

Appended Resource 1: Ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation

A Home for All?

In addition to several ecumenical resources, this prayer service is informed by prayers from the tradition of Native American Christians. In this context, the phrase “the people” is a reference to all species, minerals even stars in the heavens. Among these people are the human people, the plant people, the four-legged, flying and swimming peoples, rock people, star people and more. All “people” should find their home in the oikos of God.

As you plan your service, consider pitching “Abraham’s Tent” in the midst of the prayer service as a symbol of the community’s intention to create a home for all. You may also wish to set the space with natural items that represent the land and other “peoples” from the beloved community who call your place “home”.

Leader parts are in regular font, **congregational responses are in bold.**

Welcome

We gather in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the Earth and all its creatures!

Praise be to the Holy Trinity! God is sound and life, Creator of the Universe, Source of all life, whom the angels sing; wondrous Light of all mysteries known or unknown to humankind, and life that lives in all. (Hildegard of Bingen, 13th Century)

Greeting

We greet each friend in the name of Jesus,
born of Mary and child of Joseph,
grandchild of Heli, who was the 40th-great-grandchild of David,
child of Jesse,
grandchild of Ruth and Boaz who was, by Rahab then Tamar,
the seventh grandson of Judah, child of Jacob,
child of Rebecca and Isaac,
child of Sarah and Abraham,
descendant of Noah, great-grandchild of Enoch who walked with God,
the 4th-great-grandchild of Eve and Adam, human children of the Earth and the Creator.

And who are you, friend?

We invite you to reflect on your ancestors or the meaning of your name, and share this with your neighbor.

We gather in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, who lived as a refugee in Egypt, and who was raised in Nazareth near the Sea of Galilee that feeds the Jordan River. We welcome you from your home. Where is home for you?

We invite you to reflect on your place of origin and your local ecology, how do you describe your home? And share this with your neighbor.

From the places we call home, we are gathered in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of each creature and the Earth, that is our common home.

Psalmody

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

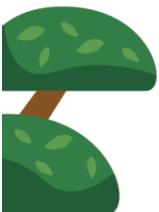
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

As they go through the valley of Baca,
the valley of tears,
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
O Lord of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

(adapted from Psalm 84 and 24)



Thanksgiving for the Earth

Creator, the strength of all creatures, we honor you. Listen to the thoughts of your people.

We honour your Spirit who renews the world and calls us to care for your creation to the East, to the South, to the West and to the North.

We live by the ways you have entrusted to us within the circle of life. Come Great Spirit as we gather in your name.

(We turn our bodies to the Four Directions as we pray the following prayers. Begin by turning toward the East and continue to turn, with each prayer, in a clockwise direction)

We face East:

The place of dawning, there is beauty in the morning, there the seeker finds new visions as each sacred day is born. All who honor life around them, all who honor life within, shall shine with light and glory when the morning comes again. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

We turn to the South:

In the South, the place of growing, there is wisdom in the earth, Both the painful song of dying and joyful song of birth. As the Earth gives up her lifeblood so that her children's hearts may beat, so we give back to her our reverence for the holy ground beneath our feet. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

We turn to the West:

The place of seeing, there is born a vision of the servant of the servants, who proclaimed the Gospel to us. Guide us at the end of each day and fill us with your peace. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

We turn to the North:

We look to God our Creator who cleanses our earth with snow, wind, and rain. To Jesus who fills us with the wideness of mercy and grace and lovingly embraces all the people. And the Holy Spirit who comes to inspire us. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

(adapted from Celebrating Creation: Honoring Indigenous People, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, ELCA)



Song

Sing a hymn that praises God as Creator. If possible, find a hymn that is shared by all participating traditions. Click here for a list of creation-themed hymns.

Lament

“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”. With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her...This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in childbirth” (*Rom 8:22*). And so we confess. (*adapted from Laudato Si'*)

Jesus Christ could not find a place to lay his head. Because of our will to dominate, millions of our human family are displaced from their homes. Many lack access to clean water, sanitation and dignified places for personal hygiene.

Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

Foxes of the field and birds of the air have a place to call home. Because we misuse the land, the soil, water and air, habitats are desecrated, and millions of species no longer have a home.

Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

Your promise was to be a blessing for all the peoples of the Earth. But when we exploit the gifts of creation, Indigenous lands are devastated and those who live close to the Earth lose their ways of life.

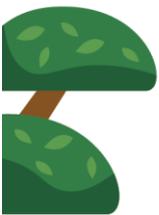
Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

The mustard seed is great because it provides shelter for many. But we seek security for ourselves, instead of mutual care and faithful hospitality towards our co-creatures.

Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

Let us remember “that we ourselves are dust of the earth” (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made of her elements, we breathe her sacred air and we receive life and refreshment from her sacred waters. May we hear it as a promise and a calling.

