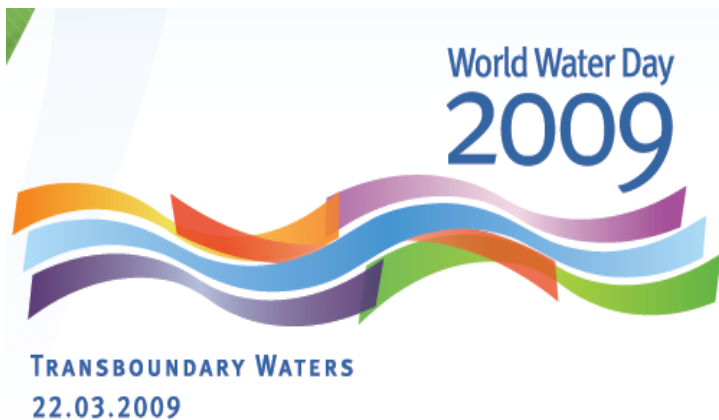


# “For there is no food and no water”

## Worship Resources

### Prepared for World Water Day 22 March, 2009



#### Introduction

With growing pressures on water sources it is important to take time to remind ourselves and each other that water is a gift from God. Water is essential to life - something recognized by the early Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness, grumbling against Moses and even God when no water was to be found. The need to find an adequate water was essential to their survival just as it is today for the 1.1 billion people (or roughly 20% one in eight people) who do not have access to sufficient, safe and clean drinking water. Two thousand years later the distribution of water and the need for vastly improved global sanitation remain key barriers to development and the improvement of life.

The United Nations observes World Water Day on March 22 and this year is focusing on “Shared Waters - Shared Opportunities”. The theme explores the rivers and lakes that are shared by two or more countries. Nearly 40 per cent of the world’s population depends on trans-boundary water sources. Underneath the surface of the earth there are over 270 known trans-boundary aquifers. Many countries are facing increasing scarcity of water and unless greater efforts are made these trans-boundary waterways could spark greater conflict. The UN estimates that by 2025, 1 800 million people will be living in countries and regions facing absolute water scarcity and two-thirds of the world’s population could be living under stressed conditions.

Climate change is also having an effect on water resources. Rainfall patterns are changing as the temperature rises and there are increasing reports of melting glaciers and ice fields. For the poorest people the repercussions are immense. Countries like Tuvalu will be submerged, those living near water in Bangladesh will face more frequent flooding and the incidence of malaria and water-borne diseases is likely to spread. Other parts of the world will face increasing drought and the spread of desertification. Meanwhile the world continues to damage its sources of fresh water. Every day 2 million tons of human waste end up in water course and in developing countries 70 per cent of industrial waste is dumped untreated, polluting usable water. Since 1900, half of the world’s wetlands, the principal source of renewable freshwater have been lost.

While governments have been focusing on the global economic crisis, the tremendous danger to the global environment has fallen from focus. The need for more effective action by governments and global organisations is becoming increasingly urgent. The lack of clean, safe water and good sanitation for such a large percentage of the world’s population needs greater attention and renewed action. In Aotearoa New Zealand water management is becoming increasingly fraught and while not sharing waterways with a neighbouring country the likelihood of increased tensions is high.

Use this worship opportunity to focus your prayers and actions on helping to ensure more people have the water that they need.





New well in Darfur Photo credit: P Jeffrey/ Act-Intl

### Opening Prayer

L: God of wave and water

R: We greet you this morning

L: God of sun and rain

R: We greet you this morning.

L: God of ocean and lake

R: We greet you this morning

L: You are the one who offers us life in abundance and hope when we are drained of energy.

R: We worship and praise you – the God who cares for the whole of Creation.

### Prayer of Approach

From the depths of the ocean to the heights of the heavens

From the wind that blows from the east, the west, the north and the south

From the beginning of time to the life eternal

We give you thanks for your great love for this earth

For all those who have water and who share it with others

For all those who need food and water each day.

