Feedback from Lent Course


Group of 8 members.

Session 1 Historical and present context both necessary, need first to understand second, need O.T. to understand N.T. Need to be careful that head knowledge and understanding does not get in the way of living the Christian life. We felt that, in the West, lack of perceived need of God, even in the church, robs us of a life of faith.

Session 2. Can & should we subdue creation? We need to manage it, to survive. Bible tells of our relationship with God, not a literalistic account of events. Belief behind account matters, that creation was intended to be good. There are connections between moral behaviour and economic or war & disasters. Creation is also fallen, though natural disasters are out of our control, the poor are always in the most vulnerable places, poor buildings, flood plains etc: forcing people to the margins of society, creating environmental degradation.

Session 3. Creation is not static. It is working towards God's ultimate plan. Creation is one, the earthly and heavenly are not separate.

Session 4. In response to the Navajo conception, we felt that our multicultural society helps us to see different perspectives of the truth. We like the 3 questions they ask when reading the Bible and reflected that the "indaba“ approach, where everyone has a voice, attempting to come to a common mind, rather than a more formal structure, used in the last Lambeth conference, will help us to hear God more clearly than a more formal approach.

Session 5. Creation is a whole and we are inextricably linked in a covenanted relationship. The Holy Spirit is there before and within us and prays through us when we know not how. We tend to live for the here and now and our earthly future in spite of the End. But how we live now is to hasten the Day, a new heavens and a new earth. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.


I am the rector of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Bradford, PA, USA. Our adult education class used the Lent Course "And It Was Good" on Sunday mornings in Lent. We had 12-14 participants in this class. We met a final time this past Sunday (April 15) for a wrap-up of the course and to gather our comments to share.

They are as follows: We believe in the Hope for the future and feel the need for unity as we work to participate in bringing about the Kingdom of God. Scripture provides ideal for loving relationships, forgiveness. As Westerners we tend to be more analytical in reading the Bible, we struggle with understanding new creation, we are more distant from land and creation in day to day lives. Jesus interacts with us where we are - responds to us even in our sinfulness with love rather than fear or hatred and is so much bigger than evil (the painting "The Scorpion“) There are limits to our mastery and consequences of our misuse of creation - stewardship brings responsibility. We are a small part of creation (humbling) yet even in our smallness Christ died for us and all of creation. Bible is best read as a story of God's acts not a science or history book. We look forward to a fully restored creation - evidence of importance of created/material world to God. We are thankful for the creation God has made and our place in it and the gift of Scripture to help us to know God and know ourselves. All boils down to relationships - between us and creation - us and God - us and one another - us and others.

[3] Andrew Federle – Anglican - Canada

Our parish in Toronto, Canada, just completed the Lent course. It was, in a word, fantastic. The group really valued how it "began at the beginning" while also connecting with contemporary problems (e.g. global warming). We liked being able to know more about how the church worldwide was wrestling with these texts/ issues. And the creation theme was linked so strongly from week to week as to give a strong sense of coherence. The format was strong and clear. We enjoyed the closing liturgical element each week.
We chose to meet for 90 minutes each time. As the leader (and parish priest), I chose to edit material out each week (e.g. the art work) so as to be able to go deep enough into the scriptures. Other weeks, I chose to just tackle one of the scriptures. Overall, the course was very rich and it was great for me to not have to reinvent the wheel this Lent.

Thank you so much. Makes me glad to be a part of the Communion.

[4] Elaine Murray - Church of Ireland - Cork, Ireland

A Carrigaline Union of parishes group averaging 20 people met weekly during Lent and used the 'And it was good' material. We found it to be a complex and rich study course. The point was made that the 'church' was not particularly good at providing relevant topical material of this nature so this course was appreciated. As we read submissions from other parts of the Anglican world, we constantly found ourselves discussing our faith from a 'post Celtic Tiger' perspective which would be uniquely Irish of course. We found that the material forced us to think of ourselves as part of much bigger issues which we agreed was essential to our Christian faith as we all have a tendency to parochialism here! Life is never as black and white as we assume and this kind of course drawing on a wide variety of experiences help remind us of the grey areas. We particularly loved the prayers from far flung places in our Communion. In all, we found the course to be a challenging and energising experience leading us with some insights into Holy Week.


We used the "And it was good" study as our Lenten program this year--shared with a neighboring parish. The other priest and I alternated leading the sessions. We created a "New England Benedicite" after session 4.

