should be channelled towards God's creation.

The contemporary world has been induced with negative ecological energies through our human activities such as emission of green gas, illegal mining, excessive cutting down of trees, environmental pollution and the like. This has resulted in the creation fighting against us, humans such as pollution of our water bodies resulting in diarrhea, skin diseases etc. We should give ourselves another opportunity to rewrite the wrongs to unlearn, learn and relearn to care for God's creation. Let us all make



a conscious effort to cultivate the habit of establishing a healthy relationship between ourselves and God's creation in our own small ways for example, to tidy our environment and water plants as means of contributing to creation care differently.

In recognizing God as the owner of all, it has the following significant implications for our lives:

- Perspective: We are not owners, but stewards of God's resources.
- Priorities: We should prioritize God's purposes and the well-being of others.
- Accountability: We will be held accountable for how we manage God's resources.

To live out this truth, we can do the following:

- Practice generosity: Share our resources with others, especially those in need.
- Live simply: Avoid waste and extravagance, living modestly and sustainably.
- Advocate justice: Promote fairness and justice in the management of God's resources.

In quest to changing our lifestyle towards God's creation, these reflection questions are worth considering: What does it mean for you to acknowledge God as the owner of all you have? How can you practice faithful stewardship in your daily life? What changes do you need to make to align your priorities with God's purposes?

## PRAYER

*Dear Lord,*

*Inspire within me with the power of the Holy Spirit to cater for Your creation as required of me.*

*Amen!*

Eyram Oforiwaa WORDEKPOR

EPCG - Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana



## Man and the environment in God's plan

*The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.*

*Genesis 2:15*

Among the most precious gifts that the Creator has given to all humanity, the environment ranks high. This environment, as God made it, as it came from His hands, is good and harmonious. God rejoiced in the work of creation because it reveals His incomparable power (Gn 1:31).

But today, one does not need to be a scientist to see the alarming state of environmental degradation. The threats posed by neglect and even abuse of the earth and its natural resources are becoming increasingly worrying. Climate change, desertification, degradation and loss of productivity of vast agricultural areas, pollution of nature, rivers and groundwater, depletion of biodiversity, increase in extreme natural phenomena, deforestation of equatorial and tropical areas, are all phenomena that today threaten peace, health and, therefore, the authentic integral development of humankind. As a result, protecting the environment is becoming more essential than ever for the peaceful coexistence of humanity.

Nothing in creation belongs to human beings. This is God's original plan for humankind. However, enjoying peace also means fighting for survival. Hence the dual concepts of «cultivating» and «preserving». The first involves working, cultivating, ploughing and serving, while the second involves preserving, protecting, watching over and conserving memory.



The first verb, to work, has several functions: economic, social, health, food, environmental, etc. The functions of the second verb, to keep, are legal, administrative, security-related, etc.

One of the challenges for humanity at the beginning of the third millennium could well be to find and maintain a fair and vital balance between these two tasks that fall to human beings... the mandate that man has received to cultivate and keep the garden where everything was already very good. His mission therefore excludes any idea of passivity or idleness in the face of the works of creation.

It is urgent that we change our relationship with creation, because climate change is endangering life.

## PRAYER

*Sovereign Master of the universe,  
We are grateful for Your love for us, Your creatures. Forgive us for not taking care of Your garden. May Your Holy Spirit help us and teach us to be good stewards as You desire, so that Your garden may always be a pleasant place to live.  
Amen.*

*Mathilde ANDET GUIDIMTI  
EPCRC - Eglise Protestante Christ-Roi Centrafrique*



## Let us put our possessions at the service of God and our neighbour

*Listen to this, you who rob the poor and trample down the needy! You can't wait for the Sabbath day to be over and the religious festivals to end so you can get back to cheating the helpless. You measure out grain with dishonest measures and cheat the buyer with dishonest scales. And you mix the grain you sell with chaff swept from the floor. Then you enslave poor people for one piece of silver or a pair of sandals. Now the Lord has sworn this oath by his own name, the Pride of Israel: "I will never forget the wicked things you have done!"*

Amos 8:4-7

### **The ten bananas**

A man had nothing. God gave him ten bananas. He gave him three for food. He gave him three to sell so that he could buy shelter from the sun or rain. He gave him three so that he could sell them and buy clothes. He gave him one so that he could give thanks to God in gratitude for the other nine.

The man ate three bananas. He sold three to find shelter from the sun or rain. He exchanged three for the clothes he needed.

Then he looked at the tenth banana. He knew that God had given it to him so that he could show his gratitude by returning it. But this banana seemed so much more beautiful and tasty. He told himself that, after all, God already had all the bananas in the world. So he ate it and returned to God... the peel!

Do we not often act like this man when it comes to managing our possessions? Although these possessions are entrusted to us by God, we find it difficult to express our gratitude to Him and to conform to His will. We therefore risk being unfaithful stewards.

### **The parable of the unfaithful steward**

To avoid God's punishment, we must know how to put our possessions at the service of God and our neighbour.

This is what Jesus recommends to us in the parable of the unfaithful steward (Lk 16:1-13). He asks us to be as skilful in managing real assets as others are in preserving their personal interests.

This parable is quite controversial. Some theologians have even called it the most difficult parable in the Gospel. Jesus does not encourage the steward's obvious dishonesty and mismanagement. Rather, He praises his foresight for his future after his dismissal.

He exhorts us, as children of light, to follow the example of the prudence, dynamism and foresight of the children of this world. We all know how to invest ourselves with excellence in business, the professional world or academia. Let us make the effort to compare this commitment with that to the affairs of our Creator.

Each of us is invited to give God His rightful place at the centre of our lives. Everything we are and everything we have belongs to Him. When we arrived on this earth, we had nothing. And when we leave, we will be stripped of all our possessions. We are merely custodians of what we enjoy. Thus, in the use of our material possessions, we are exhorted to behave as God's stewards. It is He who has entrusted them to us, not to use and abuse them, but to use them in solidarity. Good stewardship consists in making them an instrument of sharing and friendship.

### **Working together**

Churches have an essential prophetic and practical role to play in the good stewardship and preservation of creation.

On the one hand, they are called upon to raise awareness, educate and mobilise the faithful and the community on ecological issues and possible solutions.

On the other hand, they must continue to denounce environmental injustices that affect the most vulnerable populations, advocate for ambitious public policies on environmental protection, fight against climate change and encourage the faithful to make informed consumption choices.

We are merely stewards of all that we possess, whether it be wealth, knowledge, power or being. We deserve no more than our neighbour.

The Lord promises us heavenly bliss if we choose to put our possessions at His service and that of our neighbours. In this way, we could inhabit the world with greater wisdom, compassion and responsibility.

### **PRAYER**

*Lord,*

*We want to dwell in Your eternal home. Help us to manage our wealth well and, more broadly, the creation that You have entrusted to us. Today, more than ever, we are confronted with the consequences of the way we inhabit creation.*

*Grant us the grace to adopt a more sober and environmentally friendly lifestyle. Give us the strength to stand up for the rights of those who have no voice. Grant us the ability to exercise our responsibility for the stewardship of creation effectively and jointly, each contributing our unique gifts and perspectives.*

*In the name and for the love of Jesus Christ.*

*Amen!*

## See, change, share

*Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.*

*Genesis 1:31*

Creation is intrinsically good. God himself affirms this at the end of the sixth day, when all the work is done and all that remains is to reflect on so much work on the seventh day, the day of rest.

It would be good to inhabit creation with this spirit, that is, to admire God's work in harmony with the organisation of our earthly lives, granting ourselves a day of contemplation, not only as a spiritual day but also as a day of sharing with the earth and water, with the air and with people: with the life that surrounds our environment, whether near or far. A day of love, care and attention.

However, a deeply rooted inattention to contemplation has led human beings to look at the fruits of profit, often exchanging them for the good fruits that God brought forth during the six days of work. The Creator's work was constant, laborious, clean and harmonious. It produced neither waste nor marginalisation.

Contemplation in sharing teaches us to look beyond to understand that we must begin (we should have done so long ago) to repair the breach opened in creation. God's trees, whether fruit or ornamental, are a gift to every living being. The trees we have planted are a right, for the brothers and sisters who are with us, and for those who will come. They bear fruit that feeds the finances, expropriates land, transforms the climate, and



harms health. They will be strong, they will produce a lot, but they do not correspond to the concept of good. As we contemplate the fields that produce these fruits, we share: groundwater is contaminated by fertilisers, much of the biodiversity is destroyed by habitat transformation, the land is violated by overproduction and abandoned when it is exhausted and thirsty for food, the air is taken away from people in areas where pesticides are widely used, and animals are unable to read the signs telling them not to breathe! What is even more serious is that, for all this, there are refrigerators full of food and populations exhausted by hunger, a consequence of a «well-being» that produces waste and imposes injustice between peoples, establishing discrimination not only on food, but also on the question of who should collect the waste produced by the rich West.

In God's goodness lies the beauty of creation, with its colours, sounds and scents. Sensations that disappear in human dwellings. The need for housing, transport, commercial traffic, power stations, but also facilities designed to entertain human beings, do not allow for harmonious contemplation. What can we share with the rest of creation when we can no longer see it? When we are forced to travel even miles away from home?

Inhabiting creation would be a good thing, but occupying creation as we do is quite different. If we could look into God's eyes, we might understand the pain we inflict on His creation. We could also content ourselves with looking into the marked faces of our neighbours, who are increasingly often bewildered strangers whom we do not want to know thoroughly so as not to divert attention from what we think we have rightly conquered! And yet we can trust in hope, the hope that Christ made visible through the Resurrection that conquered evil, and through that hope become transformed people who overturn history and, with God's help, restore «good» to the beam of light that emanates from the Spirit that surrounds us.

## PRAYER

*We believe that the triune God, having created the world by His eternal Word through the power of the Holy Spirit, dwells on earth and is present in all things through His Spirit as Shekinah.*

*We believe that natural religion does not consist in knowing God through reason, by observing nature: either because we are nature, or because natural knowledge of God comes through God. Natural knowledge of God comes through His action in nature and produces wisdom.*

Maria Elena LAQUANITI  
CEVI - Tavola Valdese - Chiese Evangeliche Valdesi et Metodiste de Italia/  
Commission GLAM (Globalisation-travail et environnement) de la Fédération des  
Eglises Protestantes d'Italie



## Manifesting tomorrow's creation today

*In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord.*

Isaiah 11:6-9

This prophecy presents a wonderful world where creatures of different species live together in harmony. Ferocious animals live with the defenceless, humans and animals of the fields share the same space, without fear or threat. It is the image of a life in which innocence, children and infants are preserved, and danger does not exist.

It is a vision of hope. It depicts not only a reconciled world, but also the ultimate fulfilment of God's plan, that of a new order, where evil and fear disappear, where peace and justice dwell in the hearts of all creatures. This image reveals the total restoration of creation, a return to the original harmony intended by God. It is the eternal Kingdom of God, where people will live in harmony with each other and with the whole of creation. It reflects the restoration of creation to God's original plan, as it was before sin brought enmity between human beings and the serpent, before humans became agents of destruction.

Messianic hope speaks not only of the future, but of a process already underway in the present. In Christ, the first fruits of the perfect Kingdom are already manifest. Through Him,

God has reconciled the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19) and entrusted human beings with the mission of being ambassadors of this reconciliation. To manifest today the creation of tomorrow is to choose to live now according to the values of the Kingdom to come: peace, justice, respect for life and universal love.

Disasters, desertification, the depletion of resources and the destruction of ecosystems remind us how much humanity has disrupted the balance intended by God. Conflicts, injustices, moral and spiritual pollution reflect humanity's estrangement from the Creator. Yet, in the midst of this disorder, God continues to call His children to become artisans of restoration. Every creature of God has a place and a role within creation. Human beings, who from the beginning have been placed as guardians of this creation, have a duty to work so that God's coming reign may already be experienced today. I have a duty to promote peace between others and myself, and with the nature that God has entrusted to me, by fighting against war, deforestation, pollution, and threats to endangered species.

Creation groans in expectation of the revelation of the sons of God (Rm. 8:19). This means that the restoration of the world also depends on our concrete commitment. Every gesture of peace, every sincere prayer, every action for the common good contributes to the manifestation of this coming Kingdom. Christians are not spectators of God's future, they are collaborators in it today.

*So the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord.* As a child of God within this creation, I understand that I must also work to spread the Gospel more widely, so that this knowledge may be deeper. Whatever my responsibility in society, a better knowledge of God will enable me to live among others, accepting our differences, to pray for the restoration of creation, and to engage with people or associations that protect nature.

The Kingdom of God that is to come is a reality for which we must work together today to bring about. It is in our daily actions, choices and relationships that the new world is already being built. Where God's love inspires our words and deeds, there the creation of tomorrow advances.

## PRAYER

*Father,*

*I desire to be an important link in promoting peace among human beings and in safeguarding the whole of creation. I give You thanks because You allow me today to be aware of my role and my responsibility as a child of God. I realise that as a guardian of creation, as You have established me since the foundation of the world, my role is significant and my responsibility is important. I implore You, Lord, to raise up throughout the earth a growing number of servants who, like, carry the consciousness of the kingdom as You conceive it, and who work with devotion for the preservation and salvation of all creation.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!*

Jean Clovis SIGNE  
EECa - Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun

## Sent to guard the garden

*Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?"*

*I said, "Here I am. Send me."*

Isaiah 6:8

God is still looking for voices ready to respond. Not just to proclaim, but to act: *Here I am, send me...* into this world on fire, into this groaning earth.

Isaiah responds in a context of crisis: the people have strayed, iniquity is great, the sanctuary is shaken.

Today, our common sanctuary, 'creation', is also damaged. Deforestation, pollution, unbridled individualism, loss of the sacred connection with nature. Yet God is still looking for messengers. Not to dominate, but to serve life.

**Inhabit creation differently** is to accept this new (and ancient) mission: to cultivate and to keep. It is to carry a faith that plants, that protects, that stands with the hummingbird to say, «I am doing my part.»

The Church is called to become once again a sent people. Not only to preach in temples, but to be seed in the fields, leaven in the cities, a voice for the voiceless, protectors for the ecologically homeless: forests, rivers, endangered species, children without a future.



To say *Here I am* today is to live a spirituality of responsibility. Not as a burden, but as a joyful response to the call of God the Creator. We are called to a theology of the garden: rooted in the Word of Christ, open to the Spirit, engaged in the world. Are we ready to say *Here I am* for creation? For a faith that heals, repairs, and builds lasting hope?

