

Care of Creation Ministry and International Earth Day

International Earth Day will be observed on **Thursday, April 22** (<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2021/>). The scope of work in this ministry is intersectional and covers many topics including climate and environmental literacy, climate restoration technologies, reforestation efforts, regenerative agriculture, equity and environmental justice, citizen science, cleanups, and more.

The Episcopal Church has some excellent resources (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/>). The Episcopal Covenant to Care of Creation provides a useful framework for this ministry based on three major themes.

EPISCOPAL COVENANT TO CARE OF CREATION

In Jesus, God so loved the *whole* world. We follow Jesus, so we love the world God loves. Concerned about the global climate emergency, drawing from a range of approaches for our diverse contexts, we commit to form and restore loving, liberating, life-giving relationships with all of Creation.

LOVING FORMATION

For God's sake, we will grow our love for the Earth and all of life through preaching, teaching, storytelling, and prayer.

LIBERATING ADVOCACY

For God's sake, standing alongside marginalized, vulnerable peoples, we will advocate and act to repair Creation and seek the liberation and flourishing of all people.

LIFE-GIVING CONSERVATION

For God's sake, we will adopt practical ways of reducing our climate impact and living more humbly and gently on Earth as individuals, households, congregations, institutions, and dioceses.

You can learn much more about the Care of Creation Ministry of The Episcopal Church at this link:

https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/CC-creation_care_covenant_action.pdf

Karon Click is serving on our Diocesan Commission for Care of Creation. If you are interested in learning more about this ministry, please contact her.

Terri Creech: Her 365 Day Journey Through the Bible

As she traveled on her path through Christian discovery, Terri Creech had always thought that it would be a beneficial challenge to read the Bible cover to cover, but the task seemed daunting and fraught with complications. As she moved through the past years, this idea lingered until one afternoon, while making her way to her booth in the *Peddlers Mall* in Richmond, she happened upon a book called *Daily Bible*. She seemed drawn to it, or maybe it to her, but at any rate, she picked it up and perused its pages. Inside, she found a guide for a daily reading of the NIV version of the old and new Testaments, in chronological order. It presented daily assignments for



reading the books from Genesis to Revelations. Terri quickly purchased the book that would be instrumental to her growth for the modest price of \$4, a bargain to be sure!

With great enthusiasm, she took up the challenge of reading the entire Bible in a total of 365 days, with assignments of an average of 4 to 8 pages per day. With great determination and discipline, she pressed on through the entire Bible, missing only 2 days of assignments, but then “doubling up” to catch up on the readings that had slipped through her goal.

Using this book, Terri did manage to complete her plan of reading the entire NIV Bible in one year. As she considered her experience, she recalled some of the more difficult books as being the ones that dealt with the genealogy of Christ. These tended to cause her to lose focus, she admits. She had anticipated that the *Songs of Solomon* would be difficult to read through, but found instead, that the Epistles of Paul “wore me out!”

Her favorite book was *Hebrews*. She found that it contained a sincere message of hope. She was particularly touched by the quote from this book “Christ death shows Grace.” Terri enjoyed the flow that this book seems to have, and the way it spoke to the common person. She also recalled the emphasis on obedience in this book: obedience to God and obedience within the family hierarchy. She says that her take away from the book of *Hebrews* is “The destruction of the family is the destruction of us!”

She was “amazed” at the lack of information of the actual life of Christ. She says in the letters of Paul and the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we learn about the 3 years of His ministry, but she would love to learn more of his early years and family life other than what is included in the “Lost Books” which are open to interpretation. As she completed the texts, she kept in mind that the books she was reading were inspired by God, but written by man, and therefore conflicts in story were inevitable, and that it was important to keep perspective in mind.

She later made an effort to cross-reference the King James Version with the material that she had already completed, and to find references to the roles of women in the church. This is still an on-going effort, and the assignments from the book purchased in the *Peddlers Mall* are proving to be helpful, but the task is still a difficult work in progress.