New England Benedicite

Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord, Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, all you stars and seasons, Howling winds and warm breezes Ocean water and sandy beaches glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever

Glorify the Lord, all you places and spaces Mount Washington and Cape Cod Smuggler's Notch and Fountain Park, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever

Glorify the Lord, all you powers of weather Tornados and microbursts Blizzards and thunderstorms, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, all you plants and trees, Maple and birch, Lady slippers and skunk cabbage, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, all you animals and birds Lobsters and turtles Mayflies and peepers, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, all you springtime visions Daffodils by stone walls, Mud season and open windows, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, all you teams and players Red Sox and Big Papi Celtics and Patriots, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Let us glorify the Lord, Father Son and Holy Spirit Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

We found the reflections on disaster and global warming very helpful, especially since my parish (and the area around us) was hit by a tornado in June 2011. These reflections felt very real to us.

[6] Church of the Holy Comforter – Episcopal - Richmond, Virginia, USA

For Week Three, one participant commented that when Jesus is calming the storm in Mark 4, he says, "Peace, be still" to the storm as if he is speaking to a friend.

For Week Four, we wrote a Benedicite for Richmond, VA:
Response: All Creation Bless the Lord.

Oh, you living creatures of the river James; You majestic trees that renew our spirit with your vernal rebirth; Squirrels and bunnies that inhabit our yard and fields Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Response: All Creation Bless the Lord.

The pollinating ministry of the multitudes of honeybees in the Fan; The red juiciness and pungency of Hanover tomatoes; The drama and beauty of the dogwood trees which give us flowers in the Spring, leaves in the Summer and red berries in the Fall Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Response: All Creation Bless the Lord.

You glorious blossoms, Pear, Apple, Cherry, that foam on the trees; You birds who return with your joyous songs; You lengthening days with your sweet evening light Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Response: All Creation Bless the Lord.

From the mountains to the seas and the rolling hills between, For fog and mist in the quiet of the dawn, Give thanks for the comfort of the four seasons. Give to our God your thanks and praise.

Response: All Creation Bless the Lord.

I would now like to consider Week 3. The calming of the storm is excellent in demonstrating that Jesus is Lord of Creation. However when it comes to the Parable of the Mustard Tree I could not see the link with creation as clearly it is about the Kingdom of God. In fact my thoughts went to another tree. That of the one in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. If we compare and contrast the two we have some excellent symbolism. The Davidic line of Kings had, at this stage been truncated and Kingly authority on Earth had been given to Nebuchadnezzar. However through his sin of pride his authority was truncated and later (after 7 years) restored. But the Babylonian Kingdom was very soon after destroyed, never to be restored. On the other hand there will be a shoot from the stem of Jesse, and His kingdom will be eternal. And just as the Mustard Tree has very small seed we could say that in One Man Jesus the Kingdom of God has a small beginning.

Group discussion week two- the creation story continues- Jeremiah laments over the state of humanity, how they have ruined the earth, God created the earth for humans, but they are ruining it with their greed.

A small group discussion: course held weekly during Lent.

1.Genesis shows the relationship between God and humanity - claims that God is the creator of heaven and earth. That Creation is good.

2.The Creation could be considered true, but not literally true.

3.Many peoples have their own Creation story

4.Some Aboriginal people in Canada say "Our' story is like the Old Testament story. 'Our shared' story is the Story of Jesus"

5.In the Sudan, we wonder what are some of the traditional Creation stories in your culture that would sustain the stories in the Bible?

Submitted by Pat Wellser at patweller@eagle.ca
Week 3 - Jesus The Centre & Heart of All Creation

"Jesus is at the heart of our faith."

Responses to the "Questions for Discussion"

2. .... Very important - makes more sense of and to the readings.

3. ... Not a great deal

4. .... Represents The Tree of Life Could be the birth of creation Beautiful - a map with roadways

Submitted on behalf of St. Peter's Anglican Church - patweller@eagle.ca

[12] Paul Harvey
Denomination: Anglican
Bendigo

I find some points and questions inconsistent. In Week 3 point 2 the question is "How far is context important.....? To me very important otherwise we can go excessively wrong. Yet in Week 2 there is an attempt to portray the destruction of Judah as an ecological disaster. In Jeremiah Chapters 1 - 5, it is clearly the judgement of God against Judah because they have repeatedly forsaken Him and followed pagan gods. Jeremiah 5:1 makes this very clear to the point that if there is but one righteous person God will stay His hand. The book of Daniel makes it also clear that the Kingly line of David has been cut off and temporarily handed over to the Gentiles (in particular beginning with Nebuchadnezzar. And this will continue until there is a shoot from the stump of Jesse. I also took objection to the Reflection as it ends with demise of humanity which has no place in Scripture. I also found that the closing prayer read like a "mea culpa" for all the sins others.

