**‘Elements of Worship’** **for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020**

Resources written and compiled by Christine Jack

**Introduction**

Reflections for Lent 2020: Lent – in relationship with ourselves, with God, with others, the earth and the rest of the life community as a central focus.

Lent is traditionally a six-week period when, as churches and Christians, we are reminded of the foundations of our discipleship, of how we are called to live and to love in today’s world. Lent itself comes before Easter, when we celebrate the resurrection life, working to bring life and hope into many situations and reflect on the actions we can take ourselves.

We are living in a world, where we in the West have a freedom to make choices; we prize our individual liberty often asserting that we are free to do what we want as long as this does not cause harm to others.

Why does our reflection this Lent begin with the theme of ‘freedom of choice’? Because in the biblical texts for the first Sunday in Lent, choices are being made. In the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and in the story of Jesus’ temptations in the desert, each are being asked to make choices which will have consequences. From the very beginning, we are both individuals with a personal liberty and a part of wider environmental and societal context, part of creation, part of both society and the natural world. As people of faith we are part of the people of God, and draw on the foundations of this faith which shape our lives as rational, conscious, generous people.

Genesis 1-3 risks being read either in isolation from the rest of the Bible or alternatively in a too dominant role. This can make our understanding of creation backward-looking if not static. Looking back to ‘what we might have been’ if we had made different choices; the ideal human being defined at the very beginning of the story. The problem is that if we define human nature and the image of God at the act of origination, our vision can become narrow. A major issue in current biblical thought is that these opening chapters are part of a broader dynamic of the faith of Israel; a living faith which actually is in continuing encounter with God. We need to remind ourselves that the theology of creation is distributed more widely, more extensively, through the Hebrew Scriptures; into the Wisdom literature and the Psalms, now considered to be valuable readings of creation and creatureliness.

We need to widen our perspective to a broader context of God’s interaction with the world. Our neglect of the doctrine of creation in our churches needs to change as we develop our understanding of salvation and creation and of how salvation and creation are held together.

How we might best do this will unfold as develop our themes for the Lenten programme. Here we will move from the ‘static human-centred individualism’ of the past 500 years, to a ‘resource-centred global relationship’ context in the new era of the 21st century.

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**‘Elements of Worship’** for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020

**Week One – Saying Yes to Life**

**Chapter One: Let there be light (Genesis 1.1-5)**

**Collect / Gathering**

Almighty God

You created the heavens and the earth

And all that is in them

Help us to live sustainably with creation

Mindful of the needs of others

And of future generations;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Who came that we may have life in all its fullness.

Amen.

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks for the beauty of God’s goodness and glory;

And for the gift of light which gives life to the world.

For the sun, moon and stars of light,

For all creatures which glow in luminescence

For the planetary being which shine in the night sky

And the auroras of dawn.

We give thanks for the golden thread of energy

which weaves cosmically through our global world

and for those who harness the power of water, wind and waves

which power our light and electricity.

**Lament / Confession**

We lament our careless use of fossil fuels which have caused

Global toxification and human and cultural degradation.

We confess our lack of awareness

And slow acceptance of facts,

Our denial of the work of scientists in the service of humankind.

We lament the global warming and rising sea levels

Which threaten island nations and vulnerable people and habitats.

We confess our negligence of the commandments to love the Lord our God

And to love our neighbour as ourselves.

**Absolution / Forgiveness**

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;

the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;

the Lord accept your prayers, and absolve you from your offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

**Preaching / Sermons: Book review:**

Ruth Valerio’s book is an excellent resource for Lenten groups and individuals as it explores the issues so much at the top of our agendas today. As people made in the image of God, we are entrusted to look after creation and all he has made. Dr. Ruth Valerio draws on the Days of Creation (Genesis 1) as she relates the themes of light, water, land, the seasons, other creatures, humankind, Sabbath rest and Resurrection hope to issues of environmental, ethical and social concern. *Saying Yes to Life* looks at the issues that are having an impact on millions of lives around the world. Each chapter is divided into sections giving both biblical and factual information and holding the two together with many examples from around the world to give this a really global focus. She gently draws us back to our Lenten purpose with suggestions of ways in which we can learn more, become informed, and take action in our own lives. Further, we can use our voices to push governments and businesses to make the large scale transformational changes that are needed. Lastly, she suggests, we can give, as individuals and in our churches – money and support to organisations working both to help communities to adapt to climate breakdown and mitigate further changes.