As she looks back over her experience, Terri is convinced that the book that she found that day in the Mall was “put there” for her to find, and that it has helped her to accomplish something that she always wanted to do. It seems that God will leave small gift for us to find, if only we are open enough to look!

Reaching Out with Love

COVID has been hard on everyone, including our children and grandchildren. Like us, they have tried to find ways to keep God in their lives and hearts. My granddaughters have both missed attending church and are so glad we’re having in-person services again.



Michele's granddaughters: Mia on the left and Miranda on the right making art to include in lunches for the homeless that we provide every Friday in downtown Richmond.

A few weeks ago, **Miranda** asked me (out of the blue!) how she could “tell other people about Jesus”. We had a wonderful conversation about ways she could do that and it was obvious she had been giving it a lot of thought. She also recently requested a “real Bible” to supplement her children’s Bible. She then received her great-great grandmother’s Bible.

During the pandemic our ECOS kids have been making little notes and cards to add to the lunches we provided to the homeless and hungry. This provided an activity that helped them develop compassion for those in need. Thank you to **Grace Sears** and **Rachel Cook** for keeping the children engaged during the past year. Thanks also to the parents and grandparents passing on their faiths to the younger generations. —**Michele Gore**

Light up the world with prayer!

For the past five years **Archbishop Welby** has encouraged Christians the world over to pray together from Ascension Day to Pentecost—a total of 11 days. The vigil is known as “Thy Kingdom Come.” The essence of this prayer vigil is for each of us to pray for five persons we know who need to encounter Christ in some way.



If you google “Thy Kingdom Come” or type in thykingdomcome.global, you’ll see a map of the world lit up in many places. The lights represent thousands of people or groups that have registered on the site. They are pledging to join in praying for the coming of Christ’s kingdom where they live, among the people they know.

If you listened to **Bishop Mark’s** latest Fireside Chat, you know that he is counting on the Daughters of the King not only to pray but also to encourage churches across the diocese to take part in Thy Kingdom Come. When the Mary Magdalene Chapter meets on April 20, we’ll be talking about how we want to participate as a chapter. We would love to see members of Our Saviour registered so all of us can be points of light on that map, pledging to pray for five.

Here’s the challenge:

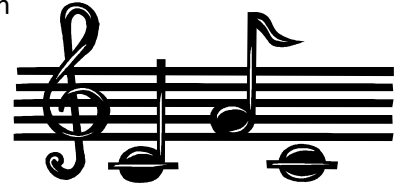
1. Ask God to impress on your heart five people who need to encounter Christ.
2. Plan a time when you could pray for them each day from May 13 (Ascension Day) to Pentecost (May 23).
3. Register at thykingdomcome.global—and look around the site at the new resources.
4. Let **Mother Carol** – or any **Daughter of the King**--know you want to be involved.

May the Holy Spirit work in our own hearts and those we pray for as we celebrate Pentecost this year!

Grace Sears

In Defense of Old Gloomy Easter Hymns

I enjoyed reading **Sandra Plant's** article in the last newsletter about how much she loves singing the happy, joyful Easter hymns—especially those with lots of alleluias because “aren’t we all happy on Easter?” I totally agree! But I must take issue with her stated preference for those hymns as opposed to the old hymns in our Hymnal with words like “terrors, prisons, Satan, and death’s strong bands.” She is not alone. Several decades ago, I was practicing a hymn during the Easter season when a former ECOS priest came out of his office and said something like “It is still Easter. You should be using joyful music.” Too late—the bulletin was ready to go so we sang the questionable hymn the next day after which he apologized to the congregation for singing a gloomy hymn. (The only time he ever questioned one of my hymn choices.)



