

NARRATIVE LITURGY

Second Sunday in the Season of Creation

(Australian Version 1)

Land Sunday

We worship with creation on the land



'Let the field exult and everything in it'. Psalm 96:12

A Narrative Liturgy

At key points in the liturgy the biblical basis for text of the liturgy is explained to enrich the worship experience of all.

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with the land. We celebrate with the grasses, the soils, the vines and the creatures of the land present in the sanctuary. We celebrate with the land represented by a terracotta Earth bowl filled with red soil. A large candle burning in the bowl represents Christ.

Gathering/Invocation

The opening *Invocation* affirms that God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the source of life in all creation. The response of the people is based on the famous cry in Isaiah 6, also called the *Sanctus*. According to the cherubim (in Isa. 6.3), the whole Earth is 'filled' with God's glory! And the glory of God, in many places in the Old Testament, is the visible presence of God. That glory settled on Mount Sinai and then 'filled' the tabernacle. Isaiah says this presence of God 'fills' the whole Earth. If Earth is 'filled' with God's presence as the tabernacle of old, then Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred place for us to worship! So, in *The Season of Creation* we worship in the midst of creation.

Leader In the name of the Creator, the fountain of life,
 the name of Christ, the pulse of life,
 and the name of the Spirit, the breath of life. Amen.

People **Holy! Holy! Holy!**
 Earth is filled with God's presence.

L Christ, we come into your presence today
 to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

P **A planet filled with your presence,**
 quivering in the forests,
 vibrating in the land,
 pulsating in the wilderness,
 shimmering in the rivers.

L God, reveal yourself to us in this place
 and show us your face in all creation.

P **Holy! Holy! Holy!**
 Earth is filled with God's presence.

Procession and Song

We join in song with the children as they enter the church holding symbols of the land—grasses, coloured soils and banners celebrating creatures of the countryside. We celebrate with them as they place these symbols around the terracotta bowl representing Earth. They run their fingers through the red soil in the bowl. We rejoice as one child lights the candle in the Earth bowl.

Call to Worship

In the *Call to Worship* we follow the lead of the Psalmists (Pss. 96 and 148) who both recognise that living creatures rejoice in their Creator and who call upon all parts of creation to praise God. So in this *Season of Creation* we not only thank God for creation but invite parts of creation to join us in praising and thanking God. Like the Psalmists, we worship with the parts of creation around us that we know and love!

We celebrate with creation as worship leaders, from different points in the church, call the land and land creatures to join us in worship.

L1 We invite the country to worship with us:

**P wild flowers and mysterious mushrooms,
swirling grasses and golden wattle.**

L2 We invite the farmlands to sing with us:

**P wheat fields, orchards and vineyards,
red gums, gardens and wetlands.**

L3 We join with all the fauna of the fields in praising God:

**P kangaroos, emus and bandicoots,
echidnas, eagles and magpies.**

L1 We invite the ground to stir deep below:

**P life-giving microbes restoring the soil,
beetles and worms preparing our food.**

L2 We celebrate the song of the soil!

P Sing, soil, sing!

L3 We invite you to name land creatures
to join us in worship.

We name, silently or aloud, other creatures of parts of the land and invite them to join us in praising our Creator.

L1 We celebrate the song of the soil!

P Sing, soil, sing!

Remembering

In anticipation of *The Confession* of our sins we remember that we are all, like Adam and other living creatures, created from Earth (Gen. 2). That makes all creatures our kin. But we have become alienated from Earth. This rite is designed to help stir within us the primal connection we have with Earth. Earth is also the home God has given us to love.

L Take the rosemary you received at the door, rub it between your fingers and share with the person next to you a special memory of the soil, the paddocks or wild creatures in the country.

L We remember the dry land that rose from the waters in the beginning of creation, and the plants that emerged from the soil to cover the land with vegetation.

P We remember with delight the gardens and the fields of our childhood, the places where we played in the sand, when we felt close to the ground, to bright flowers and baby animals.

L We remember and rejoice.

P Thank you, God, for the land, for soils that sustain our life.

Confession

In the past we have tended to confess only our personal sins against God and one another. In *The Season of Creation* we also acknowledge the sins we have committed against creation, both individually and collectively as human beings. Our sins have hurt both creation and our kin in creation. The very first sin our human parents committed affected the ground (Gen. 3.17). Our greed and selfishness still bring hurt and harm to many parts of creation.

L As I hold aloft this symbol, we remember and confess that we have become alienated from Earth and cleared much of the life from the land in our garden planet.

Large bleached bones and/or other symbols of parched lands may be held high in the sanctuary and then deposited on the red soil of the Earth bowl.

**P We are sorry.
We have killed living soils with excessive chemicals.
We have turned fertile fields into lifeless salt plains.
We have cleared rich lands of wild life.**

L We are sorry.

P We are sorry. We are sorry.

Absolution

The Absolution is here the word from Jesus Christ freeing us from our sins against specific parts of creation, Christ also frees us to come home and bond again with Earth again. As we come home we ask Christ to have mercy on us and we pray for peace with all creation.