Turn us O God, from our desire to unroot ourselves from our home in the garden, and from our will to dominate your Earth. Call us again, to till and to keep. Gather us into the power of just relationships that heal and sustain. Enlighten us by your Spirit that renews the face of your Earth and safeguards a home for all. Amen.



Reading of Scripture followed by preaching or participatory reflections

See the thematic readings offered in this resource, or locally designate a text that reflects the particular context of your prayer service. Suggested scriptures are on the Season of Creation website.

Song

Sing a hymn that praises the biodiversity of creation. If possible, find a hymn that is shared by all participating traditions. Click here for a list of creation themed hymns, thanks to Interfaith Power and Light.

Profession of faith

We belong to the Creator in whose image we are all made.

In God we are breathing, in God we are living, in God we share the life of all creation.

We belong to Jesus Christ, the true icon of God and of humanity.

In him God is breathing, in him God is living, through him we are reconciled.

We belong to the Holy Spirit, who gives us new life and strengthens our faith.

In the Spirit love is breathing, in the Spirit truth is living, the breath of God always moves us.

We belong to the Holy Trinity, who is one in all and Three-in-One.

In God we are all made, in Christ we are all saved, in the Spirit we are all united.

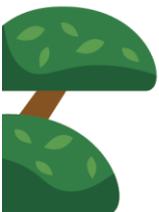
Together, we belong to the Earth, our common home.

The Earth that is the Lord's, and all that is in it.

(Per Harling)

Offering and offertory prayer

You may want to have an offering, perhaps to collect money for a particular project or ministry that contributes to ecological restoration, or an aspect of climate justice, or you may want to showcase local plants, animals from your area as a way to raise awareness of the rest your local habitats need.



Intercessory Prayers

Whenever we join together, we should give thanks. So let us join our hearts and minds together and think of all creation and the Creator's gifts. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of our Mother, the Earth, upon whom we walk and who supports us and nurtures life in all its forms. We think of the minerals, the fungi, and bacteria that give life to soil, bodies and systems. We pray we can learn to walk on Earth with more respect. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of the reasons why we are gathered. For this place in which we gather, and for all of the animals and plants that call this place home. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of the whole human family whose livelihood and well-being depends on the well-being of the Earth. We lift up the men, women and children who are displaced from their homes. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us turn our minds to the sacred waters of the world, the great oceans, aquifers, lakes, rivers and streams, the life that lives in the waters and those that give itself to be our food. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us now turn our thoughts to the plant life of the Creator's world. That which is below ground; the roots and vegetables. That which puts just its head above the ground: the grasses, medicines, plants and bushes. All of the many kinds of good fruit the Creator has given us. And finally, the great trees of the forest that we know of as the "Standing Ones." Loving God.

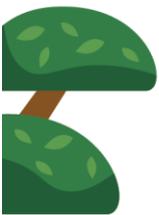
We give our thanks.

Let us think of all our kindred animals, those that crawl, walk, swim and fly. We give thanks for those that provide food for us, those that sustain cycles in their work and living, those that provide companionship and beauty. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of the birds of the air. The feathered ones that are the messengers between us and the Creator. Loving God.

We give our thanks.



Let us think of the relationships that sustain life in this beloved community. We think of the “Three Sisters,” corn, beans and squash who nurture, guard and sustain as they grow together (you may insert local examples of plants or animals that live in mutuality). These relationships are gifts from the Creator and our sustenance. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

(Inspired by the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Prayer and passed through, among others, Archbishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop)

Creator God, look upon the creatures gathered here together and send us where you would have us go, so that we may embody the ministry of justice for your Creation through our being and acts. Walk with us so that we may face the winds of change and walk the good road. Protect and renew our common home. Enlighten us. Sustain us. May God our Creator be with us this day and always. Amen.

(Adapted from Celebrating Creation: Honoring Indigenous People, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, ELCA)

Lord’s Prayer

We pray our common prayer that Christ taught us.

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your beloved community of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

Amen.

(Adapted from The New Zealand Book of Prayer | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. This version of the Lord’s prayer was influenced by Maori theologians)

Sharing the peace

If we are in Christ, we are becoming a new creation. One Home, One Body.

We see God around us. We see God within us. We give thanks to our Creator.

Let us show the caring nature you have instilled within us by greeting each other as a sign of God's justice of peace, love, forgiveness and grace. The peace of our Creator be with you in all things.

And also with you.

You are invited to care and share peace with your neighbor, and speak a word of peace to the land in which you gather, and the creatures who share this common home.

(adapted from *Celebrating Creation: Honoring Indigenous People*, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, ELCA)

Benediction

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
Who transforms chaos to order,
Lead us to transform our lives and the Church
To reflect God's glory in creation.

(CTBI Eco-Congregation Programme)