*‘Ruth Valerio’s book is perfect for individuals and groups to think, reflect, pray and be challenged together’* Justin Welby, from the Foreword.

**Intercessions**

Each chapter in Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ concludes with a prayer which essentially also summarises the content of that chapter. This prayer could be used and adapted if necessary.

**Discipleship and action**

We need to use our voices – raise our voices not the sea level – and alert governments and businesses as well as take action in our own lives. Let’s encourage our churches to include the wellbeing of all creation in our worship, our prayers, our hymns and sings; and let’s give to environmental charitable organisations as well as our usual pastoral concerns.

**Blessing and Dismissal**

We look forward with hope as we walk with each generation

Pointing to Christ’s resurrection and to the end of the age

When a restored creation will be transfigured by his redeeming light.

Go in strong and growing faith. Trust in the tenderness of Christ to heal a bruised and broken world.

**Thanks be to God.**

Go in eager and refreshing hope. Work with Christ risen from the dead, to fulfil the promise of a new creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us go in peace, to treasure and to tend the world God made and loves.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**



**‘Elements of Worship’** for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020

**Week Two – Saying Yes to Life**

**Chapter Two: Let the waters be separated (Genesis 1.6-8)**

**Collect / Gathering**

Lord God,

In the imagery of water you reveal the attributes of your Spirit.

In the crossing of the Jordan, we remember your life-giving power,

Cleansing, washing and liberating us in our baptism;

Deepen in us a due respect for this resource

That we may fully drink of the gift of your life-giving Spirit

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks for the gift of fresh water

For the ponds, streams, rivers and canals

Mangrove swamps and tidal channels,

and the creatures which depend on them;

For the central role of rain and

The water cycle which refreshes the earth,

And powers eco-systems and the web of life,

For my kitchen tap

And God’s bounteous provision.

**Lament / Confession**

We lament the water stress which results

In poor water quality, in degradation and pollution

We confess the water crisis which cause disease and malnutrition,

Drought and thirst,

In many parts of the world;

We lament our forgetfulness of our neighbours

And the life and blessing of the God of all the earth.

**Absolution / Forgiveness**

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;

the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;

the Lord accept your prayers, and absolve you from your offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

**Sermon / Discipleship and Action**

Book review – see Chapter 1

**Discipleship and Action**

We will think about water today, not take it for granted, but be ‘inspired ‘ by it, and become more aware of the problems it faces and the part we can play in looking after it.

**Intercession**

Each chapter in Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ concludes with a prayer which essentially also summarises the content of that chapter. This prayer could be used and adapted if necessary.

**Blessing / Dismissal**

We look forward with hope as we walk with each generation

Pointing to Christ’s resurrection and to the end of the age

When a restored creation will see waterways and rivers overflowing with living water.

Go in strong and growing faith. Trust in the tenderness of Christ to heal a bruised and broken world.

**Thanks be to God.**

Go in eager and refreshing hope. Work with Christ risen from the dead, to fulfil the promise of a new creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us go in peace, to treasure and to tend the world God made and loves.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**



**‘Elements of Worship’** for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020

**Week Three – Saying Yes to Life**

**Chapter Three: Let the land produce vegetation (Genesis 1.9-13)**

**Collect / Gathering**

Eternal God

You crown the year with goodness

And you give us the fruits of the earth in their season:

Grant that we may use them to your glory

For the relief of those in need

And for our own well-being;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks for the goodness of the land, the plants and the trees,

For the trees which counter climate change

Removing CO2 from the atmosphere and generating oxygen,

Holding back storms and flooding with strong roots

And providing moisture and fertility to the soil.

