

Special Sundays

Liturgy,
art, &
poetry
for special days
of worship

Liturgy for Earth Day / Creation Care Sunday

Written by Rev. Sarah A. Speed

We invite you to implement this service as-is, or adapt it for your context. Either way, please attribute credit as follows: Liturgy by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Introduction

In 1969 massive oil spills ravaged the coast of California. These oil spills served as a tipping point for concerned politicians who launched a “teach-in” day across college campuses to educate students on air and water pollution. Inspired by the college “teach-ins,” activists scaled these efforts to reach the broader public. As a result, a national Earth Day was launched on April 22nd in 1970.¹ Within that same year, the energy around Earth Day helped lead to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Environmental Education Act, and the Clean Air Act.

Since that time, Earth Day has become a beacon of hope around the world. Classrooms teach about environmental justice, cities hold parades, people visit their farmer’s markets, and many Christians sing, “For the Beauty of the Earth.”

Drawing inspiration from Earth Day traditions and our faith’s enduring declaration that God delights in creation and declares it good, we offer this liturgy. Our hope is that this liturgy may help congregations practice, celebrate, remember, and advocate for creation as an act of faith.

About the Service

While the most natural time for this liturgy to be used may be on or around Earth Day (April 22nd), this liturgy could also be used in September for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation²—or it could be used anytime throughout the year. We have alternatively titled this service “Creation Care Sunday” so you can use it for other times in the year. Regardless of when you celebrate, we hope that the words and plans help you celebrate creation as an act of justice, resistance, and holy gratitude.

¹ Learn more about the history of Earth Day here: earthday.org/history

² Learn more here: creationjustice.org/world-day-of-prayer-for-the-care-of-creation.html

Introduction *(continued)*

About the Service *(continued)*

Additionally, we encourage you to pair this worship liturgy with a call to action for your community. One of the following organizations may be helpful to you as you discern ways your community can take action:

- Interfaith Power & Light (interfaithpowerandlight.org)
- Creation Justice Ministries (creationjustice.org)

Music Suggestions

Here is a list of suggested hymns and songs for congregational singing and special music:

- “[Morning Has Broken](#)” by Eleanor Farjeon (1931)
- “[For the Beauty of the Earth](#)” by Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1864)
- “[God of the Sparrow](#)” by Jaroslav J. Vajda (1983)
- “[All Good Gifts](#)” by Matthias Claudius (1782)
- “[The God Who Set the Stars in Space](#)” by Timothy Dudley-Smith (2003)
- “[Great is Thy Faithfulness](#)” by Thomas O. Chisholm (1923)
- “[Here I Am, Lord / I, The Lord of Sea and Sky](#)” by Daniel L. Schutte (1981)
- “[Holy Ground](#)” by Can Olgun and Sarah Speed, FAPC Chapel Church Music (2024)—*former guest musicians with A Sanctified Art*
- “[Is This How the World Ends?](#)” by The Many (2021)—*former guest musicians with A Sanctified Art*
- “[Of The Earth](#)” by The Many (2022)—*former guest musicians with A Sanctified Art*
- “[For the Wholeness of the Earth](#)” by Bret Hesla (2017)³
- “[All Be Stewards](#)” by Bret Hesla (2017)
- “[The Earth is Yours](#)” by Gungor (2014)
- “[Creation Song](#)” by Josh Garrels (2020)
- “[Live a Better Way](#)” by Joshua Long (2024)⁴
- “[All Your Works Are Good \(Psalm 104\)](#)” by Sandra McCracken (2015)
- “[God of Wonders](#)” by Third Day (2009)
- “[Cover the Earth](#)” by Naomi Rain (2023)

³ Bret Hesla has a large library of songs inspired by ecology and stewardship of the earth. You can find and license his songs here: brethesla.com

⁴ Joshua Long's entire album is about the Christian call to environmental justice and can be downloaded via a pay-what-you-can model here: joshualong.bandzoogle.com/music

Introduction (continued)

Scripture Suggestions

This liturgy is not crafted around any particular scripture. Instead, it is designed to be general enough that you can use any desired preaching or focal scriptures. Choose from this list, or select the texts that speak to you.

