



Season of Creation 2026 Theme and Symbol Presentation



Living Water

Season of Creation 2026

Immersion in Living Water

EZEKIEL 47:9, 12

1. Text, Theme and Symbol

“Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. [...] Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezek 47:9,12)

This year's **theme**, “Living Water”, explores Ezekiel 47:9 and 12 as a powerful biblical vision of hope and ecological healing. Set amid exile and loss, the image of living water flowing from God's sanctuary reveals divine healing that renews land, water, biodiversity, and human responsibility towards the whole creation.

The **symbol** pictures water flowing from the Temple of God - at first a tiny stream which grows deeper and deeper and as it does so it brings life to dead areas and restores fertility to damaged or barren ecosystems. Through living water comes healing, but in order to receive new life we too must step into the water and also become part of God's river of life, taking part in the healing of creation.

2. Historical Context of Ezekiel 47:9,12

The context of this text is one of political, social, theological and national catastrophe. Jerusalem has been destroyed by the armies of Babylon. The Temple of Solomon has been razed to the ground. Many of the people of Israel have been taken into exile in



Babylon, carried far from their homeland. By the rivers of Babylon they weep and lament (cf. Ps 137).

The Book of Ezekiel is set during the Babylonian exile (Ezekiel 1:1), after the fall of Jerusalem at the beginning of the 6th century BCE. Ezekiel, a priest, is among those exiled and is commissioned by God as a prophet (Ezek 3; 33:1-9).

His message initially centres on God's judgment against Israel's idolatry and injustice, interpreting the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as divine judgment carried out through the Babylonian armies (Ezek 7-10; 21). Yet Ezekiel's message does not end in judgment: God has not abandoned his people. Ezekiel proclaims that God's sovereignty is not confined to the Temple, God remains present with the exiles, and restoration is promised. Significantly, the Temple is at the center of Ezekiel's vision of renewal (Ezek 40-47). Although it had been profaned and destroyed, it is now transformed into a symbol of blessing, healing, and God's presence through the whole of creation. The wonderful river described in Ezekiel 47 embodies this future renewal: when the Lord dwells again among his people, the land itself will be restored.

3.Theological Overview: Ezekiel 47:1-12

Ezekiel has been describing the building of a new temple in the desert from chapter 40 through chapter 46. This new temple is impressive but empty and lifeless. It is only in chapter 47 that life finally appears.

In this passage, the prophet is brought in a vision to the entrance of a future, idealized temple. From beneath its threshold flows water that begins as a trickle and becomes an ever-deepening river - too deep to cross. This river courses through lands once barren, transforming deserts into fertile deltas, restoring fish, vegetation, and even healing the salt-laden waters of the Dead Sea. The Hebrew verb *šûb* ("to return") may be imagined spatially as a turning point, comparable to a place along the Jordan River where fish could turn back before being carried into the lifeless waters of the Dead Sea. This notion also has a deep theological meaning of conversion. The imagery is vibrant and dynamic, and yet its ecological significance often gets overshadowed by purely metaphorical readings.

In many Christian traditions, Ezekiel 47 has been read primarily as a future eschatological promise — a depiction of the messianic age when God dwells fully with his people and renews all things. The prophet's vision is, however, also for healing now, as well as anticipating a broader cosmic restoration. The River of Life represents a renewal that extends beyond human salvation to include the healing of creation itself. The trees whose leaves are "for healing" suggest not only physical sustenance but holistic flourishing, encompassing both humanity and creation. Ezekiel 47:1–12 contains a distinct environmental message that speaks of global healing, renewal and transformation of life,



of the interdependence between humanity and the natural world, and of hope through action in caring for the earth, our common home.

3.1 Living Water: Water as Life

Ezekiel's vision reframes water — the most basic element of life — as a divine agent of renewal, justice, and hope, a life-giving force flowing from God's sanctuary. In Ezekiel's time, water was a symbol of divine presence and blessing. Great civilizations depended on mighty rivers such as the Nile, as well as the Euphrates and the Tigris which were two of the rivers that watered the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen 2:10). The water of the oceans too is teeming with life!

The vision begins with a small trickle — droplets of water flowing from the place of prayer and sacrifice. From a tiny stream it grows to an unstoppable river — the first marvel. The river grows as it flows from the Temple, nourished by the worship and prayers of God's people.

But the second marvel is greater still. The river does not merely sustain life, it restores entire ecosystems. The prophet saw *"on the bank of the river a great many trees on one side and on the other.... This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh."* (Ezek 47:7,8) While describing how the river flows into the "sea of stagnant waters" the prophet is referring to the Dead Sea, one of the most lifeless places in his region. So powerful is this river's water that the salt waters will become fresh and teem with life.

3.2 From Sacrifice in the Temple towards God's Water of Life

Ezekiel's vision decisively reconfigures the meaning of the Temple. In Israel's cultic tradition, the sanctuary was the place of sacrifice, where blood — the bearer of life — was shed for reconciliation. Blood signified both judgement and mercy, reminding the people that life was both costly and fragile.

In Ezekiel 47, however, the dominant image is no longer blood flowing toward the altar but water flowing outward from the Temple threshold. Holiness is expressed primarily through generative abundance. Divine presence does not consume life; it releases it.

This shift from blood to water is both theologically and ecologically significant. Blood belongs to the logic of survival within brokenness; water belongs to the logic of renewal and flourishing. Ezekiel does not reject sacrificial theology, but situates it within a wider horizon. Reconciliation with God results not only in restored worship but in renewed land, healed ecosystems, and abundant life. Ethical implications follow naturally: if God's presence manifests itself as life-giving water, authentic worship cannot be confined only



within ritual observance. Faithfulness must be measured by its impact on all conditions that sustain life. Care for creation thus emerges as a direct consequence of a restored relationship with God.

Hope for renewal and healing starts in the place of prayer, worship, and sacrifice. The tiny drop of hope begins in our own lives, in our repentance and transformation.

4. An Ecological Reading of Ezekiel 47:9,12

Ezekiel's claim that fresh water will make salt water become fresh (Ezek 47:8–9) is deliberately shocking — it names something *ecologically impossible* in order to proclaim something *theologically decisive*. The prophet is not describing a natural process; he is announcing a divine reversal.

The Dead Sea symbolised death: no fish, no plants, no outflow — a place where life goes in and dies. Salt water represented sterility and judgment. By declaring that the fresh water *heals* the salt sea, Ezekiel echoes Genesis imagery, where God brings order and life out of chaotic waters.

This is a new creation. Ezekiel could have said the river *bypasses* the Dead Sea. Instead, it enters it. The point is theological: divine life flows *into* the most dead and hopeless of places. The Hebrew verb used (רָפָא *rapha'*) means *to heal, restore, make whole*. Life is renewed not through human management but through divine action interacting with the created world. Salt water becomes fresh not by human management but by divine healing. God does not bypass the place of death — God enters it.

The trees which bear fruit every month represent a form of life that has moved beyond scarcity and seasons of lack. Like the freshening of the Dead Sea, this image is intentionally *non-ordinary* — it signals restored creation, not improved agriculture.

Fruit trees are naturally seasonal and vulnerable — to drought, pests, war, and famine. Ezekiel is saying: in God's restored order, life is unbelievably abundant. The trees bear fruit "because the water flows from the sanctuary." Their productivity does not depend on rainfall patterns or soil conditions, but on continuous divine presence.

The imagery deliberately recalls Eden, yet it exceeds it. Eden had trees "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen 2:9), while these future trees have twelve harvests a year! This is not nostalgia; it is amplified restoration — Eden has been reopened.

John the Apostle later echoes Ezekiel, presenting the river and the Tree of Life as the final vision of cosmic, ecological, and even political healing (cf. Revelation 22:2).