L Christ hears your confession from
deep in the tomb
and forgives your sins against the land.

**P Christ, teach us to love Earth as our home
and all living creatures as our kin.
Help us to return home to Earth
and to love the land.**

L. I speak for Christ:
I free you to come home to Earth
by loving the land.

**P Shalom! Shalom!
We are coming home!**

Christ Have Mercy

L As we come home to Earth,

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we seek to love our home,

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we seek to care for our kin,

P Christ, have mercy.

Glory to God

L Glory to God in the highest!

P And on Earth peace with our kin in creation!

Prayer for the Day

In our prayers we not only ask God to give us the sensitivity of the Psalmists to discern God's presence in creation and to rejoice with creation, but we also ask God to help us be like the prophets who heard the cries of creation. Joel heard the land mourning, the cattle groaning and the wild animals crying out in pain (Joel 1.10-19).

L Let us pray.

**P God, our Creator, we celebrate your vibrant presence
among us and our kin in creation, especially in the soil, the fields and the
land. Help us to empathise with your creatures who are suffering. Lift
our spirits to rejoice with the land, the flowers of the field and all the
creatures of the countryside. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and
renews all things in creation. Amen.**

Readings for the Second Sunday in Creation

The *Readings* for a given Sunday in *The Season of Creation* revolve around the theme for the day and connect with the theme of the series in a given year. The Old Testament texts focus especially on a distinctive aspect of God creating through Word, Spirit or Wisdom or on a dimension of creation itself. The New Testament texts highlight the Gospel and reveal the connection between Christ and creation.

Old Testament Genesis 3:14–19; 4:8–16 ‘Earth bears the curse for us’

Because of the sin of our primal parents, God pronounced some curses. The ground of Earth bears the curse for humans, and from the ground Abel’s blood cries to God. At their death, Earth welcomes humans home again.

Psalm Psalm 139:7–10 ‘God is present in all of Earth’

The Spirit of God is present throughout creation, from the heights of space to the depths of the ocean.

Epistle Romans 5:12–17 ‘The second Adam comes to Earth’

Christ is the second Adam, who came to overcome the sin and death caused by Adam, including the curse imposed on Earth.

Gospel Matthew 12:38–40 ‘Jesus in the heart of Earth’

In death, Jesus too is connected with the ground. He is three days and three nights ‘in the heart of the earth’.

Children’s Address: ‘*A Secret in the Soil*’ told by a storyteller or by means of a puppet

Children’s Prayer: Thank you, God, for making me from red soil, the way you made your first child, Adam. Amen.

Children’s Song

Affirmation of Faith

The Affirmation of Faith is like an ancient creed. It draws together in a succinct way the essentials of faith for a creation liturgy. The following outline highlights one or two key texts that support these essentials.

Line 1 is based on Gen 1, John 1 and other texts where God creates.

Line 2 is based on Ps. 104.30-31 where God renews creation through the Spirit and is invited by the Psalmist to rejoice in creation.

Lines 3-5 are based on Isa. 6.3 and Genesis 2 discussed above.

Lines 6-8 are based on John 1.14. To become flesh is to become a piece of creation, a being made from air, water, soil and those parts of Earth God used to make Adam. Jesus Christ becomes part of Earth.

Lines 9-11 summarise the Good News that Jesus lived and died for all.

Lines 12-15 affirms that Jesus not only rose from the dead but also became the cosmic Christ who reconciles all things to God and fills the cosmos, as Paul tells is in Eph. 1.3-10,23 and Col. 1.15-20.

Line 16-20 recognise the role of the Holy Spirit in renewing creation (Ps. 104.30) and in groaning with a suffering creation while we wait for the rebirth and liberation of creation, as Paul says in Romans 8.18-27. Lines 21-22 highlight that we who die and rise with Christ (1Cor. 15) will celebrate a new creation with Christ (Rev. 21.1-4; 22.1-5).

- L Let us affirm our faith together.
- Women We believe that God creates all things,
 renews all things and celebrates all things.**
- Men We believe Earth is a sanctuary,
 a sacred planet filled with God's presence,
 a home for us to share with our kin.**
- Women We believe that God became incarnate,
 became a piece of Earth, like Adam,
 a human being called Jesus Christ,
 who lived and breathed and spoke among us,
 suffered and died on a cross,
 for all human beings and for all creation.**
- Men We believe that the risen Jesus
 is the Christ at the core of creation
 reconciling all things to God,
 renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.**
- Women We believe the Spirit renews life in creation,
 groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
 and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.**
- Together We believe that with Christ we will rise
 and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

Passing the Peace

- L Let us share the peace of the Lord with one another.
P **The peace of the Lord be with you.**

Song

Sermon or Reflection

The Offering

The offering is a moment of joyous response to God amazing grace and generosity. At this moment we re-offer/return God's creation to be used for God's purposes, especially those with which we celebrate on a given Sunday. The money and goods we offer are also a symbol of our commitment to save more and more energy, water, soil and every part of creation needed to preserve life. Specific commitments to areas of earth care could be written on slips and included with the offerings.