## PRAYER

*Almighty God,  
Here I am. Send me where life suffers.  
Make my hands capable of healing your creation, my heart attentive to its cries, and my steps faithful to your call.  
Amen!*  
SOLI DEO GLORIA

## Creation, a gift to be cherished

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [...]  
Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.  
Then he separated the light from the darkness. [...]  
Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens  
from the waters of the earth." And that is what happened. [...]  
Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may  
appear." And that is what happened. [...] And God saw that it was good.  
then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees  
that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from  
which they came." And that is what happened [...] And God saw that it was good. [...]  
God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the  
night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, to govern the  
day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. [...]  
God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water,  
and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was  
good. [...]  
God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring  
of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. [...]  
God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and  
female he created them. [...]  
Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!*

Genesis 1

Genesis presents God as an artist, a builder and a poet, shaping the universe with incredible care and intention. Nothing is left to chance: from distant galaxies to the smallest grains of sand, everything bears witness to infinite wisdom. The laws of nature—strong and weak nuclear interaction, electromagnetism, gravity—are so precisely tuned that the slightest change would make life impossible. Rodney D. Holder, a space scientist, suggests in one of his articles that the universe seems «perfectly tuned» for the existence of life. This scientific observation echoes what God Himself said: *it was very good.*



This «*very good*» is not just a nice assessment. It is a blessing, a sign of divine approval that gives creation a sacred value. Every element – light, the ocean, the sky, animals, humans – has a role to play, a meaning, a beauty all its own.

Unfortunately, today, this original beauty is often hidden. We see pollution, deforestation, waste, and a general lack of interest. Instead of being attentive gardeners, human beings sometimes behave like destroyers. Yet, thanks to Jesus, we are called to change: to become guardians, servants, and amazed witnesses.

To consider the Earth as a sacred place is to recognise that every tree sings praise, every river reflects God's splendour, every creature is proof of his creativity.

Protecting nature then becomes a way of showing our faith, a kind of living prayer, a way of saying «Thank you» to God.

In our everyday choices – consuming reasonably, recycling, planting trees, caring for our environment – we can show God's love for the world. It is a concrete spirituality, a sensitivity to nature that comes from the heart.

What if we learned to observe carefully again? To walk gently in nature, to listen to the birds singing, to appreciate the rain and the sun? To rediscover that creation is like an open book, a living story, a sacred melody?

Then our way of seeing things would change. And so would our involvement. Because to love God is also to love what He has created. And what He has created... is truly excellent.

This new perspective compels us to act. It encourages us to teach children to respect the Earth, to pray for farmers, to support local reforestation initiatives, to celebrate the seasons as wonderful gifts... It calls us to a faith that breathes, takes root, and blossoms.

Creation is a gift, but also a responsibility. It is where our salvation is at stake, where our hope is born, where we can see the glory of God. By caring for it, we honour the One who gave it to us.

## PRIÈRE

*Almighty God,*

*Open our eyes so that we may admire Your creation with joy and respect. Give us grateful hearts, hands ready to act, and the will to protect what You have declared «very good».*

*May our lives become a song of love for Your work, a living proof of Your Kingdom.*

*Amen.*

*Kodjo Kafui Gracien Bruno AMOUZOUVI  
EMT - Eglise Méthodiste du Togo*

## Inhabit creation differently... within oneself

*"The Kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs. You won't be able to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is already among you."*

Luke 17:20b-21

### **Inhabit oneself**

**Inhabit creation differently** is to inhabit ourselves differently. It means welcoming the Earth, no longer as a backdrop or a resource, but as a living part of our inner selves. For what we call creation is not something external to us, but the very reflection of our soul. For the Kingdom of God is already among you.

**Inhabit creation differently** is to recognise that the entire universe vibrates in our hearts, in our breath, in our every gesture. Mountains, rivers, birds and trees are not just poetic images, but voices that speak to us, presences that invite us to rediscover our lost unity.

### **Listening to creation**

This inner dialogue with creation begins with deep listening. *Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. (Jb 12:8)*. A monk who was once asked what could be done to heal the Earth replied: «Listen within ourselves to the echoes of the Earth crying out.» Listening to creation also means hearing its current groans, feeling deeply what is happening to it and being moved by it: *For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Rm 8:22)*. Listening to creation means accepting that everything around us carries an intimate teaching, a discreet but ever-present wisdom. Thus, flowers teach us the fragile beauty of the moment, trees teach us rootedness and verticality, rivers teach us letting go and fluidity. But also, the burnt forest challenges us on our greed, the polluted ocean questions us on our indifference, and the species that are disappearing call us to rethink our lifestyles.



### Living in renewed unity

We can no longer live separated, isolated, strangers to our surroundings. Christian spirituality invites us to recognise the deep connection between all that exists in God. Every conscious gesture is an act of love towards creation and towards ourselves. As the psalmist reminds us: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

*The world and all its people belong to him. (Ps 24:1).* We own nothing; we simply participate in a life that transcends us and flows through us.

This rediscovered unity also calls us to act together, to cultivate shared gardens, to simplify our daily lives, to support one another in restoring a fragile world. For *Inhabit creation differently* also means carrying together an active hope that transforms our daily actions into seeds of a renewed future.

### Becoming co-creators

**Inhabit creation differently** means moving from doing to letting be, from taking to sharing, from agitation to inner silence. In this silence, everything finds its rightful place. It is there that we fully taste the simple and profound joy of being alive, connected, unified in the Eternal One.

And perhaps then, when we are fully inhabited by this Presence, we will finally discover what it truly means to be created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:27). According to Orthodox Christian tradition, the image is a gift already realised in each of us, while the likeness is a call to grow spiritually throughout our lives, to become ever more like God. To be co-creators of a reconciled world, where every form of life is recognised as a face of the Creator.

### PRAYER

*Eternal One,*

*You entrust this world to us as a garden to cultivate and protect. Open our ears to the whispers of the Earth, open our eyes to the fragile beauty that surrounds us. Awaken in us the empathy necessary to care for living beings and our fragile planet. Help us to take simple and genuine actions, to live together in harmony with all creation. May our lives become a living testimony of Your love for all that breathes.*

*Amen.*

Nils PHILDIUS

EPG - Eglise Protestante de Genève

Maison bleu ciel, espace de (d'éco-)spiritualité chrétienne à Genève



## The Church and the environment, a biblical perspective

*"A certain landowner planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. At the time of the grape harvest, he sent his servants to collect his share of the crop. But the farmers grabbed his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. So the landowner sent a larger group of his servants to collect for him, but the results were the same. Finally, the owner sent his son, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.' But when the tenant farmers saw his son coming, they said to one another, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Come on, let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' So they grabbed him, dragged him out of the vineyard, and murdered him. When the owner of the vineyard returns," Jesus asked, "what do you think he will do to those farmers?" The religious leaders replied, "He will put the wicked men to a horrible death and lease the vineyard to others who will give him his share of the crop after each harvest."*

Matthew 21:33-41

This is the parable of the wicked vine-dressers, not that of the two sons, but it can be interpreted as a call for responsible stewardship of God's creation, encouraging believers to be attentive stewards of the earth entrusted to us. By acting as good stewards and giving God the «fruit» or tribute that is due to Him, we honour Him as the true owner and avoid the spiritual rejection and judgement that befell the vine-growers who destroyed the rightful heir.

