

2009 Environmental Lenten Worship Resource

Option for Vigil of Easter

This special evening worship service has a long and ancient tradition; it is a time to await and celebrate “the return of the light” which comes with the Resurrection of Christ. The appointed scripture readings recount God’s actions on behalf of God’s people, from the beginning of creation and throughout the great moments of deliverance for God’s people. It is a time traditionally used for celebrating Baptism and the Affirmation of Baptism.

There are several avenues to weave the “creation connection” into this observance!

The Vigil of Easter can provide a special and holy time to reflect on:

The light, the presence of Christ, woven throughout creation, from its first moment, with a “Big Bang” of light and unimaginable energy, according to physicists (also see Celtic theologian J. Philip Newell’s book, *The Book of Creation* (Paulist Press, 1999);

The presence of God through times of flood and danger; and

our call in Baptism to “strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

An ancient message from Ezekiel for today

In the designated scriptural readings from Ezekiel, two passages offer sermon possibilities in connection with our theme of *Creation Waits with Eager Longing*:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

...Brings to mind the second stanza of the hymn *Here I Am, Lord*, doesn’t it? This sentiment from the prophet Ezekiel, pronouncing the word of the Lord, seems very pertinent to our need to awaken to God’s call to earthkeeping. It is about having new hearts, filled with compassion, and new spirits, that burn for justice and peace, that will compel us to respond to the cries of creation and the needs of our fellow humans. And, in that story of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), we hear the testimony of the power of God to bring life out of what seems most hopelessly dead and destroyed – a message of hope, in our time of urgency and challenges.