



The Church of England
in Essex and East London

Diocese of Chelmsford

Creation in Christ

6th September 2026

Readings: Colossians 1. 15- 20; John 1. 1- 14

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The church has now entered the season of Creation tide: the period in the annual church calendar dedicated to God as Creator and Sustainer of **all** life.

The season of Creation is a concept introduced by the late Ecumenical Patriarch, Demetrios I in 1989. Since then, September 1st (chosen because it is first day of the Orthodox ecclesiastical year) has been adopted as the start of Creation tide.

It concludes on the Feast of St Francis (4th October). During this time people of God are called to pay special attention to the responsibility of humanity for the Earth and for all that lives upon it.

A good place to start from when thinking about the doctrine of creation, is to question why did God create? God is self-sufficient, God didn't need to create, but God chose to, in order to be in a relationship with something outside of Godself.

Scripture describes *how* God created- which was bringing forth, out of nothing, creatures that are valuable in themselves and which give God glory.¹ In the Book of Genesis we read that God blessed the creatures, provided for them, and wanted them to flourish. We read how God is pleased with creation, it is good, it is rich and diverse. Human beings were created to work/ to serve the land and take care of it- to guard and conserve.

To protect the land so that they might enjoy peace. Not to dominate, as the Hebrew has so often been misunderstood.

Being at peace with created things and their Creator is to be at peace, it is shalom. However, there was, and there has remained in the Church until recently, the belief that creation was not valuable in itself or in giving glory to God, but only in how it benefited for human-animals.

The church fathers, such as Origen, held that the universe was created for the benefit of humans, while Irenaeus of Lyons similarly stated that '...creation is suited to man; for man was not made for its sake, but creation for the sake of man.'² Philo of Alexandria

¹ David A. S. Fergusson, *The Cosmos and the Creator: an introduction to the Theology of Creation*, p. 19.

² Clough, 2012, p. 12.

and Martin Luther spoke about how humans were only brought forth once when their home had been fully furnished and prepared for them³.

Karl Barth took a similar stance, yet he admitted that this did not hold up when looking closely at Scripture, for example in Psalm 104 human-beings are only mentioned briefly. Barth wrote: 'In the rest of the Psalm he [man] is then completely lost in a host of other creatures. Similarly, in the great speech of God out of the whirlwind in Job 38, there is no mention of him among the other wonderful created figures'.⁴

Barth's Christological approach did not leave space for non-human animals in Jesus' life and purpose.⁵ However, not only does Scripture show that God cares for all that was brought forth out of nothing. But that God remains involved in the world. God's new covenantal promise included all life (Gen. 9. 15; Hosea 2. 18)

The incarnation is a cosmic event for just as 'all thing in heaven and on earth were created' (Colossians 1. 16), so God's plan in Jesus is to 'gather up all things in him [God], things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1. 10). To limit God's salvific work to only one species, limits God power and undermines God's creative purpose. It also fails to address the presence of Jesus in the act of creation and the working of the Trinity, for we understand that Christ was in the beginning with the Father and that 'all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. And what has come into being in him was life...' (John 1. 2-4).

*The theme of this year's season of Creation is **Immersion in Living Water**, drawing on Ezekiel 47: 1- 12, which portrays God's life-giving water flowing from the temple of God. The river grows deeper and deeper restoring barren land, reviving waters, and sustaining flourishing ecosystems. The vision invites human responsibility: recognising ecological damage and embracing interconnectedness.*

[\(https://seasonofcreation.org/\)](https://seasonofcreation.org/)

We who have been born anew in the living water of Baptism, have a duty as part of our Christian calling to strive to safeguard creation that God has entrusted into our hands to care for and protect.

³ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 1. 39 in David Clough, *The Anxiety of the Human Animals: Martin Luther on Non-human Animals and Human Animality* in Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009) p. 42.

⁴ Karl Barth, CD III/1 20 in Clough, 2012, p. 18.

⁵ Clough, 2012, p. 90.

The act of Creation was a divine choice. God cares for the whole world and wants creation to flourish. God has entrusted us with the vocation to protect and conserve what God had brought forth. But we have sinned. Caring for creation is an act of Worship to God, it is to fulfil our identity as image bearers of God but we are destroying this incredible planet and its creatures at breakneck speed, all because of arrogance and greed.

Now more than ever people of faith ought to be asking ourselves: how does our faith express care for creation? How are we joining in with God's will for the world? And what can we do better to ensure that we and our worshipping communities are following better the 5th mark of mission: to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

And if you'd like to hear from leading experts about why creation care is such a pressing issue, come and watch the screening of the National Emergency Briefing here at Chelmsford Cathedral on Friday 11th September from 6pm, followed by a discussion with a very exciting panel. You'd be very welcome.