### **The parable in context**

The vineyard: The owner plants a vineyard, surrounds it with a fence, digs a winepress, and builds a tower, showing the care and preparation he brings to the land.

The tenants: The owner leases the vineyard to tenants and goes on a journey, entrusting them with its care.

The heirs: The owner sends servants to collect his share, but the tenants beat them.

The fate of the heir: When the owner's son arrives, he is killed by the vine-growers who want to take possession of the inheritance.

The outcome: The owner's judgement falls upon the wicked vine-growers, and the vineyard is given to others who will produce the appropriate fruit.

### **Environmental interpretation**

**God's creation:** The vineyard is the Earth, God's creation, which He has given us.

**Our responsibility:** We are not the owners, but we are responsible for taking care of the world.

**Stewardship:** Just as the vine-growers were to care for the vineyard, we are called to be faithful stewards of God's creation, managing it with wisdom and care.

**The fruit:** We must give God the fruit—the harvest and worship that are due to Him—from the resources He has given us, which includes caring for the environment.

**Consequences:** Just as the vineyard workers were judged, failing to be good stewards of the environment will have spiritual and practical consequences, as we will be forfeiting the gifts God has given us.

Furthermore, creation is sacred and does not belong to us, it belongs to God. We do not belong to ourselves but are simply part of creation. It is therefore our responsibility to care for it, as this is part of our role as stewards.

Although this parable is intended solely to speak of Christ's death, it can also inform us, allegorically, about our responsibility as mere tenants who are here only temporarily. Selfishness and greed drive the vineyard workers to take everything for themselves and drive out the owner. They want to take possession of the vineyard, and they can only do so by killing the heir in order to eliminate any possibility of legal claim to the property.

We can also draw inspiration from the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30): when we treat what has been given to us, whether material gifts or other gifts, as talents for which we will be held accountable at a later date.

### **PRAYER**

*Dear God,*

*We thank You for the magnificent land of The Gambia, for its rivers, forests and abundant resources. We ask You to guide us in protecting these precious gifts from harm. May our actions be guided by love and responsibility, to ensure a healthy environment for generations to come. Help us find the wisdom to care for the earth and its creatures, and to live in harmony with nature. We pray for a sustainable future, where all life can flourish. Amen.*

*Simeon Thomas*

*ELCTG - Evangelical Lutheran Church of The Gambia*



## And the Word became Animal...

*For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird on the mountains, and all the animals of the field are mine.*

*Psalm 50:10-11*

*So the Word became human and made his home among us.*

*John 1:14a*

### **Animals mere objects?**

«It is a shocking figure, one that strikes the conscience and perhaps the heart: one million animal and plant species – one in eight – are at risk of disappearing from the face of the earth and the depths of the oceans in the near future,» warned the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) five years ago. Extinction is linked to the view of animals (and the rest of creation) as mere objects at the disposal of human beings. Thus, the tradition of thought from Plato/Aristotle to Descartes to Kant, which says that animals do not have 'reason' and cannot think like us, means that they are considered mere objects and it is possible to do whatever we want with them. A misunderstanding of the exhortation to 'have dominion' over them (Gn 1:26) has been added to this throughout history.

### **God also sees and considers animals**

In biblical tradition and in the account of creation in the Book of Genesis, animals (on earth) were created on the same day as human beings, and were even fashioned in the same way, endowed with the breath of life. God knows the animals of the forest, the mountains and the beasts of the field. And animals have a right to rest (Ex 23:12; Dt 5:14) and to food (Ex 23:10). Animals are under the protection of God's law and are even included in the profound peace that will reign according to the vision of the prophet Isaiah: *In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. [...]. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain [...]. In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place. (Is 11:6-10).*

### The Word even became a creature

Methodist theologian David CLOUGH, who has worked on a theology of animals, shares an interesting thought: It is not because Jesus is a man that women are not saved. Why should we refrain from thinking even more broadly: God came in Jesus to dwell in His entire creation! CLOUGH, if I understand correctly, follows another tradition, that of Pythagoras (whom we know more for his mathematics), Francis OF ASSISI, and Thomas TRYON (in England), in which animals are our kin, inhabiting the same house as us!

At the beginning of John's Gospel, the prologue, praising God who 'dwells' in the world, tells us that the Word became sarx – often translated as 'man' (Jn 1:14). The Greek word sarx means 'body, flesh or creation'. It describes flesh as fragile, ephemeral and mortal. This word certainly describes human beings in the Bible, but also animals (1 Cor 15:39). What if we understood this word in John's Gospel in this broader sense? *The Word became flesh; and made his dwelling among us. (NIV Jn 1:14)* John's prologue tells us that God came in His Word to dwell in His entire creation – human beings, animals... and perhaps even vegetation! He came 'home' to save the entire creation and lead it to profound peace – at least, that is the perspective of the Epistle to the Colossians 1:19-20: *For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

### PRAYER

*For animals (Albert Schweitzer – Book of Prayers, Olivétan – Soc.Luth, p.335)*

*Hear our humble prayer, O our God,  
For our friends the animals,  
Especially for those who suffer;  
For those who are hunted, lost,  
Abandoned, frightened or starving;  
For those who must be put to death.*

*To those who are in contact with them,  
Give a compassionate heart,  
Caring hands,  
And words of affection.  
Make us true friends to animals,  
So that we may share with them  
The grace of your blessing.*

## Human being is responsible for preserving nature

*The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.*

*Genesis 2:15*

What is the responsibility of the human being towards nature?

In the beginning God created nature, that is, according to Genesis 1, He first created light and then all other things and in the end He created the human being in His image and likeness and blessed Him to bear fruit. In Genesis 1:28, God blessed mankind to be fruitful and to have dominion over all things that He had created before mankind.

To dominate means to establish rules that can allow good coexistence between human beings and the rest of nature. Dominating implies rules that respect the nature that God created with so much love because, at the end of each creation, He classified it saying that everything is fine.

In chapter 2 of the book of Genesis, God places human beings in the Garden of Eden with two objectives, namely:

1. Plowing
2. Save

Why plow? Already in chapter 3, with the fall of man, he was told that from the sweat of his face his bread would come. This means that human beings should plow the land to provide them with their daily bread. This farming had to follow rules that would allow humans to do the second part, which is to save.



To preserve means to respect the work that God created, the nature that He placed at the disposal of human beings. To keep means to recognize that God created human beings out of love and provides them with everything they need to live well and better.

Because human beings do not comply with God's recommendation to protect the Garden of Eden, there are now climate changes that are putting human life itself at risk. The planet is going through very difficult times that are characterized by rising temperatures. This increase in global temperature leads to animal suffering, lack of rain and, consequently, hunger in poor countries that depend on rudimentary agriculture system.

Paul wrote to Timothy, in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. [...] *They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. (2 Tm 3:1-4).*

Now we see human beings investing more in money and their satisfaction and destroying the nature that God placed to plow and guard.

It is time to reflect on human behavior in preserving the environment as this will allow mankind to live longer.

Human beings must comply with God's Word to cultivate and keep the Garden and not destroy it, as this will put in danger the entire creation that God made with so much love.

In Mozambique, every year we suffer with cyclones as a result of climate change, many people are killed; the Church must work up and advocate about this difficult situation that we are passing through. We must save the Garden not destroying it.

