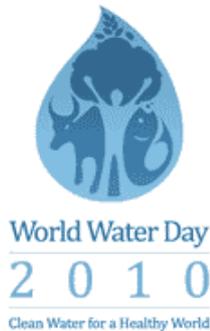


# “Give drink to my chosen people” Isaiah 43:20c

## World Water Day Worship Resources

### 22 March, 2010



Water gives life. From the first drops of water that pool together then tumble through the many waterways that link the globe, it sustains the planet like the blood that keeps us alive. We depend on this constantly renewing source to sustain the ecosystems that provide the food and sustenance we need. However, without adequate protection these sources of water are no longer sufficient for demand. In the past 50 years humans have polluted these life sources in an unprecedented manner. Where once flowing stream fed pristine rivers and crystal clear lakes, now they are more likely to carry disease and pollutants or even dry up altogether.

The seriousness of the damage to the water supply compounded by the increasing demands for more water are major challenges to us all. Increased production, industrial processes, mining and agriculture combined with the greater pressure from a growing population add daily to this stress. Addressing issues surrounding global water supply and sanitation is an urgent matter especially when so many people suffer from the consequences of drinking unclean water and using unhygienic toilets. Together they are key causes of ill health and increased poverty as those with the least struggle to pay for treatment. Global efforts by the United Nations to increase access to sustainable, safe drinking water are improving the situation for some but similar efforts to improve sanitation are failing. Increased political pressure is needed for significant progress in ensuring this most basic human right.

Improving water quality is cheaper than cleaning up after damaging contamination and yet UN agencies report that there are not the resources to monitor and protect waterways. Industry and governments are failing to include sufficient costs of long term environmental use into their economic equations and are more likely to take a cheap short term view. For change to happen there needs to be a major shift in economic thinking to take greater account of the harmful effects of damage to the environment and its consequences for the well being of people and the planet. Many of CWS's partners are working in their local communities knowing that the management of the environment and treatment of poor people are closely linked.

These World Water Day worship resources seek to challenge all of us to take greater responsibility for our waterways and to ensure that all people everywhere have clean water and adequate sanitation, with a focus on the challenging aftermath of Haiti's earthquakes.

#### **About World Water Day**

World Water Day was first designated by the United Nations in 1992. This year's theme is Clean Water for a Healthy World.



*Caitland Dirocher, aged 8 carries water back to her family's tent in the Martissant district of Port au Prince, Haiti Photo: P Jeffrey/ ACT*



*Anna Zizi pulled out of the collapsed house of the priest by the Cathedral of Our Lady of Assumption, one week after the quake. Photo: P Jeffrey/ACT*

### **Opening Prayer**

Creator God, Come among us, open us to your presence.

*We come seeking new life, for energy that brings hope to the world.*

### **Time with Children**

Equipment: Bottle or jug of water and a bowl, preferably wide and clear.

If you are using a PowerPoint show the picture of Caitland from Haiti. Ask if any one has felt an earthquake and if so how did it feel. For younger children you might like to ask them to mime the shaking. Continue: when the ground shakes so much lots of things break. Buildings fall down, people get hurt and water pipes break. For many people that means they don't have clean water to drink and so need extra help. Some of you may have heard about the earthquake in Haiti.

Introduce Caitland aged 8 who is carrying water back to the tent where her family is living. Groups like Christian World Service are helping her family get the water to help them survive. Caitland lives a long way away but we can still help her. We can send money and pray for her and other children who do not have water.

Invite them to join in a water prayer. You might like to mention how joining our prayers is like drops of water together. Ask each child to take turns at pouring in some water. Older children may like to offer their own prayers. After each child pours some water invite the congregation to say "We pray for the people of Haiti that they might have water and new hope."

### **Prayer for Others**

#### **Sustaining God**

We turn to you in prayer, mindful of the world in which we live where too many people lack the most basic source of life - clean water. This is your world, created with water enough to meet every person's need, young and old, male and female, rich and poor.

*We pray for water for all God's people.*

#### **Life giving God**

We pray for the people of Haiti. Before the earthquake so many of them struggled to find the means to survive but now it is so much harder. They are your people and in need of your care. Help us to remember them as they rebuild their lives. May they know that like all people of this earth, you care for them. Give strength to all those seeking to bring new life to this broken land and hope for a just future.

*We pray for water for all God's people.*

#### **Dreaming God**

We pray for all those who have the power to make life-giving decisions, especially those who are responsible for managing and maintaining water systems, for community groups and CWS partners seeking to restore the environment and the lives of poor people, and those who can make policies to protect the future of all people. May they find just solutions that ensure that every human being has clean water and adequate toilets.

*We pray for water for all God's people.*

In the name of the Christ who always brings life and hope, we pray together.

