

the jubilee

Opening Prayer

*O God our creator,
whose good earth is entrusted to our care
and delight and tenderness, we pray:*

*For all who are in captivity to debt, whose lives
are cramped by fear from which there is no
turning except through abundant harvest.*

*May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.*

*For all who depend on the earth for their daily
food and fuel whose forests are destroyed for
the profits of a few.*

*May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy. >>*

>>

*For all who labour in poverty,
who are oppressed by unjust laws,
who are banned for speaking the truth,
who long for a harvest of justice.*

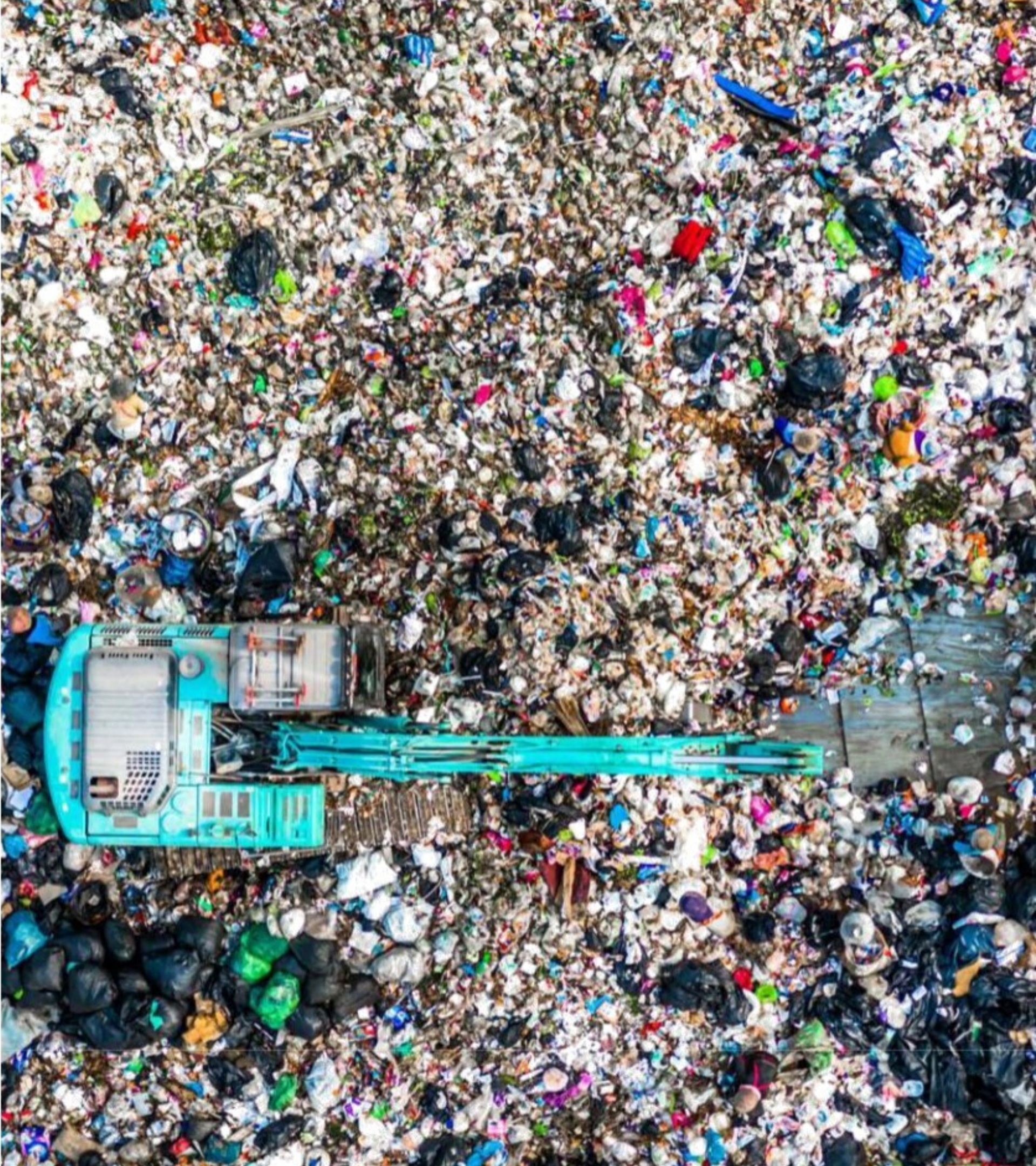
*May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.*