[13] Name: Beth Hammond - Episcopal USA - North Carolina

We are a group at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville, North Carolina, USA. We meet once a week for a 7:00 am Eucharist followed by breakfast and class - we are enjoying the course materials very much indeed! Week Two elicited passionate conversation about our stewardship of the earth - the Reflection most of all - we found we related to this even more than to the Genesis passages. We wonder about responses from other countries to this reflection...we are aware of a sense of failure in how we have cared for the earth, that we have lost much of our reverence and connection to the earth - is this a typically North American response? And we wonder about how we each consider the growing scarcity of water - perhaps we may have this in common with other parts of the Communion?

[14] Paula Consolini – Episcopalian - Williamstown

Our lenten discussion group covered a wide range of issues including trying to define "new creation", our connection to it and the role of miracles in it and in our lives. We concluded that we, north Americans, are beginning to realize the human interconnection with all creation though we have a long way to go to get past the greed and fear that drive us to damage our world. We appreciate that greater understanding is only the first step. The next is figuring out ways to act on the understanding. We will move deeper into these and related issues in the rest of our discussions in the series.


Our discussion was very lively, it was nice to see the contrast between Isaiah and Mark, especially the picture of Jesus holding a scorpion, which can kill with its deadly stinger. Out of the evil, comes good, an innocent life can be shattered in an instant.

[16] Rosalind Mary SSC – Anglican - Wales

My first impression of the Lent Course materials is that they are very pretty, but very difficult to read. Trying to read the participants' sheet for the first week I found the font size is small and the light blue type almost impossible to read without holding to a good light.
Also I was rather dismayed at the amount of coloured ink required to print the course. Another time would it be possible to offer an option in a simple typed format for those of us who are trying to live simply and conserve resources.

Sorry to be so negative. Once we have studied the course hopefully I may be more positive. It is good to be able to share with the Communion as a whole.

And it was good….at St David’s, Lent 2012

St David’s Anglican church in Prestbury, Pietermaritzburg is one of those quintessentially South African contradictions. The parish church is surrounded by several hectares of lawn and, indigenous trees and is bordered on one side by a stream and the other by the Botanical gardens. The other two sides are bordered by a busy, noisy road – a taxi route into the city - and a set of shops selling everything from computer parts to (we suspect) illegally distilled liquor. The church grounds are used by local boys as a soccer pitch, Escom workers who need a lunch venue, teenage lovers who seek a romantic venue and local men of the road who need a place to sleep. The Sunday congregation is as diverse. Refugees from Zimbabwe and the DRC sit alongside white families who have lived in the area for decades and black families who have only moved to the area since the end of apartheid. Indian women in saris and Zulu girls in beads rub shoulders on Heritage Day. The wonder of it all is that this is one of the warmest, most welcoming congregations I have ever come across. Everyone is welcome: noisy babies, retired clergy, people who have no paid work.

It was this gloriously rich congregation that decided to take up the Anglican Communion Lenten Bible Study And it was good. We met once a week for five weeks in three different groups. Each group had its own dynamic, but the pattern overall was the same: We started by listening to a piece of music (for example Arvo Part’s Fur Alina, Erik Satie’s “Lent” from his Veritables Preludes, Psalm 104). Then we would read aloud the first of the Biblical passages suggested. Sometimes we heard two or three different versions of the text. Then we discussed the text (before looking at the study notes provided). Sometimes there was some additional information provided on the passage. Then we would move onto the next passage. Sometimes we read the “Notes from around the Communion”, but more often than not we did not get that far and participants were invited to read these notes for themselves. Each week we had the beautiful colour pictures which come with the course material displayed on the wall through the Bible study.

Before Lent a group of worship leaders – lay minsters, musicians, Sunday School teachers and clergy – met to plan the Sunday worship for Lent. We discerned a clear thread running through the readings – namely the theme of Covenant. So we decided to follow the theme of Covenant and creation. The first Sunday of Lent included a reading from Genesis 9 (the covenant with Noah in the rainbow). Following this lead, we made a rainbow which covered the front of the altar. Each Sunday during Lent we had the children strip off one of the colours, so that by Good Friday, only the gray background was left. On Easter day we “restored” the rainbow in all its colours. On that morning, the servers did not wear their usual robes, but instead they each wore T shirts in the colours of the rainbow. Our opening song for Easter morning – Graham Kendrik’s “First Light” – picked up the theme of creation and the hope of us all.

First light is upon our faces,  
first light of the morning sun,  
first sight of a new creation,  
first hour of the age to come.