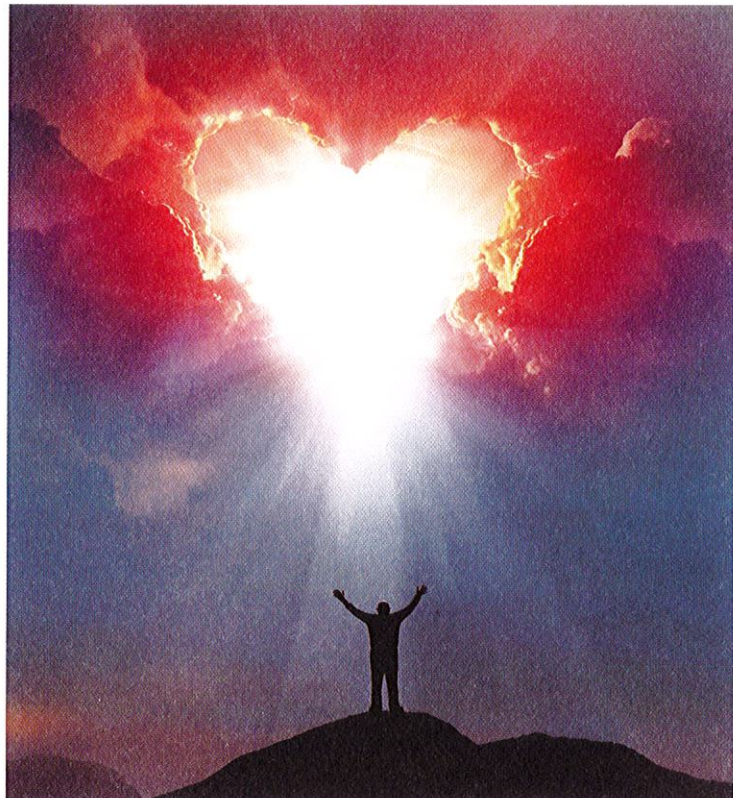


Transformed by love



Lord, you call us to love one another as we love ourselves. Give us grace to see you in other people and to see ourselves as you see us. Open our hearts to your transforming love, that we may find healing and peace. Amen.

Water

Part 6 – the river of life

by Caroline Hodgson

Caroline Hodgson concludes her series about water.

Towards the very end of the Bible we are returned to the image of water: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). Creation begins and ends with water.

Francis of Assisi called water "useful, humble, precious and pure". Its humility may be its

greatest gift to us. We cannot live without it, yet it asks nothing in return – it gives by simply being what it is.

So next time you look at the sea or listen to rain, prayerfully remember that these earthly waters hint at something greater – the eternal flow of God's love and renewal. The stewardship we practise now – conserving, protecting, cherishing – points towards the promise of Revelation – a world restored, where the water of life flows freely, and all creation rejoices in the presence of God. 

Julian Smith *reflects on* Romans 13:8-end

Charles Dickens was preoccupied by debt. Perhaps it was the experience of seeing his father in a debtors' prison, but whatever the cause, money and debt are recurring themes in his books. Is Paul's advice to the Romans to "owe no one anything" the result of his own experience? As a trusted member of the Jewish elite he would have been financially comfortable, and his transformation to itinerant preacher would be materially destabilising.

He qualifies his advice by adding "except to love one another". This is the heart of Paul's experience, for he has been overwhelmed by God's love and his life is utterly changed. He acknowledges that love fulfils the Law, but his experience takes us further. God's love is freely given, not earned or deserved – a gift of God's grace.

Part of our response to God's love is to love one another, in obedience to Jesus' command to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). But loving our neighbour can sometimes be easier than loving ourself. We carry round hurts and regrets that misshape us, that stand in the way of receiving God's love and properly sharing it with others. We mistake sympathy for love, because we haven't allowed God to transform our lives with love and so heal our hurts. God sees in us what God saw in Paul – huge potential waiting to be transformed by love. 

Creation Season

Part 2 – the gift of creation

by Alan Jefferies

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it," says the psalmist (Psalm 24:1). Everything begins with that truth, and the Season of Creation, which is marked in the Church of England between 1 September and 4 October, invites us to pause and remember that the world is not ours but God's.

Liturgical and practical resources enable and encourage us to "give thanks for God's gift of creation, and to renew [our] commitment to caring for our one planet home".

We live in a culture that treats nature as a resource to be used, yet the Bible tells a different story. The world is a gift – abundant, intricate and marvellous. Each creature, from the smallest insect to the tallest tree, bears the mark of its creator. To see creation rightly is to see it as beloved. Gratitude becomes the beginning of our care. When we give thanks for sunlight, soil, water and air, our hearts shift from possession to praise.

www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/season-creation 

“Our salvation is in loving and cherishing his creation, in so living that others may have life.”

Gerard W. Hughes (1924-2014), Scottish Jesuit priest and spiritual writer