## PRAYER

*Almighty God,*

*We are here before Your face to recognize Your presence in our lives. Thank You, God, because we know You and we ask that You help us to be prudent with Your creation. We ask that You help us to know how to preserve it. Don't help to know how to save. Help us to know how to take advantage of it, working so that we can have our daily bread. Do not allow, Lord, that we destroy Your nature because this will affect all the creation that You made with much love. Help us, Lord, to be men and women who fear You and obey Your word, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.*

## A dream for today

*For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.*

*Romans 8:19-21*

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

*I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."*

*And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"*

*Revelation 21:1-5*

As a young pastor, I feel more than ever the call to live my faith in a concrete way, as close as possible to life and the earth. **Inhabit creation differently** echoes a dream I have: that of a faith that is incarnate, humble, and rooted in reality.

We are invited to see our mission as a whole: to proclaim the Gospel, yes, but also to live differently on this earth that God has entrusted to us. It is not a question of dominating creation, but of inhabiting it with respect.

Cultivating and keeping: this is God's double call. Two complementary actions. One shapes, the other protects. Today, this fragile balance has been broken. Nature suffers, exploited and despised. And the earth waits, as Paul says, for a new generation capable of hoping differently.



Inhabit differently is to look differently. It is to see a tree as a presence, not as a material. It is to hear a silent prayer in the wind. It is also to review our choices: to live more simply, consume less, love better. It is not giving in to fear or guilt, but choosing sober joy, joyful responsibility. It is, in essence, making our way of living on earth an act of faith.

It also means rediscovering our connection with God, with the earth, with others. Returning to the essentials. Choosing relationship over possession, communion over domination. In a world torn apart by crises and imbalances, our faith urges us to act, to repair, to care. Being a Protestant today is not just about protesting against what is wrong. It is also about proposing a new way of living, of believing, of walking humbly with our God.

And it starts with simple gestures. No longer throwing things away without thinking. Taking care of a shared space. Passing on to our children not only verses from scripture, but a respectful way of living on earth.

Inhabit differently is not an option for environmental specialists, it is a call for every Christian. It is a concrete way of living out our faith.

For ultimately, the Christian faith is ecological in its essence. God loves the world. Not just souls, but the whole world, with its trees, oceans, birds and climates. And if God loves the world, we are called to love it too. The cross itself does not redeem an abstraction, but a wounded creation. And the resurrection opens up hope for all creation.

That is why our commitment cannot be lukewarm. We must dream differently, pray differently, consume differently. We must also campaign differently: not through fear or guilt, but through joy. The joy of those who still believe that the Kingdom is near. The joy of those who sow, even in tears, because they know that one day the harvest will come.

So yes, inhabit differently means still believing that the Gospel is good news for the whole world, including forests, rivers and threatened peoples. It means telling the world that another way of life is possible, because another way of seeing has been born: that of love, that of faith, that of hope.

May God help us to be artisans of this good news.

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever.

## PRAYER

*Lord of life, You who wove the earth and the heavens,  
Grant us to dwell in Your world as guardians and not as masters. Make our hands sowers of peace, our choices signs of hope. May Your Church walk humbly, love fervently, and speak truthfully. Teach us sober joy and active tenderness. May creation recognise in us the children of the Kingdom.*

*Amen.*

Gaston OUATTARA

EPS - Eglise Protestante du Sénégal

## Justice and peace for the Lord's people

*And this righteousness will bring peace. Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in safety, quietly at home. They will be at rest.*

*Isaiah 32:17-18*

This passage, often read in a spiritual or eschatological context, takes on particular resonance when linked to the way we inhabit the earth. It is part of a vision in which justice concerns not only human relationships, but also our relationship with creation.

Originally, Isaiah addressed the people of Judah during a period of political and moral crisis. The kingdom was threatened by foreign powers, and society was marked by injustice, corruption and oppression of the weakest. The prophet announced a reversal: after judgement would come a time of restoration, under a just king, where peace and security would reign.

In a Christian reading, this passage is often interpreted as a messianic prophecy. It speaks of a future where justice brings peace, where God's people live in peaceful dwellings, in security and rest. This is not a distant utopia, but a vision that God invites us to embody today.

The prophet speaks of «secure dwellings» and «quiet resting places». This raises the question: who can rest in peace today? Millions of people are displaced by climate disasters, conflicts over resources, and pollution that renders their land uninhabitable.

### **The work of justice will be peace**

The justice Isaiah speaks of is a global justice that includes environmental justice: preserving resources, respecting natural cycles, protecting the most vulnerable from climate change. It involves giving the earth back its right to rest and regeneration. It calls us to sobriety, gratitude and responsibility. It prompts us to question our habits: how do we consume?



How do we travel? How do we cultivate our gardens, our neighbourhoods, our planet? Isaiah also speaks of peace. This is not a magical peace or one imposed from above. He speaks of a peace to be built through a commitment to justice. The peace the author speaks of cannot exist if our way of life destroys ecosystems, if our peaceful homes are built on environmental injustice.

For this peace to come about, justice must be practised. And this justice does not only concern our human relationships: it extends to the way we inhabit the earth, the way we live with creation.

Are we peacemakers in the way we consume, travel and cultivate?

Through this passage, Isaiah offers us a vision of hope: a people living in peace, in harmony with God, with others, and with the earth. This vision can become reality if we agree to live differently, with humility, responsibility, and love.

In our era marked by ecological crises, climate change and environmental injustices, this text resonates with particular urgency. It reminds us that true peace cannot exist without justice, and that justice concerns not only our human relationships, but also our relationship with the earth, animals, natural resources and all living things.

## PRAYER

*Lord our God,*

*You are the God of peace, and You show us that true peace comes from justice and respect for Your work. You have entrusted us with the earth as a common home, a garden to cultivate, a creation to love. But too often we have exploited it, forgetting that peace cannot flourish on injustice.*

*Today, we hear Your call: to a conversion of heart, to a transformation of our habits, to a new way of inhabiting the world.*

*Give us the wisdom to live simply, the strength to act fairly, and the faith to hope for a future of rest and security. Make us peacemakers in our families, our communities, and our daily choices. May our homes be peaceful, our relationships sincere, and our earth respected.*

*May Your Spirit renew in us the desire for justice, so that your promise may become reality: a people resting in peace, in safe and tranquil places, under your benevolent gaze.*

*Lord, thank you for giving us the intelligence and the heart to understand Your lessons and to see in them only the love You have for us. Thank You for making us instruments of Your peace, so that Your people may be carried, in all circumstances, by the hope of your eternal light.*

## Agricultural Entrepreneur: Farming as Divine Partnership

*For six years you may plant your fields and prune your vineyards and harvest your crops, but during the seventh year the land must have a Sabbath year of complete rest. It is the Lord's Sabbath. Do not plant your fields or prune your vineyards during that year.*

*Leviticus 25:3-4*

Your work is more than cultivation; it is co-creation with God. The soil beneath your feet is sacred ground, a living testimony of God's faithfulness and generosity. Every seed you plant is an act of trust, a partnership between your labor and His divine provision. The biblical call to Sabbath rest for the land challenges modern patterns of endless extraction and invites us to rediscover the holy rhythm of balance and renewal. Just as the human body needs rest to regain strength, the earth also needs time to breathe, heal, and restore its vitality.

