



Garden of Peace

Isaiah 32:14-18

PEACE WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2025

Each year, the Season of Creation Ecumenical Steering Committee proposes a theme for the Season of Creation.

This year's theme is "Peace with Creation", inspired by Isaiah 32:14-18:

"For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks. Until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness, and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (NRVUE)

As we go into September we will be celebrating the Season of Creation in our services through sermons and in our liturgy. The resources for this come from the Common Worship 'Time of Creation' resource, ARocha Eco-Church material, the Season of Creation Ecumenical Steering Committee, and Climate Sunday.org (a Churches Together initiative).

Our Sunday schedule is:

7th Sept - Psalm 148.1-13: Keith - Season of Creation (Amanda leading)

14th Sept - Isaiah 32.14-1: Kate - Peace with Creation (Mark leading)

21st Sept - Matt. 19.13-15: Amanda - GFA Award (Amanda leading)

28th Sept - Romans 13.8-14: Graham - Fairtrade /Justice/Equity for all (Chris leading)

5th Oct - John 6.25-35: Amanda - Harvest Sunday (Amanda leading)

Below there are 4 studies picking up the themes of the Season of Creation and based on Isaiah 32.14-18.

These don't link directly to each Sunday in order, but pick up the themes and material we will be preaching on, although I have tried to include at least one question that directly links to Sunday's theme across the 4 September Sundays and 4 studies given below.

Study 1: The Symbol/Logo:

The 2025 Symbol, above, is inspired by Isaiah 32:14-18.

Titled "*Garden of Peace*", it depicts a white dove flying over a tree. The left side of the tree is barren, with roots digging into dry soil, surrounded by an arid, desolate landscape. In contrast, the right side of the tree is lush and green, standing amidst a flourishing landscape. The dove, carrying an olive branch in its beak, flies toward the right—symbolizing peace as a transition from a war-torn, overexploited land to one that is fertile, thriving, and hospitable.

Let us remember that humanity was originally called to tend a garden. Through this year's Season of Creation, we will reflect on the connection between caring for creation and fostering peace. The white dove with an olive branch is a globally recognized symbol of peace. In the story of Noah, it also signifies new life after destruction.

Note: This logo is not meant to diminish the unique value of desert ecosystems and their creatures, which are also part of God's creation. Furthermore, the desert holds a significant role in the Bible.

Study Questions 1:

What do you think of the logo? Do you like it?

Which side of it do you feel you stand in your own life?

Which side of it do you think we stand as a nation?

Which side of it do you think we stand as a global community?

What transitions or journeys need to be made for us to stand, as individuals, as a nation and globally, on the right hand side?

What does this logo say about a desert ecosystem? What does the Bible say about a desert ecosystem?

Read Psalm 148.1-13 together.

Study 2: War on Creation

"The palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and watchtower will become dens forever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks" (Isaiah 32:14).

The prophet Isaiah portrays a desolate Creation, devoid of peace due to injustice and the broken relationship between God and humankind. Devastated cities and wastelands reflect the destructive impact that human activities can have on Earth. Animals readily move in and claim parts of what was once an exclusively human habitat, as if human settlement had deprived them of sufficient space. While the joy of a pasture for animals (Isaiah 32:14) is undoubtedly a good thing in itself, it comes at the cost of human displacement due to conflict.

Though God's plan for Creation is rooted in justice and peace, human sin disrupts this, leaving Creation in ruin—from wealthy palaces to poor farmlands, forests, and oceans. Isaiah vividly describes the results of human estrangement from Creation. Moreover, the abandoned and ruined watchtower and palace (or citadel, in some translations) suggest that warfare is ultimately frustrated by God.

Peace is more than just the absence of war. In the Hebrew Bible, shalom represents a far deeper concept—one that extends beyond the absence of conflict to the full restoration of broken relationships, as illustrated in Isaiah's vision. This restoration encompasses our relationship with God, ourselves, the human family, and the rest of Creation.

Throughout history, many human activities have contributed to the destruction of Creation. Yet today, more than ever, some human activities take the form of a war against Creation. Our impact has expanded from local to global, manifesting in unsustainable lifestyles, excessive consumption, lasting pollution, and a throwaway culture.

Some hold greater responsibility for this crisis—elite consumption, exploitative business models, and economic theories prioritizing profit over sustainability. Pollution, health crises, deforestation, and mining in conflict zones worsen the situation.

Last year's UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Cali, Colombia, aptly themed "Peace with Nature," highlighted the urgency of these issues.