For our faith rooted in the whole world God has created

and is the context in which we live our faith and

work out our salvation.

For our dependency on agriculture

Providing food and habitat on the land.

**Lament / Confession**

We lament our complicity with deforestation,

For the dispossessed on the land,

For dwellers of the ancient forests and their loss of home and habitat,

For our loss of diversity, and of species, both plant and animal,

Our loss of ancient medicines and knowledge drawn from the natural world

And the opportunities to develop new life-saving systems

Where light, water, land and vegetation work together in living harmony.

Amen.

**Absolution / Forgiveness**

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;

the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;

the Lord accept your prayers, and absolve you from your offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

**Preaching / Sermons**

Book review. See chapter 1.

**Discipleship**

For preservation of forest and woodland, the habitats and species there, and for the re-afforestation and planting of trees in both rural and urban areas.

**Intercessions**

Each chapter in Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ concludes with a prayer which essentially also summarises the content of that chapter. This prayer could be used and adapted if necessary.

**Blessing and Dismissal**

We look forward with hope as we walk with each generation

Pointing to Christ’s resurrection and to the end of the age

When a restored creation will be alive in song and action in the natural world and the garden city.

Go in strong and growing faith. Trust in the tenderness of Christ to heal a bruised and broken world.

**Thanks be to God.**

Go in eager and refreshing hope. Work with Christ risen from the dead, to fulfil the promise of a new creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us go in peace, to treasure and to tend the world God made and loves.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**



**‘Elements of Worship’** for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020

**Week Four – Saying Yes to Life**

**Chapter Four: Let there be lights in the sky (Genesis 1.14-19)**

**Collect / Gathering**

Lord of all creation,

We have plundered the resources of the world

And jeopardised the atmosphere and climate of our planet.

Give us a new vision for our planet

And create in us a new sense of social and ecological justice.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks for the sun, moon and stars of light

For the pattern and order of day and night

For the rhythm of the seasons throughout the year.

 We give thanks for God the creator who sustains and nourishes

The whole of creation; carried and cared for

Until that great day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

We give thanks for the planetary exchange between sun and outer space,

Between air and water, sustaining our life systems.

**Amen.**

**Lament / Confession**

We confess our plundering of natural resources, the deforestation,

Draining of wetlands, and pollution of airways

We lament the global warming

which destroys our life rhythms and atmospheric balance.

We confess our lack of care which has led to toxic pollution

And human and cultural degradation.

**Absolution / Forgiveness**

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;

the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;

 the Lord accept your prayers, and absolve you from your offences,

 for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen**.

**Sermon / Discipleship and Action**

Book review. See chapter 1.

**Discipleship and Action**

For this chapter, we need to read and learn more about how our environmental crisis has developed, about the interchange between the sun and outer space and the earth’s eco-systems, and about the choices we need to make in the future to ensure the life of our planet and of all creatures, human and non-human.

**Intercession**

Each chapter in Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ concludes with a prayer which essentially also summarises the content of that chapter. This prayer could be used and adapted if necessary.

**Blessing / Dismissal**

We look forward with hope as we walk with each generation

Pointing to Christ’s resurrection and to the end of the age

To the coming of a new heaven and a new earth, as we choose life and say ‘yes!’

Go in strong and growing faith. Trust in the tenderness of Christ to heal a bruised and broken world.

**Thanks be to God.**

Go in eager and refreshing hope. Work with Christ risen from the dead, to fulfil the promise of a new creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us go in peace, to treasure and to tend the world God made and loves.

 **In the name of Christ. Amen.**



**‘Elements of Worship’** for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020

**Week Five – Saying Yes to Life**

**Chapter Five: Let the waters teem with living creatures and let the birds fly (Genesis 1.20-23)**

**Collect / Gathering**

Eternal and life-giving God

In diversity you enrich the unity of our existence;

Help us to live in harmony with the difference

And uniqueness of other creatures.