*For all who are in captivity
to greed and waste and boredom, whose
harvest joy is choked with things they do
not need.*

*May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.*

*Turn us again from our captivity, and
restore our vision, that our mouth may
be filled with laughter and our tongue
with singing.*

"Till All Creation Sings" - Janet Morley



Reflection by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

“Judaism’s teachings about the ‘jubilee’ principle stress that the land is lent not given to human cultivators: it requires ‘sabbatical’ years, and its value is to be seen not in terms of absolute possession but as a source of a limited number of harvests between the sabbatical years.

The assumption is that the environment that is given, the land bestowed by God, has to be set free regularly from our assumption of ownership; it has to be left to be itself, to be in relation to God who has given it. A year of un-cultivation, wildness, is not a lot, but it speaks of our willingness to organise economy around ecology, to ‘keep house’ within the limits of a world where we are guests more than owners.

The jubilee idea has had great currency recently as a focal image for the imperative of debt remission; I believe it has just as much importance in this context – and using it in this context reminds us of the way in which the issues of economic justice and ecological justice belong together.

Perhaps we need another ‘jubilee’, concentrated on sabbaticals for over-fished waters and deforested uplands, recognising that the rapacity and short-term planning that devastate these resources have their roots in the same blindness that, three decades ago, began to press disadvantaged nations into debt and then sought to improve their economies by the profoundly damaging strategies of ‘structural adjustment’, which deplete the human – the civil and cultural – resources of a nation.”





Readings and Discussion

Read Luke 4:16-21

1. What vision does Jesus have for the “year of the Lord’s favour”?
2. How should modern Christians respond to this text?

Read Leviticus 25:1-17

1. Notice the language the text uses. To whom does “the land” belong?
2. In light of this, how was Israel supposed to relate to the land?
3. How might observing the jubilee have benefited the land?
4. Equally, how might the jubilee have benefited the society that depended on the land?
5. How can we take the jubilee principle seriously in the world we live in today?



Going deeper

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of land ownership to the care of the land?

2. There are differing patterns of land ownership. In Maori kaupapa, as in other cultures, land is held in common, while alternative communities such as eco-villages and communes have collective ownership.

What are the advantages and disadvantages - social and environmental - in this?

3. In the Western economic model, the capital value of land and property seems to increase every year, so mortgages grow. As a result farming has to become more intensive to increase production.

