

## WORLD WATER DAY: AN INVITATION

Wed 1 March 2017

*(Photo By U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Michael Lindsey [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.)*

What has a mouth but never eats; a bed but never sleeps; and runs but never walks?

Give up? A River.

Today's disturbing reality is that increasing demand for water from a growing population and increasing variability in rainfall due to climate change results in many rivers ceasing to run and many mouths going without sufficient food.

March 22 is World Water Day, an annual event proclaimed by the United Nations to focus international attention on a resource that all life depends on. This year the theme is Wastewater or to put it another way, why waste water?

Increasingly, waste water is being seen as a valuable resource both for recycling and reuse and for the valuable nutrients (such as nitrogen in urea) that waste water often contains. Inadequate management and treatment of waste water can contribute to water scarcity by polluting freshwater supplies and making them unsuitable for drinking. Improving waste water management means improvement on all six targets of the Sustainable Development Goal on Water. On World Water Day, the UN will Launch the 2017 World Water Development Report with the title 'Wastewater: The untapped resource'.

Water has a strong spiritual significance in the Christian tradition as a gift of God, yet this scarce resource is threatened and denied to millions around the world. In recognition of life giving importance of water, the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) is again inviting us to use the season of Lent to reflect on water. Since 2008, the EWN has provided weekly theological reflections and other resources on water for the seven weeks of Lent and for World Water Day.

In 2017, the Seven Weeks for Water will take us on a **pilgrimage of water justice in Africa**. The Biblico-theological reflections and resources for the seven weeks will be based on the water crisis in the Africa region and take into consideration issues of justice and peace.

About half of the world's population without access to safe drinking water and about one third of world's population without access to adequate sanitation facilities, come from sub-Saharan Africa. Church leaders from across Africa discussed the theme "Pilgrimage of Water Justice towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" at a regional gathering hosted by the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) in late November 2016. The declaration they adopted said:

*"Access to safe water and, even more, access to improved adequate sanitation is a major challenge in the world. Even after the declaration of water and sanitation as a human rights issue, today around 750 million people do not have access to safe drinking water, while close to 2 billion people have to drink contaminated water, and around 2.4 billion people (1 in every 3) do not have access to adequate and improved sanitation facilities. Access to safe water and improved adequate sanitation are still major challenges in Africa, where millions of people do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities. Thousands of children die every day due to consumption of contaminated water and poor sanitation facilities."*

**The Lagos Message: A Pilgrimage of Water Justice in Africa**

This Lent, I invite you to include prayers for water in your intercessions or perhaps focus one worship service around the theme of 'Life giving Water'. Reflections, liturgies and other resources will be uploaded to the EWN website every week, starting from 1 March 2017. This year the reflections on water and sanitation will focus on inequality, stigma and discrimination related to water, feminisation of water poverty in the context of Africa, among others.

Special prayers are needed as I write for the people of Southern Sudan, Somalia and Yemen who are facing starvation due to a prolonged drought and conflict.

Visit: **<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/seven-weeks-for-water>**

We pray that our Lord, the living water of life will bless us abundantly as we work towards fulfilling the will of God – for as much you give a drink to a thirsty, you do it to the Lord. (Matt 25:40)

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