Deepen within us an awareness of our place within creation

That we may be stewards and servants of its variety and beauty.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks for the seas, the ocean and the skies

For coral reefs, shoals of silvery fish and tasty herrings

For whale and shark, cod and plaice,

For the birds and butterflies of the air

For doves, eagles, sparrow and raven,

For their colour, vibrancy and diversity,

Widen our gaze form the peoples around us

To the wider natural world of fruitful eco systems

And the mysteries of the depths of the sea and the wide horizons

The work of marine biologists and those who study birds and insects

**Amen.**

**Lament / Confession**

We confess our lack of concern and our ignorance

Habitat loss, careless urbanisation, and destructive farming methods

We lament industrial overfishing, the bleaching of coral reefs, the plastic pollution,

And the lack of awareness of our connectivity between

People, the land and the sea, of life in relationship.

**Absolution / Forgiveness**

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;

the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;

the Lord accept your prayers, and absolve you from your offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen**.

**Preaching / Sermon**

Book review. See chapter 1.

**Intercessions**

Each chapter in Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ concludes with a prayer which essentially also summarises the content of that chapter. This prayer could be used and adapted if necessary.

**Discipleship and Action**

Reduce, reuse, recycle.

**Blessing and Dismissal**

We look forward with hope as we walk with each generation

Pointing to Christ’s resurrection and to the end of the age

When a restored creation will be transfigured

by sustaining eco-systems and vast number of diverse species

Go in strong and growing faith. Trust in the tenderness of Christ to heal a bruised and broken world.

**Thanks be to God.**

Go in eager and refreshing hope. Work with Christ risen from the dead, to fulfil the promise of a new creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us go in peace, to treasure and to tend the world God made and loves.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**



**‘Elements of Worship’** for Ruth Valerio’s ‘Saying Yes to Life’ Lent 2020

**Week Six – Saying Yes to Life**

**Chapter Six: Let the land produce living creatures and let us make humankind in our image (Genesis 1.24-31)**

**Collect / Gathering**

Almighty God

You created the heavens and the earth

And all that is in them

Help us to live sustainably with creation

Mindful of the needs of others

And of future generations;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Who came that we may have life in all its fullness.

**Amen**.

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks for all living creatures and for humankind

And for the land which sustains and shelters them.

We give thanks for biodiversity, yet preservation of each separate and distinct species

And for Isaiah’s peaceable vision of all the animal kingdom living in harmony, wolf and lamb together.

Thanks for the right use of our land, for food security and ethical consumerism,

And for the resurrection churches which pursue resurrection lives

For people bearing God’s image and

In pursuit of more healthy, moral and greener lifestyles.

**Amen.**

**Lament / Confession**

We confess all the places where we fall short of the responsibility

With which we are tasked in the care of our common home,

We lament our lack of care, compassion and discipleship and our lack of ability

To hold salvation and creation together.

We confess all the times when we do not pray and act and give

As responsible caretakers, guardians and stewards of the planetary home,

With which we have been gifted, for ourselves and future generations.

**Amen.**

**Absolution / Forgiveness**

The Lord enrich you with his grace, and nourish you with his blessing;

the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;

the Lord accept your prayers, and absolve you from your offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

**Preaching / Sermon**

Book review. See chapter 1.

**Intercessions**

Each chapter in Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ concludes with a prayer which essentially also summarises the content of that chapter. This prayer could be used and adapted if necessary.

**Discipleship and Action**

This chapter also has much on food and ethical consumerism, which certainly makes a very interesting topic for discussion and for preaching, and is something which affects us all in our daily lives.

**Blessing and Dismissal**

We look forward with hope as we walk with each generation

Pointing to Christ’s resurrection and to the end of the age

When a new heaven and a new earth will reflect God’s deep concern for all of his creation.

Go in strong and growing faith. Trust in the tenderness of Christ to heal a bruised and broken world.

**Thanks be to God.**

Go in eager and refreshing hope. Work with Christ risen from the dead, to fulfil the promise of a new creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us go in peace, to treasure and to tend the world God made and loves.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Resources written and compiled by Christine Jack

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