Saint Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures* calls the Earth our sister and mother. How can Mother Earth nurture us if we fail to contemplate, learn from, and love her? Ignoring our interconnectedness undermines this vital relationship.

Study Questions 2:

What is peace or shalom? Where and how do these concepts interconnect and overlap?

Does creation itself sin? How does human sin affect creation?

Did Jesus die just for humankind, or for all creation?

What will happen to creation at the end of time?

How can Mother Earth nurture us if we fail to contemplate, learn from, and love her?

How do you connect with and steward the natural world?

What more could you do/How could you shrink your Carbon footprint?

See this link on Carbon Footprints and an easy way of assessing yours:

<https://footprint.wwf.org.uk>

Study 3: Our Hope - Creation Will Find Peace When Justice Is Restored:

"Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field" (Isaiah 32:16).

There is hope for a peaceful Earth.

Biblically, hope is active—it involves prayer, action, and reconciling with Creation and the Creator through repentance (metanoia) and solidarity.

Isaiah 32:14-18 envisions a peaceful Creation where God's people live only when justice is achieved.

Righteousness leads to peace and restores the land's fertility: "The effect of righteousness will be peace; and the result of righteousness, quietness, and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:14-18).

Creation is God's sacred gift, entrusted to our care. Christians are called to protect and nurture Creation in peace, working in partnership with others and passing this responsibility on to future generations. Its deep interconnectedness makes peace both essential and fragile.

Pope Francis challenged us all, asking: "What is the goal of our work? What need does the Earth have of us? Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is up to us" (*Laudato Si'*, 160).

Churches engage globally in climate, agriculture, and biodiversity efforts, grounded in theology and a prophetic call for repentance and justice. Only through reconciliation with and genuine justice for all living beings will Creation find peace, fulfilling Isaiah's vision (32:14-18).

Study Questions 3:

What is Hope?

What would a peaceful Earth look like?

How can you be part of making that happen?

What need does the Earth have of you?

Why would you join in with this?

What does it mean to be a 'Good Steward' of the created world God set us into (Gen 1)?

What do we do as a church to steward the Earth?

What more can we do together as a church?

Is partnership with others in our community, in our deanery and in our lives important in good stewardship?

Study 4: A Call to Action - "The Effect of Justice Will Be Peace":

God calls us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

We are called to live in peace, worship the Creator, and work for a just and sustainable community that aligns with God's eternal plans. As co-workers with the Creator, we must embody peace with all of Creation.

- "My people shall abide in a peaceful habitation" (v18). God's peace is unconditional, rooted in justice and righteousness for all people and Creation. Peace cannot exist for only a few.
- "The fruitful field is deemed a forest" (v18). God declared all Creation "good." Despite the damage caused by sin (Genesis 3:17-19), biodiversity reflects generosity and abundance. Through Christ, God became human, calling us to learn from, respect, and protect Creation.
- "The populous city will be deserted" (v14). Let us pray and respond to the cries of communities losing land and livelihoods due to war, climate change, or land grabbing, and those burdened by unsustainable practices or debt.
- "Until a spirit from on high is poured upon us" (v15). The Spirit guides us to ecological conversion and a deeper understanding of our cosmic family. We must change our mindsets, embrace righteousness, and teach these values to future generations. The Spirit-inspired outcome must be something greater and truly transformative—we are not merely seeking to restore the conditions that led to conflict in the first place.
- Peace with Creation requires proactive steps. Jesus taught repentance and restorative justice. We must repair broken relationships: between humans and Earth, humans and other creatures, and humans and God.
- "The effect of righteousness will be peace" (v17). While the challenges may seem overwhelming, Christ reminds us, "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Hope fuels action; through prayer, discernment, and commitment, we can create a foundation for change.
- God's peace emerges when we work for justice, solidarity, reconciliation, and harmony with Creation. Transformation takes patience, understanding, and trust.
- Action can include advocacy, sustainability projects, cleaning campaigns, or education to show that caring for Creation is central to our faith. We must collaborate and build on diversity to achieve peace.
- "The wilderness will become a fruitful field" (v15). Peace processes, such as reforestation, river cleaning, or building wells, can unite even divided groups.

Study Questions 4:

Discuss the Bullet Points above and the scripture they each refer to.

How does The Fairtrade movement bring about Hope and Peace?

Do you want to change how you live and understand people and creation so that we can be at peace with Creation?

What 1 thing will you change about your lifestyle, habits or finances that will help bring about peace?

Can your small group hold you accountable to that decision?

How will you do that for each other?

A Prayer of Commitment to say together:

May the Spirit be poured upon us so we can work together for peace with Creation. Amen.