- Genesis 1
- Genesis 2:4b-23
- Genesis 2:15
- Genesis 9:8-17
- Exodus 23:10-11
- Jeremiah 12:4
- Hosea 4:1-3
- Job 12:7-10
- Psalm 19:1-4
- Psalm 148:1-10
- 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

About This Liturgy Outline

- *Italicized lines are notes for worship leaders.*
- Unbolded lines are to be spoken by worship leaders and, when appropriate, printed in bulletins or projected on screens.
- **Bolded lines are to be spoken by the congregation and printed in bulletins or projected on screens.**

Materials & Setup

Materials

The following materials are suggested for this service:

- Time for Children supplies:
 - Option A: The Green Bible.
 - Option B: An assortment of seeds to show, plus a small succulent or seed packet for each child.
- Green paper squares or strips for written prayers (during the prayers of the people).
- Pens or writing utensils for each person.
- Baskets (placed on the Communion Table) to collect written prayers.

Materials & Setup (continued)

Preparation Before the Service

If applicable to your tradition, you may wish to use green stoles and paraments for this service. For the offering, two liturgists will read a poem aloud as an invitation to give. Identify two liturgists for this role. They will each need a microphone. The service also includes written prayers of the people. Make sure each worshiper has access to a green paper square or strip and a writing utensil. These materials can be placed in pews or under seats, stuffed in bulletins, or passed out by volunteers.

Optional Tablescape:

Turn your Communion Table into a tablescape of God's vast and beautiful creation by arranging greenery, flowers, seed packets, succulents, fruits, and vegetables. Feel free to get creative! You could use apples, gourds, pumpkins, squash, ferns, flowers, open pomegranates and figs (allowing us to see and marvel at the seeds), eucalyptus branches, or whatever is in season where you live. If you do turn your Table into a natural tablescape, invite folks to take a piece of the installation home with them for their week as an extension of the Table's bounty.

Order of Worship

Prelude/Processional

If you choose to create a natural tablescape, you may wish to process in a few items for the Table, such as flowers, fruit, and greenery.

Welcome

In your welcome to the gathered community, you may wish to pull from the liturgy introduction to share more about Earth Day. Below is a paragraph you can adapt to include in your welcome and/or print in the bulletin:

Family of Faith, welcome to *(insert name of church/community)*.

Today's worship is a unique service, for today we are drawing our attention to creation care. I am sure you are aware of efforts in our country and our world to advocate for the Earth's care and sustainability. However, it is not only policy that calls us to be caretakers and advocates. Our faith also calls us to be caretakers and advocates for God's good Earth.

So today, we will sing of God's good creation.

Today, we will pray for the well-being of all God's creatures—from the plants to the marshlands, from the oceans to the rivers, from the land to the sky.

Today we will look at the Earth and declare, "It is good," alongside our Creator. *(continued)*

Welcome *(continued)*

Optional: As part of your opening words, you might include a land acknowledgement to honor the indigenous peoples who stewarded the land where you now reside.⁵

Friends, let us worship our Holy Creator. Please join me in our call to worship:

Call to Worship

Church, where do you see God?

**We see God in the wide reach of sky,
in the towering height of mountains,
in the depths of the sea,
and in the vividness of flowers.**

Church, where else do you see God?

**We see God in early morning sunrises,
in the quiet after a snow,
in the reaching of rivers and tributaries,
and in the stars that light the night.**

And in your seeing, what do you know?

**We know that God is here,
and we know that God is good.**

Let us worship the God of creation!

Let us worship our with-us God.

Opening Hymn

See a list of suggestions included in the introduction to this liturgy.

Call to Confession

One of the things that is amazing about the Earth is that even after a fire, a flood, or an oil spill, new life always finds a way to grow.

Friends, God's grace is like that.
No matter the mistakes we make,
the mess we create,
or the harm we do,
God's love for us is unending.

Trusting in that good news, let us turn to the prayer of confession with confidence that even here, grace is in bloom.

⁵ For guidance on how to acknowledge the land respectfully, go here: nativegov.org/resources/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment. This interactive map can help you identify native land: native-land.ca