

**Archbishop Thabo Makgoba**  
**Season of Creation – Launch Service**  
**St George’s Cathedral – 31 August 2008**

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Readings: Job 8:11-21  
Romans 8:18-25

May I speak in the name of God – Creator, Eternal Word, and Sustainer of Life.

On today of all days, it is right to begin my sermon by speaking of God as Creator!

The very first words of the Bible tell us: in the beginning, God created. He spoke forth the Eternal Word, and all of creation came into being. And from that moment on, his Spirit has held and sustained everything in existence.

It is the most tremendous privilege to come to Cape Town and live in Bishopscourt. Within my own garden – and not far beyond its fences – there is almost immeasurable beauty and diversity, in plant and animal and insect life; there is life too in the small stream that flows across the grounds.

We enjoy amazing treasures – as are reflected in the splendour of the Keiskamma Creation Altar Piece which is on display here. It is the most marvellous piece of work.

Yet this miraculous creation is increasingly fragile.

Just as we groan with the burdens of our humanity – longing to become our best selves, always falling short of what we aspire to – so too creation groans, for it bears the consequences of our thoughtless waste, our neglectful pollution, our greedy consumption, our economic injustices, our selfish abuse of resources.

As our reading from Job points out, our actions have consequences. Our choices make a difference.

We have the option – to be part of the problem or to be part of the solution.

God’s invitation, God’s eternal invitation of generous love to us, is that we should flourish, as part of flourishing creation.

Do not walk on the withering paths that are the consequence of forgetting God, says our reading from Job.

Rather, walk God's way – the way of promise, of redemption, of fullness of life for humanity, for all of creation.

Jesus said 'I came that you might have life, and have it in abundance'.

Human flourishing is God's deep longing and desire for us – and true human flourishing entails the flourishing of the world around us.

Today we are choosing the option of flourishing!

We choose to put out hand in the hand of the Eternal Word, through whom all things were made – the Eternal Word made flesh, our Redeemer, and Redeemer of the World.

We choose to walk the paths of healing and wholeness, not only in our spiritual lives, but for all of God's creation.

This is what the Anglican Communion has committed itself to do.

Last year, largely at the initiative of Archbishop Njongo, over 400 of us met in Boksburg for the Conference called 'Toward Effective Anglican Mission'.

Here we reaffirmed Anglican support for the Millennium Development Goals, including the Seventh Goal, Improving Environmental Sustainability.

We quoted one of the 'Five Marks of Mission', on which the Communion agreed, over 20 years ago, which commits us [quote] 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth' [unquote]. This, we said, is central to God's mission and therefore the mission of the church.

We also noted how climate change is destroying God's created order, and increasing the suffering of the most poor and vulnerable.

So we called on all Anglican Provinces, Dioceses and Parishes of our Communion to prioritise environmental responsibility in all spheres of life and witness.

We can do this at all sorts of levels.

We can hold governments and the international community to account – insisting they meet their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol for cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

We can press them to do more – internationally, nationally, at provincial and local government level – not only on CO<sub>2</sub>, but on greenhouse gas emissions, on promoting clean and sustainable energy production and consumption. And we

must support legislation that promotes best practice in every other area of life that impacts on our environment – and that penalises those who abuse our world.

We can also call on the private and non-governmental sectors to do more. Perhaps our work places can do better on energy use, on recycling, on cutting down waste and pollution, and on promoting sustainability within our communities.

We can do more within our Churches, I am sure.

In Bishops court, we are trying to cut down on paper consumption, on electricity use ... [*add other examples*]

First of all, we can raise our awareness of the impact of our lives on our environment – we must begin where we are, and make our differences here and now.

As has often been said, ‘Think globally, act locally’

All of us must start where we are – and not feel discouraged at how great the challenges are.

Each of us can make a difference. And each small step can lead to another and another and another.

‘Education’ is the first recommendation that we made at the Lambeth Conference, for what the Church can do to safeguard our environment. We can and must educate ourselves; and then act on what we learn.

We must also bring Empowerment – so people have the opportunity to make a difference. Then there is Advocacy – lobbying governments, business, everyone whose choices affect our actions and our lives. And we must also persuade by setting examples of how to do better.

And last, but not least, there is Liturgy.

It is my great pleasure to be able to launch this Season of Creation within our own Church and Province.

I commend the Resource Book to you – for the information, advice, suggestions and provocative questions it contains.

And most of all, for the material which helps draw us closer to God in worship – closer to seeing creation with his eyes; closer to caring for our world and for one another as he cares for us all.

For we end where we began – this is God’s world, which he entrusts to us. And we should celebrate his gift, and praise him for it, and learn to treasure it as he does, and help sustain it.

It is God’s desire that we and all of his creation should know and share in his promise of glorious freedom, of flourishing, of fullness of life that he offers us in Jesus Christ, sustained by his Spirit.

This is why we pray ‘Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ – as we shall do in a few moment’s time.

What is God’s will? What is God’s dream for us all?

Well his nightmare is all too close – hungry children, flooded cities, polluted oceans and poisoned air.

What then is Gods dream?

Clear rivers flowing, children nourished with healthy food, safe and clean transport, pure blue skies, a world at peace.

Let us dream God’s dream with him.

Amen.