



Working Group on Worship  
**Liturgical resources**  
for World Environment Day in the Year of the Forests

### GATHERING <sup>1</sup>

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.

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

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

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

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

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

### CALL TO WORSHIP <sup>2</sup>

We invite the forests to worship with us:  
**Mountain ash and eucalypts,  
quivering ferns and glistening moss!**

We quiver with the trees as they shake before God:  
**when tempests and tornadoes hit,  
and raging winds invade the forest.**

We invite tall trees to celebrate life:  
**Huon pines and ironbark,  
tall timber where lizards and lichen find their home!**

We invite the forest night-life to sing:  
**Green tree frogs and timid moths,  
ancient owls and swirling bats!**

We join with the fauna of the forest in praising God:  
**Lyrebirds and black cockatoos,  
platypuses, pythons and butterflies!**

We celebrate the song of the forest!  
**Sing, forest, sing!**



## PRAYER OF INVOCATION <sup>3</sup>

It is suggested that this prayer be read by three people.

You may also choose to set up three incense bowls to be lit through the prayer as indicated.

Hail to the Maker, the Ancient One,  
Mother and Father of all that was, and is, and will be!  
Today we join with birds and trees and animals,  
with rocks and rivers and mountains and the whole creation  
to offer you our worship and honour.  
Come to us, God of Life! We invoke you!  
Come to fill us with your creative power,  
with the pulsing lifeblood of ages.  
Make us alive with celebration and with rejoicing!

The first incense bowl is lit.

Hail to the Christ, the Compassionate One,  
who was alive and was dead and now lives in the heart of all things!  
In the midnight of sin, you heard the cries of your people.  
For us and for our healing,  
you embraced that darkness with its loneliness and despair;  
you surrendered to the crack which rends the cosmos.  
Come to us, Suffering One! We invoke you!  
Renew our yearning for emptiness and for silence.

The second incense bowl is lit.

Hail to the Spirit Holy, messenger of God's Wisdom,  
primal fire of creation and breath of life!  
From the time of dreaming you made your home with holy souls,  
making them friends of God and prophets.  
You invite us to join with you in the circle dance of trinity,  
to die and be reborn in the whirling wheel of God.  
Come to us, Spirit of Life! We invoke you!  
Renew your people in the passion of the ancients:  
make of us mystics and poets and prophets,  
that the earth may be rekindled in love.

The third incense bowl is lit.

Blessed be God—Maker, Christ, and Holy Spirit—  
***As in the beginning, so now, and for ever. Amen.***

(from the Liturgy in the Forest © 2002 Garry Deverell)



## PRAYER OF CONFESSION 1 <sup>4</sup>

Human sin disfigures the whole creation,  
which groans with eager longing for God's redemption.  
We confess our sin in penitence and faith. (cf Romans 8.22,23)

*Our misuse of creation could be represented in some way, for example,  
by holding up or projecting images.*

We confess to you  
our lack of care for the world you have given us.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you  
our selfishness in not sharing the earth's bounty fairly.  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

We confess to you  
our failure to protect resources for others.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of all mercies  
cleanse *you* from *your* sins,  
and restore *you* in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION 2 <sup>5</sup>

**We remember and confess  
that we have become alienated from Earth  
and that we have violated the forests in our garden planet.**

Christ hears your confession from the cross  
and forgives your sins against the forest.

**Christ, teach us to love Earth  
and return to Earth as our home.**

As we come home to Earth,

**Christ, have mercy.**

As we seek to love our home,

**Christ, have mercy.**

As we seek to care for our planet,

**Christ, have mercy.**

(From the Season of Creation website for the First Sunday in the Season of Creation Year A - Forest Sunday)



## A SONG OF CREATION <sup>6</sup>

It is suggested that this song should be read antiphonally (indicated by L and R).

The two groups may be those on the left side and those on the right side of the church.

Alternatively, the leader of worship and/or the choir may read antiphonally with the whole congregation.

- L** Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever. In the firmament of God's power, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- R** Glorify the Lord, you angels and all powers of the Lord, O heavens and all waters above the heavens. Sun and moon and stars of the sky, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- L** Glorify the Lord, every shower of rain and full of dew, all winds and fire and heat. Winter and summer, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- R** Glorify the Lord, O nights and days, O shining light and enfolding dark. Storm clouds and thunderbolts, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- L** Let the earth glorify the Lord. Glorify the Lord, O mountains and hills, and all that grows upon the earth, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- R** