



PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AMERICA

LIVING WATER: A GIFT FROM GOD, A HUMAN RIGHT, A RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERYONE

“We give thanks to you, Almighty Father, for the gift of water. Upon it, the Holy Spirit moved at the beginning of creation. Through it, you led the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. In it, your Son Jesus was baptised by John and anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, who, through his death and resurrection, would deliver us from the bondage of sin to eternal life.” (Book of Common Prayer, Episcopal Church 1979)

These words, found in the Thanksgiving over the Water of Holy Baptism in our Book of Common Prayer, express with extraordinary depth a fundamental truth of our faith: water is a gift from God and is intimately linked with life, creation, liberation and salvation.

From the very first pages of the Holy Scriptures, water appears as a sign of God’s creative action. The parting of the waters, the river watering the garden, the passage of the people of Israel through the sea, the water gushing from the rock in the desert, the River Jordan where Jesus was baptised, the water turned into wine at Cana, and the water that Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman as a source of eternal life: all these accounts remind us that water is no mere incidental element in the history of salvation.

Water is life. Water sustains life. Likewise, water also speaks of God.

CREATION: A GIFT WE RECEIVE, A RESPONSIBILITY WE ASSUME

On this day, Christian Churches of various traditions around the world begin the Season of Creation, which runs from 1 September to 4 October.

This celebration has its roots in the Orthodox Church’s call to dedicate 1 September to prayer for creation, an initiative later joined by other Christian families. Over the years, the Season of Creation has become an ecumenical expression of prayer, reflection and action for the common home that God has entrusted to us.

It is not merely a matter of setting aside a few weeks of the church calendar to talk about nature. It is about renewing our awareness that creation belongs to God and that we are his creatures and his servants, not its absolute owners.

This year, under the theme ‘Living Water’, we are invited to contemplate water as a source of life, as a gift from God and as a human responsibility.



The prophet Ezekiel contemplates the waters that flow forth and bring life wherever they go: “Wherever this river flows, there will be living creatures... everything will live wherever this river flows.” Ezekiel 47:9

This prophetic vision takes on particular significance in our own time. Where clean, accessible water is available, life flourishes. Where water is lacking, polluted or inaccessible, human, animal and plant life is threatened.

THE FIFTH MARK OF MISSION

For us, as Anglicans, this celebration finds concrete expression in the Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion:

“To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and to sustain and renew the life of the Earth.”

These words are neither a mere decorative statement nor a phrase we can repeat without consequence. They are a call to discipleship.

Safeguarding creation means recognising that our faith has implications for the way we use water, protect forests, care for rivers, manage our resources and defend the lives of the most vulnerable communities.

Our spirituality cannot be separated from our responsibility towards creation.

We cannot celebrate God the Creator whilst destroying what He has created.

We cannot give thanks for the gift of water whilst allowing others to go without it. We cannot speak of abundant in abundance as long as we remain indifferent towards those who suffer from a lack of water.

WATER IS ALSO A MATTER OF JUSTICE

Over the last few decades, the international community has made significant progress in recognising access to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human rights issue.

General Comment No. 15 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated that the human right to water is indispensable for a life of dignity and encompasses access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and economically affordable water for personal and domestic use.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution 64/292, expressly recognised that the right to safe drinking water and sanitation is a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and of all human rights.

This international recognition raises a question that, as the Church, we cannot avoid: what does it mean to proclaim that water is a gift from God if millions of people still lack sufficient and safe access to it?



The water crisis is not merely an environmental issue.

- **It is a problem of justice.**
- **It is a matter of human dignity.**
- **It is a public health issue.**
- **It is a problem of poverty and inequality.**
- **And, ultimately, it is also a matter of life and death.**

CENTRAL AMERICA FACES THE CHALLENGE OF WATER

As the Anglican Church of the Central American Region, we cannot speak of water in abstract terms.

We live and minister in a region extraordinarily rich in natural resources: rivers, lakes, forests, mountains and water sources. However, this wealth coexists with profound inequalities in access and with ever-increasing threats.

Our communities face situations of water scarcity and unequal distribution; pollution of rivers, lakes and water sources; the deterioration of forests and catchment areas; rapid urban growth; the expansion of agricultural, industrial and commercial activities that place increasing pressure on water resources; and the increasingly visible effects of climate change, droughts and extreme weather events.

In many communities, particularly rural and vulnerable ones, obtaining water means walking long distances, waiting for hours or relying on inadequate systems.

For many families, water does not simply come out when they turn on a tap. Some have to walk to fetch it. Some have to carry it. Some have to buy it at a price they cannot afford. And some receive contaminated water because they have no other choice.

We cannot remain indifferent to this reality.

When access to water is unequal, so too are the opportunities to live with dignity.

When a water source is contaminated, it is not just an ecosystem that is affected: the life of a community is affected.

When a family cannot access the water they need for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene or looking after their children, we are faced with a situation that directly challenges our Christian understanding of human dignity.



WATER MUST NOT BECOME A PRIVILEGE

As Primate of the Anglican Church of the Central American Region, I affirm that access to safe drinking water and sanitation must be recognised and protected as a fundamental human right.

This means that no person should be denied access to the water essential for a dignified life on the grounds of their poverty, place of residence, social status, origin, age or any other circumstance.

Water may require infrastructure, treatment, distribution and management; all of which entail costs that must be borne responsibly. But the cost of providing water cannot become a justification for denying a person access to the water necessary for life. Upholding the human right to water does not mean ignoring the economic, technical or administrative complexities of its management.

It means establishing an ethical priority: human life and the common good must take precedence over any interest that seeks to turn water—which is essential for life—into a privilege reserved for those who can afford it.

A RESPONSIBILITY THAT FALLS TO US AS A CHURCH

The Season of Creation 2026 must not end on 4 October leaving behind only photographs, liturgical celebrations, Bible studies or messages posted on our social media.

It must become a starting point.

We, the dioceses of the Anglican Church in the Central American Region, are called to take on a concrete responsibility within our communities.

- We are called to teach about the value of water and to promote a culture of care, responsible use and protection of water sources.**
- We are called to pray, acknowledging before God our own responsibility and asking for wisdom to care for what we have received.**
- We are called to take action, promoting concrete water conservation practices in our parishes, institutions, schools, camps, seminaries and communities.**
- We are called to stand alongside communities, especially those most vulnerable to water scarcity, pollution or the loss of their water sources.**
- We are called to participate responsibly in society, engaging in dialogue with governments, local authorities, community organisations, and civil society organisations.**
- And we are called to exercise prophetic influence, so that public policies guarantee dignified, fair, equitable and sustainable access to drinking water and sanitation.**



A CHURCH THAT DEFENDS THE SOURCES OF LIFE

Defending the human right to water also requires defending water sources. I therefore call on our dioceses to identify the springs, rivers, lakes, headwaters, forests and catchment areas that sustain the life of our communities, and to promote concrete actions for their protection and restoration. For we cannot speak of living water if we allow our sources to die.

A CALL TO OUR GOVERNMENTS AND SOCIETIES

In accordance with our pastoral and prophetic responsibility, I also make a respectful yet firm appeal to the governments of this region: water must be given priority in public policy. We urge them to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks that guarantee the human right to water and sanitation; to ensure that human consumption is prioritised; to protect water sources and catchment areas; to combat pollution; to guarantee transparent and participatory management mechanisms; to strengthen public investment; and to promote sustainable solutions to the effects of climate change.

I also call upon the productive, business and economic sectors to conduct their activities with environmental and social responsibility, recognising that no economic project can be justified at the expense of destroying a community's sources of life.

And we call on the public to understand that water is not the sole responsibility of governments. We are all responsible.

THE WATER WE RECEIVE AT BAPTISM

But our reflection does not end with legislation, public policies or social obligations. We return to where we began: Baptism.

Every time we contemplate the water of Baptism, we are reminded that God calls us to a new life. The water over which the Spirit moved at the beginning of creation. The water of the Red Sea, through which God led his people from slavery to freedom. The water of the Jordan, where Jesus was baptised and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

The water that Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman: *'Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst; indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'* St John 4:14

This promise reminds us that Jesus does not merely quench our spiritual thirst. Whoever receives the living water from Christ also becomes a source of life for others. Whoever receives the living water from Jesus also becomes a source of hope amongst the people.



LIVING WATER

During this Season of Creation 2026, I invite all the dioceses of the Anglican Church in the Central American Region to make water a focus for prayer, reflection, education, service and commitment.

- **May our parishes and communities learn to value every drop.**
- **May our children and young people grow up understanding that caring for water is caring for life.**
- **May our institutions be examples of responsible use of resources.**
- **May our communities play an active part in defending their water sources.**
- **May our voices join those who call for justice and dignified access to water.**
- **May our churches be places where we teach, engage in dialogue and develop solutions.**
- **And may we, as a Church, have the courage to raise our voices when life is threatened. For silence in the face of the destruction of the sources of life is not neutrality; it can become complicity.**

The Season of Creation reminds us that God has entrusted us with a common home. Baptism reminds us that we have been incorporated into a community of new life. The Gospel reminds us that Jesus offers us Living Water. And the reality of our communities reminds us that this faith must be made visible in our actions.

**May God, the Creator, grant us wisdom, courage
and perseverance to safeguard
the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew life on Earth. Amen**

**May Jesus, the Living Water, quench our thirst
and make us all springs of life for others. Amen**

**May the Holy Spirit, who moved over the waters at the beginning of creation, renew
our Church and our communities today. Amen**

**Bishop Ramón Ovalle,
Primate
Anglican Church of the Central American Region (IARCA) 1
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