In Leviticus 25, God reminds His people that the land belongs to Him, not to human hands. The command to let it rest every seventh year was not merely agricultural—it was spiritual. It was a declaration that creation thrives when we trust in the Creator's timing rather than our own. This principle speaks profoundly to the agricultural entrepreneur today. How might your business model reflect this wisdom—through regenerative farming that replenishes soil nutrients, through fair labour that values the dignity of every worker, or through community food sovereignty that shares abundance rather than hoards it?



The earth is not just a resource but a partner in God's creative purpose. To mistreat it is to wound a sacred relationship; to nurture it is to worship the One who said, *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. (Psalm 24:1).* When you choose sustainable methods, reduce waste, and steward your fields with care, you participate in divine restoration. You declare through your actions that abundance and justice can coexist, that profit and compassion can grow side by side.

Your harvests, therefore, are not only economic returns but spiritual testimonies. Each season you sow and reap becomes a sermon of faithfulness, proclaiming that true prosperity flows from partnership with God. As you work with your employees, customers, and ecosystems, you model a kingdom where creation is honored, people are valued, and the Creator is glorified. In this divine partnership, you become a living witness that fruitfulness need not come through exploitation, but through love, stewardship, and gratitude.

May your fields be sanctuaries of praise, your labor a song of worship, and your business a living altar where heaven and earth meet in harmony.

## PRAYER

*Lord of the Harvest,*

*Bless the work of my hands and the soil beneath my feet. Teach me to labor with wisdom and to rest in trust. May my fields yield not only profit but life—life that sustains, heals, and honors You. Let every seed I plant reflect Your kingdom's abundance and grace. Help me partner with creation in reverence and love, that my work may glorify You, O Creator of all things.*

*Amen.*

## What if the foolishness of our ancestors was beyond our understanding ?

*The blacksmith stands at his forge to make a sharp tool, pounding and shaping it with all his might. His work makes him hungry and weak. It makes him thirsty and faint. Then the wood-carver measures a block of wood and draws a pattern on it. He works with chisel and plane and carves it into a human figure. He gives it human beauty and puts it in a little shrine. He cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the pine in the forest to be nourished by the rain. Then he uses part of the wood to make a fire. With it he warms himself and bakes his bread. Then—yes, it's true—he takes the rest of it and makes himself a god to worship! He makes an idol and bows down in front of it!*

Isaiah 44:12-15

The passage from Isaiah 44, verses 9 to 20 of which we draw our meditation pericope, describes the stupidity of our ancestors in their faith in the God of Jesus Christ. This text is an expression of God's desolation at man's attitude in his use of other creatures. As an illustration, the Lord speaks of the use of trees. The children of Israel used them not only for burning, heating and cooking, but also for carving idols. This latter use is appalling and reveals the evil mindset and foolishness of the chosen people. Indeed, Israel has fallen low, and its faith in idols carved by its blacksmiths and carpenters reveals unparalleled stupidity. The Lord will say: *Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. (Is 44:18).*

### **The sense of responsibility of the sinful carpenter**

Despite this deplorable state of God's children, there is one detail in the description of the



carpenter's work that leaves us astonished. Indeed, verse 14 says: *he cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the pine in the forest to be nourished by the rain.* I would like us to meditate together on the carpenter's actions: he chooses to cut down large trees (cedars, oaks and firs), he selects from among the trees in the forest (he sorts), and he ends up reforesting (he plants pines), which God waters with rain.

In clear terms, we see the carpenter's responsibility and his diligence in managing and investing in the sustainability of his trade. Beyond condemning his lack of inspiration and the fact that his work contributes to the misguidance of the people, let us take note of these values of responsibility, diligence and management, which are all to his credit.

### **Our duty as Christians**

In light of these responsible actions of the carpenter, it is the whole Church in general and each Christian in particular who is called into question. In our daily actions, do we take care not to commit double, triple, or even multiple sins against God and His creation? Despite his sin, the carpenter thinks about maintaining and preserving creation. What about us, in our thirst for development and our increased pursuit of worldly goods? Do we think about tomorrow, about the future and about the survival of future generations? To build our chapels, our temples, our presbyteries, our institutions... we find ourselves having to cut everything down, clear everything away, and soften everything. Do we think we can replace it by creating other spaces of the same kind? It goes without saying that if the Lord wanted to give us a prophecy today, it would be: «You are the most foolish of all generations of my creatures; you are causing your own suicide and corrupting the future of your descendants. Repent and save yourselves through more responsible and ecological actions; my people whom I love so much, says the Lord.»

May this message help us to become aware of our Christian duty and our duty as children of God in the effective and responsible management of creation!

Amen!

### **PRAYER**

Lord,

*Even the people of Israel, in their straying, did not lose the sense of responsibility assigned to them towards Your creation; teach us to be an intelligent and wise people who think not only for the present, but also and more for the future of our fellow human beings. Deliver us from the idolatry of perishable goods, from success apart from You, and from irresponsibility in our daily actions. Hear us in the name of Jesus Christ!*

Amen!

Kokou AGOTI

EEPT - Eglise Evangélique Presbytérienne du Togo

## Cosmic Communion

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise him from the skies! Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all the armies of heaven! Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you twinkling stars! Praise him, skies above! Praise him, vapors high above the clouds! Let every created thing give praise to the Lord, for he issued his command, and they came into being.*

*Psalm 148:1-5*

Look around you. Look at the splendour of God's creation. The sun rising each morning, painting the sky with flaming colours. The twinkling stars, a million diamonds scattered across the velvet of the night. The majestic mountains, the deep oceans, the green forests... all testify to the power and glory of our Creator.

Psalm 148 is a cosmic hymn that calls us to meditation and universal communion in the celebration of God.

This Psalm is not a simple prayer, it is a symphony. A symphony in which every element of creation, from the greatest to the smallest, participates in a grandiose choir, praising the name of God. This is not an invitation reserved for an elite few, but a universal call. Angels, heavens, stars, waters, animals, trees, grasses, men... all are invited to join in this cosmic celebration.

Imagine for a moment this magnificent scene. The angels, those heavenly beings, spread their wings and sing ineffable praises. The heavens resound with their voices, a harmonious choir filling the universe. The stars, those points of light in the night, twinkle like thousands of candles lit to honour the Creator. The waters, those immense blue expanses, murmur praises, their waves rising like hands raised to the sky.



But the symphony does not stop there. It descends to earth, encompassing all earthly creation. The mountains, imposing and majestic, bow in worship. The forests, with their centuries-old trees, whisper prayers in the wind. The animals, in their infinite diversity, join their voices to the heavenly symphony. The lion roars its praise, the bird sings its hymn, the ant works diligently, all while participating in the glory of God.

And we, human beings, created in God's image, are called to take our place in this symphony. We are the most precious instruments in this divine orchestration. We have the capacity to understand God's greatness, to contemplate His beauty, and to praise His name with intelligence and love. Psalm 148 calls us to a deep communion with God and with all creation. It invites us to transcend our differences and divisions and to unite as one heart to celebrate the glory of our Creator.

But how can we participate in this heavenly symphony? How can we join this universal choir of praise? Psalm 148 gives us the answer: through praise, worship, and thanksgiving. Let us praise God for His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His mercy. Let us worship him with humility and respect, recognising our smallness before His greatness. Let us thank him for all His blessings, for the beauty of creation, for the gift of life.