For all those who depend on the sun and the rain

We pray your blessing upon them and upon earth

In the midst of this circle that enfolds all that is alive

In the midst of this community that seeks to follow you

In the midst of this world where some have too much and most not enough

We pray for your wisdom to help us live more justly.

We pray in the name of the One who gives life to all.

Amen

Curing a newly built water tank with banana leaves in Uganda. CWS/ J Gould

### Children's Talk

Come with a backpack filled with supplies and a bottle of water. Begin by reminding the group of the Lenten journey – the time in the church year when the church remembers the last weeks of Jesus' life as he begins his journey towards Jerusalem.

Act the part of someone who has been walking for a long time. You might like to take the children for a walk around the church as you talk about how in Jesus' time people mostly travelled by foot. During the season of Lent some people take the opportunity to focus the attention on the life of Jesus by making pilgrimages or walking a long distance. In the South Island churches and friends have been walking relay style from Stewart Island up the main highway through Lent in the Walk for the Planet. Along the way lots of people have shared stories and worship in an effort to focus new energy for healing the planet. Like you they want to make the world better. If you were walking such a long way (you may need to suggest a more familiar place to walk to, for example Wanganui to Wellington if the South Island is unfamiliar), what do you think you would pack? As they suggest supplies that you happen to have pull them out or otherwise say something like, 'I had never thought of that. What a good idea.'

At the point that someone mentions water, produce your water bottle with an extra flourish and say, 'I am glad you remembered water. I would never make it without something to drink especially when today is World Water Day.' Take a sip and say, "Boy did I need that – it's a pity that one in eight people have enough clean water to drink." If you had eight children you could count this out and then ask them to describe what it feels like to be very thirsty or sick because you drank unclean water. If you have time you might like to share some water to drink in a celebratory manner. *Conclude with a short prayer:*

Thanks God for the water we can drink. We pray for those who do not have any and for those made sick because the water they drink is unclean. Heal them and quench their thirst. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen



## Bible Readings

### *Numbers 21:4-9*

When King Arad of the Canaanites heard that Aaron had died (Num 20:22-29) he thought that perhaps he might beat them so he attacked (v1). The Canaanites were defeated and the Israelites marched on, avoiding the possibility of war with the unwelcoming Edomites (v4). The situation was precarious and the travel exhausting. It is understandable that without food and water the people complained bitterly (v4). Their future depended on their faith in God but in their desperation their complaints are understandable. This is the last of the complaints stories and this time their complaints are not just with Moses but with God. In response the text says God sent "poisonous serpents" (v6). The serpents refer back to the story of Adam and Eve, reminding the people of the danger of sinning by word of mouth. There are poisonous snakes in the region and many at the time died from their bites. In response to the people's suffering and under instruction from God Moses built a bronze serpent. If the people looked upon the serpent they lived. The belief in the serpent as a means of healing was found in other places in the ancient world.

### *Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22*

This is a psalm of praise and exhortation to a God who heals and saves (v 19-22). In the world of the ancient Hebrews sinfulness was seen as a cause of sickness.

### *Ephesians 2:1-10*

Ephesians is a book expressing God's ordering of the entire cosmos and the place of all believers (not differentiating between Jews and Gentiles as Paul does in his writings) within it. Not written to a specific community it does however seem to suggest that the emergent church is threatened by division. It contrasts heaven and earth and the age that is with the age to come. This passage speaks of the immensity of God's grace that is given by faith no matter how great our transgressions (v5) or as the result of works (v9). In verse 10 the writer clearly states that believers are 'created in Christ Jesus for good works'.

### *John 3:14-21*

This is a classic text which means sometimes we have to work harder to find something new. It is an excerpt from the longer dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus and begins with reference to Moses raising the serpent in the wilderness (v 14). In the same way Jesus is to be lifted up in order that the world might be saved. Jesus' presence in the world is a measure of God's great love for the world (v17). Faith is what gives eternal life and as Jesus offered Nicodemus the opportunity to become part of the Jesus community without judgment, we need to offer similar hospitality. The passage ends with Jesus declaring the need for action or deeds as a demonstration of the believer's allegiance to the light. It is not sufficient to accept God's grace without action.