Amen



*Woman gets her hair done in makeshift shelter, Haiti. Photo: P Jeffrey/ ACT*

## Bible Readings

### *Isaiah 43:16-21*

For the wandering Israelites in the desert, the discovery of water was a cause of celebration and a reminder of God's concern for them. Stuck in captivity in Babylon under Chaldean rule, Isaiah uses the powerful symbol of water to remind the exiles of their heritage and tradition, and the practical nature of God's concern for them. Water to drink is a cause for celebration and thanks - 'so that they might declare my praise' (v21b). Second Isaiah reminded the exiles of how Yahweh laid down chariots, horses, armies and warriors (v16-17) to make a pathway for them. He shows in this text how water can bring life and death. Reaffirming these traditions where access to water was more precarious than it is for many of us, he reminds us of our collective responsibility 'to give water to my chosen people'. In a Christian context we can only affirm that water is for all.

### *Psalms 126*

The singers of this Psalm are dreaming of the time when God was good to them, even as they face present troubles. Likening their position to the dry beds in the Negeb desert, they ask for replenishment. In Negeb the rain comes as a torrent. Even as they plant seeds in sadness, they dream of the future when they will celebrate the harvest with shouts of joy.

### *Philippians 3:4b-14*

Paul sets out clearly his Jewish training and genealogy as a member of Israel's highest aristocracy. As a descendant of Benjamin, the only son of Rachel and Jacob to be born in the promised land, he has impeccable credentials. Yet he counts them as rubbish (v 8) compared with the new identity he has found in following Jesus. In positioning himself as superior to any opponents, he implored the church of Philippi to follow only the 'righteousness from God based on faith'. For Paul what he has known in the past, is nothing compared with what he has found from sharing Christ's suffering and hope of resurrection. His expectation of Christ's coming kingdom is almost palpable as he testifies to his intimate knowledge of Christ. It is Christ who sustains him in all that he does.

*Workers unroll piping to be used for water supply.  
Photo: P Jeffrey/ACT*



*Cleaning teeth in a camp in Port au Prince, Haiti's capital. Photo: P Jeffrey/ACT*

### *John 12:1-8*

This story is a beautiful interlude on Jesus' penultimate journey to Jerusalem. Plans were being made to capture Jesus (11:56 -7). In 12:9 -12 John records that the authorities were also planning to kill Lazarus who played a key role in recruiting followers to the Jesus movement. In the face of death Jesus shares a meal with his core supporters. Martha serves the food, Lazarus and the disciples eat with Jesus but the starring role goes to Mary. It is Mary who against normal convention lets down her hair, and anoints Jesus' feet using a pound (340 grams in modern weights) of expensive nard to perfume the whole gathering. Symbolically wiping away the dirt of the road, her act also shows that Jesus is about to take transformative action. Foot washing is a practical expression used by Christians to demonstrate humility and their role of service to others.

Judas as the keeper of the group's money raises the voice of discord into the gathering. He questions all present who have shared together, suggesting that this money could have been better spent meeting the needs of the poor (v 5). Jesus' response affirms the community enriching activity of Mary noting that 'You always have the poor with you' (v 8). In concluding the story in this way, John is also suggesting that the place of Christians is with the poor. This remains a challenge.



## Closing Prayer

God of Justice

Who cares for the earth and every person who has lived, is living and will live.

We give thanks for this time together,  
A time to re-member the world which we share.

A time to commit ourselves to new action.  
A time to join with all those seeking to bring hope into our world.

*We go in your name, with your strength and your love.*



Child washes laundry. Photo: P Jeffrey/ ACT

## Facts about Water

- More than 1.5 million children die from waterborne diseases each year.
- 1.1 billion people lack access to an improved water supply.
- Over 2.5 billion people lack adequate sanitation.
- Everyday 2 million tons of sewerage and other effluents drain into the world's waters.
- In developing countries over 90% of raw sewerage and 70% of untreated industrial waste end up in surface waters.
- For every \$1 invested in safe water the UN says a \$3-34 return can be expected.

## Take Action

Write to politicians, especially Murray McCully the Minister of Foreign Affairs, asking for an increase in New Zealand's aid budget for water and sanitation. More information is available here: <http://www.cws.org.nz/take-action/aid>

In October 2009 cabinet decided to introduce new legislation relating to the Local Government Act, allowing private companies involvement in the water system. For more information on a local campaign and links to overseas examples see: [www.righttowater.org.nz](http://www.righttowater.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.

Raise funds for the Haiti Appeal. Water and latrines are key components of the relief effort of ACT Alliance of which CWS is a member. 212,000 died in the quake with more than 300,000 injured. Some 1.2 million people forced from their homes. ACT partners are delivering much needed supplies and are assisting some 150,000 people to survive. Clean water is a core component of any relief effort. Within ten days one ACT member had set up a water purification system that supplies 10,000 people. New systems are being built to help meet this most vital need. As part of your celebrations you might like to invite contributions to the Haiti Appeal or even organise a special event to raise funds so that Haitians can rebuild their communities for themselves For more information see: <http://www.cws.org.nz/what-can-i-do/emergencies/haiti-earthquake>

## Further information and Resources

*World Water Day* photos, information and stories from the UN: <http://www.worldwaterday2010.info/>

*Lenten resource:* Seven Weeks for Water – Holy Water. A new reflection on water justice will be posted each week. Further worship resources, including an order of communion for Maundy Thursday at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home/resources-and-links/seven-weeks-for-water.html>



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