By participating in this heavenly symphony, we not only honour God, we enrich ourselves. We find peace, joy and hope. We connect to something greater than ourselves, to a transcendent reality that surpasses us. We discover the meaning of our existence, our place in the universe, and our calling to praise God with our whole being.

Join in this heavenly symphony. Open your hearts to the beauty of creation, let yourselves be filled with the joy of praise, and participate in the universal communion that celebrates the glory of God. May our lives be a constant hymn to the glory of the Creator, a vibrant testimony of our love and gratitude.

## PRAYER

*Lord God, Creator of all things,  
We intercede today for our planet. In these times of environmental crisis, Lord, we pray for the healing of our earth. May the forests, oceans, and air we breathe be preserved. Inspire us to be good stewards of creation, to respect the resources You have placed at our disposal, and to live in harmony with all life. May our actions not lead to destruction, but to restoration and peace. May our voices rise together, not only to praise, but also to act. Teach us to recognise the beauty in every little flower, in the song of the birds, and in the rivers that meander through our landscapes.  
Amen!*

Pierre YOUNG  
UEBC - Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameroun

## Living differently in creation for a new world order

*With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.*

*But that isn't what you learned about Christ. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*

*Ephesians 4:17-24*

A Jew passes before the Roman Emperor Hadrian and greets him. The Emperor asks him:

- Who are you?
- I am a Jew, he replied

The Emperor became angry and said:

- As a Jew, you dare to walk past Hadrian and greet him.

He calls his soldiers:

- Take him and cut off his head.

Another Jew comes by, but knowing what happened to the first, he does not greet the Emperor. Hadrian asks him:

- Who are you?
- I am a Jew, he replies.

The Emperor becomes angry, calls his soldiers and says

- A Jew dares to pass before Hadrian without greeting him. Take him away and cut off his head.

A senator questions Hadrian:

- We do not understand your behaviour; you killed the one who greeted you, and you killed the one who did not greet you.

Hadrian replied:

- Are you trying to lecture me on how I should treat those I hate? However they behave, I want to destroy them.

*Historical fact, as reported by Elie Wiesel*

Hadrian's understanding is characteristic of humanity devoid of evangelical values, mired in worldly values.

Christ's disciples are called to take the opposite stance. They must inhabit humanity differently, instilling in it the evangelical values that come from their Master. This is the orientation of the text of Ephesians 4:17-21.

In this passage, Paul establishes an absolute dichotomy between worldly values and those that come from Jesus Christ.

The former plunge humanity into a terrible situation marked by futility, blindness, impiety, immodesty, disorder, baseness, and indecency—all things that distance the men and women who live them from God.

Evangelical values, on the other hand, keep humanity within God's economy. They promote the establishment of a new world order, a new order of things, a new society that knows no

boundaries. Evangelical values transform the old humanity into a new one, one based on love in truth. From then on, community life becomes optimal.

Based on the above, we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, are exhorted to live humanity differently by embodying the evangelical values evoked by the Apostle Paul, leading the new life of all those who have truly known Christ, namely: renewal of the Spirit, likeness to Christ, righteousness, holiness and unity.

To do this, we must have:

- A spirit of solidarity: reaching out to others and welcoming them.
- A spirit of detachment: getting rid of our character differences in community life. Pathological passions are a source of conflict.
- A spirit of sharing: sharing leads to communion.

In conclusion, having worked throughout one's life to liberate the oppressed, to relieve the unfortunate and to remove the causes of their misfortune, or having lived selfishly, curled up in one's own little happiness, indifferent to the misfortune of others, is what will be decisive on Judgement Day.

Amen!



## PRAYER

*Almighty God, Sovereign Master of the world,*

*We dream of a world where the word 'oppressor' no longer has any meaning.*

*We dream of a world where we can eat and sing without others, elsewhere, going without bread and living in arenas.*

*We dream of a world where birdsong replaces the sound of weapons, and tenderness replaces the pursuit of money.*

*We dream of a world where no one seeks to succeed in life at the expense of others and where poets are no longer afraid to proclaim their most precious songs from the rooftops.*

*We dream of a world that foreshadows the Kingdom of God.*

*We present this dream to you, Lord God. This is our prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

*Amen!*

Basile NGUEMA ALLOGO  
EEG - Eglise Evangélique du Gabon

## The multiplication of loaves and fishes, or the miracle of sharing

*About this time another large crowd had gathered, and the people ran out of food again. Jesus called his disciples and told them, "I feel sorry for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will faint along the way. For some of them have come a long distance." His disciples replied, "How are we supposed to find enough food to feed them out here in the wilderness?" Jesus asked, "How much bread do you have?" "Seven loaves," they replied. So Jesus told all the people to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He gave them to his disciples, who distributed the bread to the crowd. A few small fish were found, too, so Jesus also blessed these and told the disciples to distribute them. They ate as much as they wanted. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven large baskets of leftover food. There were about 4,000 men in the crowd that day, and Jesus sent them home after they had eaten.*

Mark 8:1-9

Often referred to as the miracle of the «multiplication of the loaves and fishes,» nowhere in the text do the words «multiplication,» «addition,» or any other synonym appear. So what happened to those seven loaves that they fed a crowd of 4,000 people, leaving even a few baskets of leftovers? What if this miracle was not a matter of mathematics...

*Jesus took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He gave them to his disciples, who distributed the bread to the crowd.*



### **From limited resources to sufficient resources**

The miracle is not that the loaves were multiplied, but rather that they were shared and distributed. From limited resources, Jesus and his disciples made those resources sufficient. Sufficient for what? For everyone to eat their fill. Not for everyone to eat until they were sick, not for everyone to stock up for the days ahead. In fact, the fact that there were leftovers at the end shows us that each person took just what they needed to satisfy their hunger at that moment.

### **Living with limitations**

Limited resources, a question of sharing, distribution and satiety... This resonates particularly with what we are experiencing today. We too are faced with limited earthly resources: minerals, gas, oil, fresh water. Unfortunately, unlike in the biblical story, the crowd that we are finds it very difficult to be satisfied. Why is this? Because the stages of sharing and distribution are failing. Out of fear of scarcity, or a desire to have more than others, we may be tempted to fill our shelves, pockets or barrels. By stockpiling and hoarding resources, many people are left without enough to simply feed themselves. And so a vicious circle is created.

The more we see people hoarding resources, the more we fear scarcity, the more we want to increase our own reserves, creating fear of scarcity in even more people, and so on.

### **A miracle to be replicated today**

How, then, can we break out of this vicious circle? By restoring, in the light of the Gospel, the miracle of sharing and distribution. By following the example of Jesus, who was moved when he saw the people around him going without food, and who took steps to change this situation. By drawing inspiration from the disciples who, in their mission as distributors, ensured that everyone received enough. By drawing inspiration from the crowd who consumed soberly until they were satisfied and did not take more than they needed. Sharing, distributing, seeking only to be satisfied... This is a miracle that seems within our reach!

