

# Just Scripture: Lent and Easter

Groaning with creation: facilitator's copy



Lope and Eva, like many others on their remote island of the Philippines, depend on fishing. A thriving ecosystem is essential for their livelihood. But climate change is making this increasingly difficult.

**Objective:** To inspire and encourage all to believe and participate in the restoration of creation.

**To set up:** arrange chairs in a circle, place a low table in the centre with a cloth on it, one or two house plants, three candles on a heat-proof surface and an open Bible. You'll also need a flipchart stand, flipchart paper and markers.

## Opening prayer (ask for three participants to speak and light the candles)

(First person lights a candle, saying)  
I will light a light,  
in the name of the Maker  
who lit the world  
and breathed the breath of life for me.

(Second person lights a candle, saying)  
I will light a light,  
in the name of the Son  
who saved the world  
and stretched out his hand to me.

(Third person lights a candle, saying)  
I will light a light,  
in the name of the Spirit  
who encompasses the world  
and blesses my soul with yearning.

(All)  
We light three lights,  
for the Trinity of Love:  
God above us,  
God beside us,  
God beneath us,  
the beginning, the end,  
the everlasting one.  
Amen.

(From 'A Wee Worship Book', John L Bell and Graham Maule.)

## Alternative opening prayer

God of justice,  
we come to your Word  
with open minds and hungry hearts,  
eager to learn from you  
and each other,  
so we might live our lives  
more in step with your will  
to love mercy, act justly and walk  
humbly with you, now and always.  
In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

## Introduction

For Lent this year, Christian Aid is journeying with a fishing community who live on the small island of Tabugon in the Philippines. They are living at the sharp end of climate change.

Having survived and rebuilt their lives after Typhoon Haiyan hit in 2013, the community is working out how to live with the ever-present threat of climate change. Fishing is their only real means of income but that has become increasingly dangerous due to the storms. Added to this, fish stocks are being depleted due to destructive illegal fishing.

This community, led by fisherfolk Lope and Eva and helped by Christian Aid partner ICODE, have stepped up to respond to these challenges and in the process are demonstrating a deep respect and care for creation.

Lope and his team patrol the seas and have set up a house to guard against illegal fishing. The community have set down hundreds of concrete jackstones, forming an artificial reef to nurture marine life, and they have been replanting sturdy mangrove trees. Mangrove trees help protect against storm surges and improve the land and sea environment. Mangroves capture carbon in the ground and store three times more carbon than the rainforest!

You will see a picture of Eva planting a mangrove tree on your handout and some of her thoughts about climate change.

Reflecting on the experience of Lope and Eva, when or where do you feel most affected by or connected to creation?

## Bible reflection

This Bible discussion is an opportunity for us to take time during Lent to reflect on our relationship with creation.

(It is recommended that you provide a copy of the Bible passage on an A4 page for each participant. Having the passage printed out on a clean white page encourages a close and focused reading on the selected verses and

ensures everyone is literally on the same page and using the same translation.

Have the group read it quietly to themselves first, then invite a volunteer to read it aloud.)

## The passage: Romans 8:18-25

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

## Discussion questions on the Bible passage

- Opening: What jumps off the page?
- Close reading: What verb or action words are at work in this passage?
- Reflecting on the text and its context: What is the relationship between creation and people in this passage?
- Resonances between the text and now: What, if any, hope can be found in this passage for then and now?
- Seeking transformation: What action might we take to enable creation to be set free?

(Some facilitation pointers: allow the group to buzz in twos or threes as well as share thoughts in plenary. Capture the answers in writing on a flipchart – this ensures everyone feels listened to and provides notes for write-up and reflection after the session. It helps to have someone to help with this task, preferably another facilitator.)



## Closing prayer

Giver of life,  
in our plundered world  
with poisoned waters  
and polluted air  
we groan with creation.

In a world of plastic waste  
with stripped soil  
and growing deserts  
we groan with creation.

In a world of chaotic weather  
with drought and floods  
and raging fires  
we groan with creation.

And may these groans  
be the labour pains  
of another possible world  
coming into view  
that we take our place  
in bringing to bear.  
In your glorious name we pray,  
Amen!