## Prayer for Others

We pray for the waters of the world:  
The waters that are shrinking because we are using too much,  
The waters that are rising because carbon emissions are too high  
The waters that connect us to each other: rivers, oceans and streams.  
R: God of Creation help us to live more justly

We pray for the people who live on the edges of the water:  
People threatened by rising tides and whose homes have been washed away by rivers,  
People who have no clean water and lack adequate sanitation  
People who live with the threat of malaria and water borne disease.  
R: God of Creation help us to live more justly

We pray for those people with no water:  
People whose land is barren and dry through the lack of rain  
People who have been forced to search for a new home because of drought and conflict  
People who no longer have a access to the water they need to grow crops and food.  
R: God of Creation help us to live more justly

We pray for governments, councils and corporations:  
Who make the rules and have power to make change  
Help them make wise decisions that protect the planet for the future and ensure that all people have the water they need to live.  
R: God of Creation help us to live more justly

We pray in the name of the One who gives life in abundance,  
who provides water for the thirsty and food for the hungry.  
The One who loves the world without condemnation.

In His name we pray  
Amen

## Closing Prayer

L: Great God of the Cosmos  
The whole creation waits with longing for your salvation  
We all need food to eat and water to drink.  
R: We go out, strengthened by your word and your community  
To make real our love for you and this planet, our home.  
We go in your name.  
Amen



## Useful Information

- Nearly 1.1 billion people (roughly 20% of the world's population) lack access to safe drinking water.
- The lack of clean, safe drinking water is estimated to kill almost 4 500 children per day.
- Of the 2.2 million deaths from unsafe drinking water in 2004, 90% were children under five years.
- A third of the earth's population lives in "water stressed" countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- 2.6 billion (40% of the world's population) lack access to good sanitation.
- Many women and young girls in rural Sub-Saharan Africa and other places trek as much as six miles a day to collect water for their families.

(Source: <http://www.worldwaterday.net/index.cfm?objectid=E38C787B-F1F6-6035-B9D8092D300B7548>)



Christian World Service is supporting the South Island initiated Walk for the Planet as the launch of the new campaign on climate change. It started on Ash Wednesday and will conclude on the steps of parliament on Easter Sunday at 4:30 pm followed by a service at 5pm in St Paul's Cathedral, Wellington. For those unable to participate in the main walk, walk in your own community and find out about local initiatives to restore the land. You might also like to write your prayers and concerns to send in to CWS to collate in the final report. On line you can find the link at: <http://www.cws.org.nz/> or you can draw a giant footprint on which your congregation can write messages. Send the giant footprint to CWS by Easter for use at parliament or the end of April for inclusion in the message to politicians.

For further information check out:  
<http://www.walk4theplanet.org.nz/>

## Take Action

Write to politicians, especially Murray McCully the Minister of Foreign Affairs, asking for an increase in New Zealand's aid budget to help meet the needs of people without adequate water and sanitation. You might also mention the importance of NZAID, the government body responsible for the overseas development assistance programme is with a primary focus on poverty elimination. More information is available here: <http://www.cws.org.nz/take-action/aid>

Find out about water in your local community. There are many local groups concerned about the management throughout the country. For example: [www.righttowater.org.nz](http://www.righttowater.org.nz) In addition you might like to talk to your local council.

Do an energy audit of your church: check lightbulbs, recycling, insulation etc. Most churches have some information available on these issues. Also try many of the links at: <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/resources.htm>

Join the CWS climate change campaign. Information will be sent two or three times a year. Please sign on by writing to: [gillian.southey@cws.org.nz](mailto:gillian.southey@cws.org.nz)

Watch the CWS documentary, *Water, who owns it* available in VHS and DVD format. This highlights the struggle for poor people seeking to secure a safe and adequate water supply in Sri Lanka. It is available from [cws@cws.org.nz](mailto:cws@cws.org.nz)

Raise funds for one of CWS's partners working to improve people's access to water like Monlar in Sri Lanka, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees in Palestine/Israel or the Darfur Emergency Appeal.



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