### **PRAYER**

*How beautiful Your works will be, Lord, when we learn to love the wonders of Your creation and the simplicity of life.*

*How beautiful Your works will be, Lord, when we find our rightful place among all that lives and moves on earth.*

*How beautiful Your works will be, Lord, when we seek to put the sharing and distribution of resources at the centre of our lives, and when all of us are satisfied.*

*Hear our prayer, O Creator of all things, and convert our hearts.*

Sophie-Anne LORANT-FAIVRE

UEPAL - Union des Eglises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine

## A bush in the desert or a tree planted near a stream ?

*This is what the Lord says: "Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the Lord. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future.*

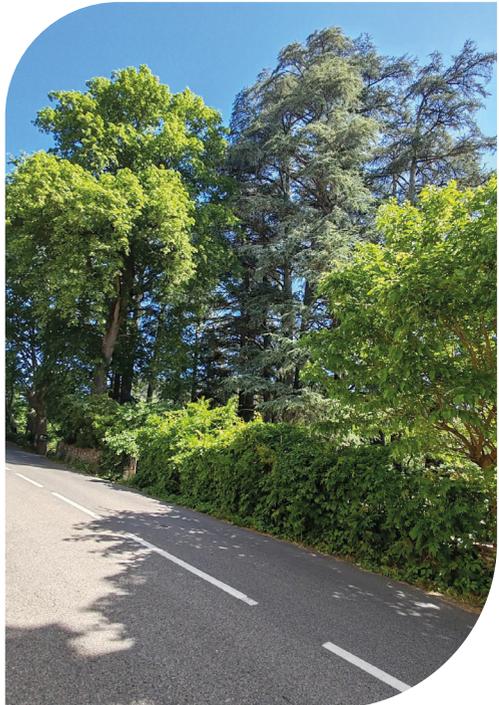
*They will live in the barren wilderness, in an uninhabited salty land. "But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.*

*Jeremiah 17:5-8*

When my son was in primary school, he had a teacher who taught him to respect nature. My wife and I were delighted with this teacher's concern and what he was teaching our child. But it was a concern... This man conveyed his anxiety about the future as much as his love of nature. Our son was very sensitive and became very worried when, for example, showers were too long or when the fruit we ate came from too far away. He helped us change some of our behaviours, but what were his motivations and those of his teacher? Today, our children have grown up and their behaviour is much less «green» than before. Why? Perhaps because they see the extent of the damage and feel that the battle is lost before it has even begun. They are no longer so concerned. Rather, they are discouraged...

For my part, I have always believed that we must above all nurture a sense of wonder at God's creation in both young and old. And I have always believed that this sense of wonder was a good start, before hoping that children (once they have grown up) would understand that creation had things to tell us and teach us.

The prophet Jeremiah invites us to reflect. And to help us decide whether we should place our trust in God or in man, he uses (as prophets often did) a 'natural' comparison! He invites us to look at nature. In fact, he may be



offering us another way of inhabiting creation. It is about taking an interest in creation because through it, God speaks to us!

While some want to frighten us and show us that nature is in danger because of us (which is not untrue) and invite us to protect it (in order to survive), while others refuse to take an interest in creation because there will be a judgement anyway (which is true) and creation will one day be restored, Jeremiah invites us to observe creation because it is like a book written by God.

Indeed, if God spoke to the prophets and inspired humans to reveal His will, God also reveals Himself through all His creation. While there is a special revelation, which not everyone wants to hear and which we call the Bible (and which tells us, in particular, how we can be saved), there is also a general revelation (creation) that tells us who our Saviour is.

Creation is therefore a wonderful book that not only tells us who God is but also urges us to worship Him and trust Him. In this text, the one who discovers God and trusts in Him is ly compared to a tree planted by a stream of water. This tree has nothing to fear, even if drought comes. Its roots are deep and it will stand firm. It will even bear fruit. Those who refuse to see God in creation or who worship creation but do not trust the Creator are compared to a bush in the desert. They will not see happiness come.

This, then, is the real ecological tragedy that we should talk about a little more: not trusting in the God who created everything. It is this pride that transforms God's beautiful creation (and our lives) into a barren and desert place, as the words of the prophet say. And this is the solution to all ecological concerns: trust in the God who created heaven and earth. If we entrust our lives to Him and accept the mission he has given us, then our attitudes and our immediate environment will herald the new world that is coming, day after day!

## PRAYER

*O Creator God,*

*We pray that our friends and loved ones who do not yet know You may discover You through your creation and Your Word (the Bible). We pray, Lord, that this new faith will inspire them to protect creation without being filled with fear in the face of an uncertain future. And we also pray that You will perform this miracle in our lives and in our churches!*

*In the name of Jesus Christ.*

*Amen*

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## What if small was stronger than big ?

*Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."*

*Jesus said, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade."*

*Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.*

*Mark 4:26-34*

«Small is beautiful»: this slogan from the 1980s extolled the virtues of alternative economies.

It could have been uttered by Jesus Himself. For in his parables, it is never greatness or power that prevails, but the invisible, the humble, the discreet. Thus the tiny mustard seed becomes a tree with long branches where birds find refuge.

Faced with modern idolatry of gigantism, some remind us that human action remains a personal adventure. True fraternisation and concrete love can only happen on a small scale.

From seeds to relationships, Jesus values the small, the hidden, the insignificant. Even David, in a moment of doubt, understood that counting his soldiers was a mistake, because true strength comes from God, not from our numbers (2 S 24). Our era, on the contrary, still believes in the idea of «too big to fail»: companies or banks so big that they cannot be allowed to fail.

But recent history belies this illusion. Enron, General Motors, WorldCom, Lehman Brothers... All were giants. All collapsed. Behind these names lie scandals, debts and bankruptcies. Proof that what seems solid can collapse in an instant. The feet of clay of Daniel's colossus (chapter 2) are still relevant today.

The winds of history often sweep away empires. Pagan cults have disappeared, heresies have died out, ideologies come and go. What seemed eternal is not so. The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, arises from nothing: from a sower, a small flock, a gesture of forgiveness. Scientists call this mystery of the small thing that changes everything the «butterfly effect». A flap of wings in Brazil, a tornado in Texas. A mustard seed, and humanity finds shelter. Advocates of sobriety also speak of the «hummingbird effect»: that little bird that, drop by drop, tries to extinguish the fire. «I'm doing my part,» it simply says. Today, this legend inspires those who take action, even modestly, for the environment or solidarity.

While the giants of this world still make a lot of noise as they fall, it is urgent that we open our eyes to what is growing in silence: the seeds of brotherhood, the shoots of love, the impulses of justice.

Jesus invites us to change our perspective: to value what is beginning, rather than what dominates. To believe that a small stone can bring down the greatest statues. And that a gesture, a word, a tiny act can change the world.

## PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,*

*You teach us that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, tiny and inconspicuous, but with unsuspected power. Today, we entrust to You our small gestures, our humble actions, our impulses of brotherhood that seem so fragile in the face of the giants of this world.*

*Help us to believe that every word of peace, every act of solidarity, every offer of forgiveness can become a tree where hope comes to rest. In a world fascinated by power and noise, open our eyes to the beauty of the invisible, to the strength of the unassuming, to the power of love that grows in silence.*

*Give us the patience of the sower, the confidence of those who know that You are at work even in what seems insignificant. May our lives, like this seed, become refuges for those seeking shelter, signs of Your Kingdom to come.*

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To all the member churches of Cevaa, may your commitment be blessed. May your words continue to bear fruit in people's hearts. And may this dynamic of sharing continue to grow, so that the mission may be ever more alive, embodied and united.

This booklet is a living reflection of our community's witness. May it resonate far beyond the Cevaa Community. May it nourish our faith, broaden our horizons, and help us to **Inhabit creation differently.**

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