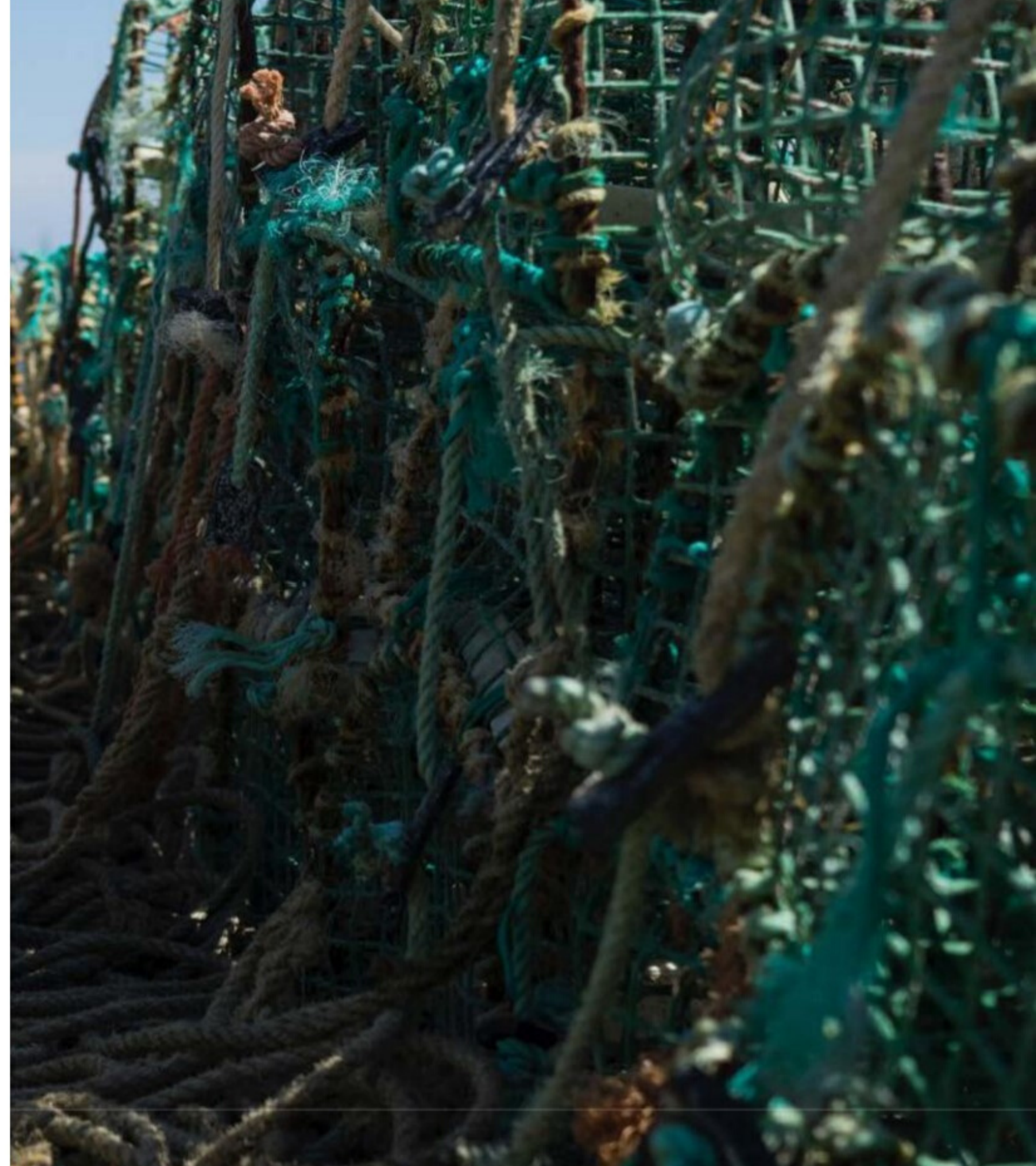
How is this affecting the environment?

5. What do you think of the Archbishop's suggestion of sabbaticals for over-fished waters and deforested uplands (and commercial farmland)?

Prayer

Awaken in us a sense of wonder for the earth and all that is in it. Teach us to care creatively for its resources.

ANZPB p.413





Making it Happen

1. Find out about a local community garden. Does your parish have any land which could be used for a community garden, to produce food for those in need and to teach the skills and provide the plants for people to develop home gardens?
2. Seriously consider growing and buying organic food. If your congregation contributes to a food bank, look critically at the quality of food you give.
3. Make submissions to your district and regional council to ensure they are fulfilling their responsibilities as guardians of the land and water.