L God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks and as signs of our genuine concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth. With our gifts we dedicate creation to the purposes of our Creator.

P **With all creation we bless our Creator.**

Prayers of the People

*We thank God for a wondrous creation. We celebrate with all our kin.
We pray for all those in need. We name them now. We close with the following prayer.*

Creation Prayer

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the land, the hills and the soil.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit in creation,
groans of longing for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration from the sea, the land and the air.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

Lord's Prayer

The Great Thanksgiving

In *The Great Thanksgiving* prayer we join with all living things and with all creation in saying thanks before we eat at The Lord's Table. Those things for which we say thanks include the Word and the Spirit that continue to create the fullness of life around us and in us. We especially give thanks for the presence of the Cosmic Christ in this planet, at our sacred meal and in the bread and wine we consume.

L The Creator be with you and all creation.

P **And also with you.**

L Open your hearts.
P **We open them to our Creator.**

L Let us give thanks to our Creator.
P **It is right to join creation in thanking God.**

L It is right to give you thanks, loving Creator.
Your word is the impulse for all things to be,
for space, stars and stardust to appear,
for Earth to emerge from the deep,
for life to be born of Earth and
for humans to be born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your Spirit is the life impulse in all things,
renewing the barren and healing the wounded,
groaning in anticipation of a new creation,
stirring a new life born of water and the Spirit.

You chose to be born a human being,
to become a piece of Earth like Adam,
to suffer, die and rise from death
to redeem humankind, renew creation,
and affirm all born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your presence is the living impulse in all things,
the Christ deep among us,
filling Earth—land, sea and air—
filling every element and place,
filling the grain and the grape
we share with you this day.

Therefore with angels and archangels,
saints and sinners,
ancient voices in the forest,
high voices from the sky,
deep voices from the sea
and the whole company of creation,
we proclaim your presence among us

P **Holy, holy, holy, God of all life,
Earth and sea and sky
are full of your presence
and glorify your name. Amen.**

Words of Institution

Invitation

Having called upon all creation to join us in thanking God for all things, including this meal, we are conscious of our kin in creation as we eat together. We are also aware that Christ, the Lamb of God, who is with us in this meal, is the one who has taken away the sin of the world—both the sin against God and the sin against Earth. One way of highlighting a consciousness of our kin is to light a candle in memory of an extinct species as we leave the meal.

L Come, for all things are now ready.
Come to the table with all your kin
and share with all in need:
the gift of healing for those in pain,
the gift of forgiveness for those in sin,
the gift of assurance for those in doubt,
and the gift of hope for those in tears.

P **May we who share these gifts
share Christ with one another
and all our kin.**

Lamb of God

P **Lamb of God, who takes away all sin against God,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away all sin against Earth,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away all sin from the world,
receive our prayer.**

Distribution

Distribution Songs

Dismissal Blessing

One of the great traditions of the Christian church is that we receive not only forgiveness through this sacred meal (Matt. 26.28) but also healing. The Christ who forgives also heals. In *The Season of Creation* we pray that prayer that the healing blessing imparted to us through this meal may empower us to bring healing to the groaning and wounded Earth where we live.

L Now may the power of Christ's body and blood reach deep into your heart, your mind and your body to heal your wounds and, through you, to bring healing to Earth, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Candles for Our Kin

As we return from the Lord's table we light a candle and place it in the sand-filled candle-stand in memory of departed loved ones or one of our kin in the land who has become extinct.

Thanksgiving

L Let us give thanks for this meal.

P We thank you, Christ, for the meal we have celebrated with you, and we pray that through your body and blood we may be healed and become agents of healing for Earth. Amen.

Sending Out

We close our worship with a mission to go forth as disciples of Christ to serve him by caring for creation. That commission was first given to Adam in the garden. His mission was to 'serve and preserve' the Earth from which he was made (Gen. 2.15). Later Jesus calls his disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation (Mark 16.15). Humans have a mission to preserve God's good creation. It is appropriate that this closing commission, therefore, is followed by an Earth ministry where worshippers find ways of preserving our planet.

L Christ calls you to be his disciple,
to serve him with love and compassion
and to serve Earth by caring for creation,
especially the land that God has given life
so that we and all our kin may live.
Hold again the rosemary in your hands
as you go forth to serve.

**P We will remember the land!
We will groan with creation!
We will rejoice with the fields!**

L Will you care for creation?

**P We will care for creation!
We will nurture the soil!
We will celebrate life!**

Blessing

L May the Spirit of God, who renews all creation,
fill you with a sense of God's presence in Earth
and the pulsing of Christ within you.
Go in peace, serving Christ!

**P We go in peace,
serving Christ and loving Earth.**

Recession and Song

We join with the children in a song of joy as they process from the church with plants and banners. We join with the psalm writer who cried, 'Let the field exult and everything in it' Psalm 96:12.