That hymn is clearly one of Sandra’s old gloomy hymns— “Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands.” (#185 and #186 in *Hymnal 1982*) But is it really gloomy? Probably not to those Christians who first sang it. Only a few years earlier, the Mass had been entirely in Latin and all singing was by a choir. Now worshippers could not only hear the service and scripture readings in German—they could join in the singing! (To get a sense of how that must have felt, imagine the day when we can come to church once again with no masks and can *all* join in singing the hymns and responses!)

The words were written by Martin Luther in 1524 and the melody by Luther and Johann Walther. The melody has its roots in the Easter plainsong chant, “Victimae Paschali laudes” (“Christians, to the Paschal victim,” #182 in our Hymnal) and a German Easter folk song drawn from the same chant, and it shares these roots with the similar melody for “Christ the Lord is risen again” (Hymnal #184). Luther said *his* tune was an improvement over *that* tune. J. S. Bach liked the hymn so much that he wrote a whole cantata based on it—using each of the original seven stanzas as a chorale, surrounded by solos, duets, and instrumental music.

The hymn has been described as depicting the “classic struggle between life and death” in which Christ rose from “death’s strong bands” to bring us “life from heaven.” Verse 2 speaks of “a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended” but in which the victory was won by life. (This dark struggle is spelled out more extensively in several verses omitted from our hymnal.) By our verse 3, the gloom and doom has disappeared and Christ brings “eternal sunshine to the heart” while verse 4 calls on Christians to feast on “the true bread of heaven” which “Christ alone our souls will feed.” And guess what! Despite all the gloom and doom, at the end of every verse you get to sing “ALLELUIA!”

This hymn was not in the *1940 Hymnal* but appeared in the *Hymnal 1982*. Maybe it was included to remind us, when we sing the happy, joyful Easter hymns, of the deeper meaning of Easter. A professor of sacred music wrote in 2013 “We may think of this as very old music nearly 500 years later, but to the early Lutherans it was new and daring. Perhaps we need to recover that vigor and give the hymn a fresh hearing (and singing).” Here are two opportunities for you to hear this hymn sung with vigor—the first at a Lutheran youth conference in 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKx2J4Llcso>) and the second by a virtual choir last Easter season https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g33V-c_sMbc and here are the words so you can sing along <https://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh319.sht> with many joyful alleluias!

Jane Rainey

Sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_lag_in_Todes_Banden,_BWV_4

<https://blog.cph.org/worship/music-of-the-month-christ-jesus-lay-in-deaths-strong-bands>

<https://aleteia.org/2018/04/15/hymn-of-the-week-christ-jesus-lay-in-deaths-strong-bands/>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-deaths-strong-bands-beaten-in-luther-hymn>

Upcoming Birthdays and Celebrations

Birthdays

Leslie Farris April 25th

Jim Farris May 5th

Marilyn McMillan May 7th



Anniversaries

Megan and Charlie Hoffman May 1st

Bob and Lesa Kilbourn May 3rd

James and Emily Anderson May 12th

Parish Calendar



Thursday, April 22: International Earth Day

Saturday, May 1: Vestry Retreat

May 6: National Day of Prayer

Clergy of the Richmond Area Ministerial Association will be praying at noon on the steps of the Court House on Main St.

May 9: Mother's Day

May 10, 11, 12: Rogation Days

May 13-23: Thy Kingdom Come prayer

May 23: Day of Pentecost (Remember to wear red when you come to Church)

June 20: Father's Day

October 30: Diocesan Annual Convention in Berea, Kentucky

Ancient Joke of the Week

A pastor was noted for his lengthy sermons. One Sunday, he noticed that a parishioner got up in the middle of his one of his sermons and didn't return until he completed his discourse. "Where did you go?" the pastor asked the gentleman upon the closing of the service." "I went to get a haircut!" answered the man. "Why didn't you get one before the service started?" asked the pastor. "I didn't need one then!" responded the congregant.

If you have any announcements or notifications that you would like to post, please contact our newsletter editor **Linda Myers**.