Closing Prayer

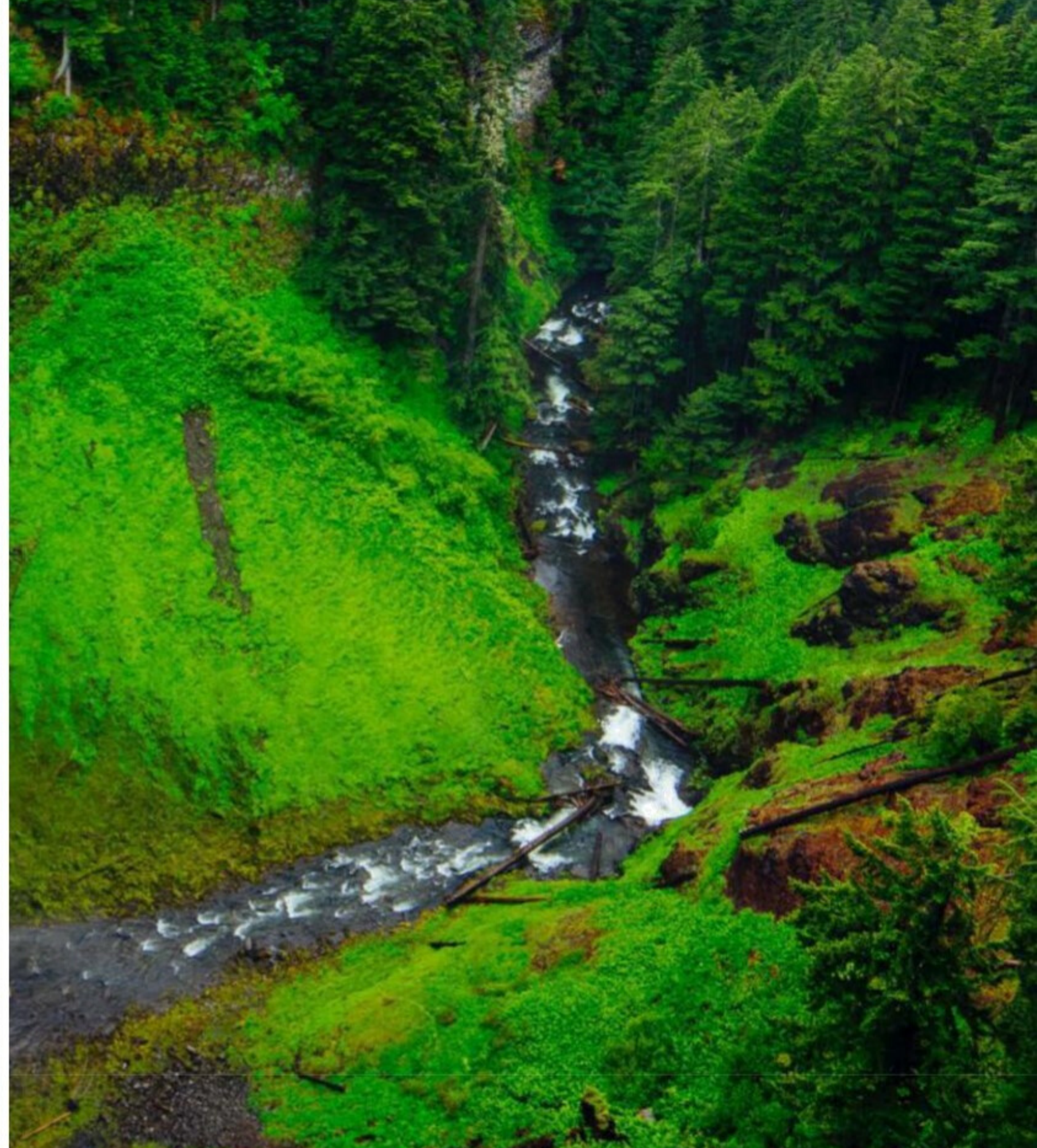
*God of creation, the earth is yours
with all its beauty and goodness,
its rich and overflowing provision.*

*But we have claimed it for our own,
plundered its beauty for profit,
grabbed its resources for ourselves.*

*God of creation, forgive us.
May we no longer abuse your trust,
but care gently and with justice
for your earth.*

Amen.

Jan Berry, Sheffield





Journal entry

Engage in some theological reflection on an issue relating to our unfolding climate and ecological crisis. Start with your experience. Explore that experience from a social, economic, and political perspective (what is going on?). Reflect on your findings through the lens of our faith tradition and Scripture. Finally, in light of your work, take action that enables a new “experience” (and, if you are super keen, begin the process again).