Note: This paragraph, based on Ezekiel's vision of a river, is not meant to diminish the value of oceans and seas which are made of salt water and yet have also been created as living waters. Indeed, the oceans are home to much of the planet's biodiversity (cf. Gen 1:21). Moreover, the oceans contribute to climate regulation.

5. Water between Crisis and Hope

5.1 The current Water Crisis

Ezekiel's vision stands in sharp contrast to the reality of the water crisis we face. According to the United Nations [UN News](#), 1.7 billion people lack basic hygiene services at home, and 2.1 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water - that is 1 in 4 people on the globe!

As climate change intensifies, and groundwater extraction increases, several countries are now reaching a so-called “point of water bankruptcy” ([link](#)), that is a condition marked by irreversible losses of natural water capital.

Although access to drinking water is a human right for all, the multifaceted water crisis disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, future generations, and non-human life that has no voice in political or economic systems. These are some of the many challenges:

- Water becomes unaffordable for the poor.
- Impact on health of water borne diseases.
- Impact of industrial discharge of chemicals and other pollutants into rivers.
- Increasing water consumption fueled by the datacentres and energy production required by our digital activities, including for use of artificial intelligence.
- Poor governance and corruption by companies and governments.
- Impact on food security of droughts, floods, storms and desertification.
- Salination of the soil due to sea level rise or overexploitation of aquifers.
- Violence over competition over scarce water supplies.

These many issues are leading to migration, pushing people into exile, with loss of homes and culture.

The impact on ecosystems and biodiversity is devastating: according to the World Wide Fund for Nature, we are facing catastrophic declines in aquatic wildlife, with freshwater populations dropping by a staggering 85 % and marine populations by 56 % in the last 50 years ([link](#)).

From a theological perspective, this crisis reflects broken relationships — between humankind and God, within the human family itself, and between human beings and other



living beings. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to stress that water pollution has implications related to social justice and equity.

5.2 Hope from Faith and Action

Ezekiel's vision is ultimately one of hope. As co-workers with the Creator, Christians' relationship with non-human creation should be grounded in the biblical vision of creation as an interconnected community of life (cf. Gen 9:8–17; Hos 2:18; Ps 24:1). Our relationship is that of sacred partnership and mutual custodianship rather than domination. Pope Francis described this as “a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature” rejecting excessive or tyrannical anthropocentrism (*Laudato si'* 67, 68, 116).

Christians are called to confront the aforementioned injustices and to reject a worldview that treats water as a disposable resource. For instance, in the last 20 years, the WCC Ecumenical Water Network ([EWN](#)) has promoted the preservation, responsible management and equitable distribution of water for all, based on the understanding that water is a gift from God, and access to drinking water as a fundamental human right.

On every continent, inspired by our faith, Christians are acting: rivers are being restored, water sources are being protected from pollution and extractive industries - and arid lands are becoming green again. Wells are being dug and water provided for parishes, villages, and health care centres.

6. Immersion in Living Water : Repentance and Healing

Scripture repeatedly associates water with divine healing and renewal: Naaman dipping himself in the Jordan river (cf. 2 Kings 5), and the healing of the person with disabilities waiting by the pool (cf. John 5). Ezekiel himself is immersed progressively deeper into the river, echoing baptismal imagery and symbolising transformation.

Stepping into the river reminds us of baptism. In the early Church, large baptism fonts were often used for immersion, and they were entered by steps - reflecting the progressivity of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 47:3-6).

Earlier in the book of Ezekiel, God promises cleansing, a new heart, and a new spirit precisely through water (Ezek 36:25–27). We are reminded of the water and blood that flowed for healing from Jesus' side (John 19:34). As believers, we are promised that if we receive and accept the water from the Temple - that is, God's healing - then “rivers of living water” will also flow from our hearts (or bellies, as the Greek says!) (John 7:38). As we are healed and renewed - living water will also flow from us for the healing of others and of creation.



