

# Season of Creation

## Small group material week 3: water

### 1. Welcome

Welcome everybody to your group. Celebrate! How goes it with your soul?

### 2. Opening Prayer:

God our creator,  
you have made us one with this earth, to tend it and to bring forth fruit:  
May we so respect and cherish all that has life from you,  
that we may share in the labour of all creation  
to give birth to your hidden glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### 3. Icebreaker

Invite people around the group to share what their favourite drink is (non alcoholic!). Then share why water is important to life.

### 4. Media extracts.

Invite people to read these two extracts about water, which are related to climate change and to sanitation, or watch the Carte Blanche video from February 2008.

**1]** Water is becoming scarcer. Much of the country is arid or semi-arid and is constantly subjected to droughts and floods, which will only worsen. South Africa's weather service says it is a known fact that higher temperatures will influence rainfall. "It could increase in some parts of the country, and decrease in other parts," the service says. Our water supplies are largely stored in dams and inter-basin water transfer schemes. "South Africa's rainfall is already highly variable in geographical distribution and unpredictable, both within and between years," the environmental department says in its climate change report, adding that a reduction in the amount or reliability of rainfall, or an increase in evaporation, will worsen the lack of surface and ground water resources. Desertification, which is already a problem in South Africa, will be further worsened by climate change, scientists warn. **(Mail and Guardian 2007)**

**2]** Access to clean water is acknowledged as basic to healthy living conditions. Yet many of our rivers and streams in South Africa are polluted by industry and by the fact that, without piped water, people in both urban and rural slums are forced to use their only water supply for drinking, cooking, and washing, while lack of sanitation facilities means that rivers and streams become polluted by human waste. All these conditions lead to the threat of diseases such as cholera, and provide the conditions under which HIV/AIDS leads to premature death.

In attempts to get clean, piped water to increasing numbers of people more quickly and efficiently than the government can do itself; attempts are being made to privatise delivery of water by handing this to overseas companies. This however means charging people for water. Poor people cannot afford this, and where this practice is being forced on them a backlash is developing.

### 5. Discussion

**a.** Invite people to share in pairs and then with the whole group: What has been my personal experience with water? How is this problem affecting me and the people I know? How is it affecting others in the wider community around us? Who are most affected?

**b.** Invite someone to read John 4:5-26. What strikes you most about this passage? Why do you think it is so significant that Jesus chose to ask a Samaritan woman for water? What does the passage say to you about today's water Crisis? What is the significance of the phrase "living water"?

**c.** Invite someone to read the following reflection: "Water: the source of life — of health and refreshment and cleansing and fruitfulness and also of power and beauty, strength and making new. Water: deep desire and simple necessity. There is no mythology in the world that does not tell stories about water, that does not see water as being at the heart of the divine as well as at the core of human life. Look at us — we baptise, we wash, we sprinkle, we bless, we even mix a few drops of water in the wine at communion. Water is a blessing we all need.

**d.** Invite the group to discuss one thing they could do, as individuals or as a group, to save water.

### 6. Closing Prayer

Close off with a suitable prayer.

### 7. Next week

We will be looking at the issue of 'climate change'. You may use the provided small group guide, which will include an extract from the movie "An Inconvenient Truth", or ALTERNATIVELY arrange with your group to watch the whole movie and discuss it afterwards.