Season of Creation 2026 Symbol



Living Water

Season of Creation 2026

Immersion in Living Water

EZEKIEL 47:9, 12

Our symbol for 2026 - Immersion in Living Water - is a symbol of renewal and birth: water flowing from the Temple as a sign of God's caring and healing for us. We are called to step into the water, until we are so deep that we must depend on God's grace to sustain us. Those who receive this water are invited to become sources of life for others, allowing God's love to flow through them into the world. And thus the water of God will become in us "a spring of water welling up to eternal life", as Jesus promised (John 4:14).

The Symbol invites Christians to a spiritual immersion - praying together while contemplating water from rivers, sources, fountains, baptismal fonts, lakes and sea, inspired by the Spirit of God, working together for the renewal of Creation.

This Symbol also urges us to dive into the "tears" of creation (Romans 8:22-23), by allowing our hearts to be touched by the suffering of our brothers and sisters. Indeed, the Season of Creation is also an appropriate time for fraternal closeness and solidarity with the vulnerable and the poor, chiefly those who suffer from environmental degradation. We can learn from their stories, from their resilience, from their commitment, and together keep hope alive.

You can access the symbol [here](#).



7. Call to Action

Our Father calls us to accept His love (1 John 4:19). Welcoming that love as daughters and sons, through a continual conversion of mind and heart, is our lifelong calling. If we choose to step into the true living water, we can contribute to a more just and life-giving world for the entire human family as well as for non-human creation.

Food security: Ezekiel’s prophecy speaks of trees that “bear fresh fruit every month” (Ezek 47:12). We are called to shape and influence our policies and practices so that all people have access to nourishing and safe food, so that the fruits of biodiversity are shared equitably. Churches can also promote greening projects which reflect Christian values on their own land, and/or equip their members with skills to grow some of their own food.

Water pollution: We are called both to refrain from and to denounce harmful pollution, while at the same time urging governments, local authorities, industry, and agriculture to act responsibly and protect water sources.

Water and sanitation: Many of our brothers and sisters still lack regular access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Therefore, we must act so that households, schools, healthcare facilities, and places of worship — including churches and parishes — have access to clean water and proper sanitation.

Environmental education: Parents, catechists, clergy, and faith communities are thus called to foster a holistic care for creation — human and non-human alike — drawing not only on technical knowledge, but also on relationships, ethics, and spiritual formation.

Drawing spiritual inspiration from Creation: Through contemplation of the natural world created by God (Job 7–12), we are invited to move from domination to humility, from exploitation to care, and from short-term profit to long-term flourishing. This transformation is both spiritual and practical, requiring a rethinking of values, economic systems, and educational priorities.

Tree growing: Many churches now link tree planting to key moments of faith such as baptism, confirmation, and funerals. Let tree growing become an integral part of our spiritual lives. Trees absorb carbon pollution, prevent erosion, reduce flooding, provide food and medicine, and cool urban environments—they truly bring healing to the nations.

Caring for our oceans — our “Blue Lung” — which face rising threats from waste discharge, overfishing, pollution, and deep-sea mining. Life and biodiversity beneath the waves must not be treated as out of sight and out of mind. May educators help our communities see and value these marine worlds. May government leaders act with



courage to protect marine biomes and livelihoods. And may we choose guardianship that keeps the Blue Lung breathing for generations.

Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration and protection: We are called to restore land in our churches, homes, and communities. There are many initiatives which we can engage with : a Decade of Climate justice has been declared by both the [World Council of Reformed Churches](#) and the [World Council of Churches](#); there are online platforms such as [Laudato si' Action Platform](#), [Anglican Communion Forest](#) and national programmes such as Green Church / [Eglise Verte](#) or [Eco Church - A Rocha International](#).

Let us overcome our fear and step into the water of God's love - to be part of the River of Transformation for the world, to see the literal healing and renewal of creation and the blessing of the Earth.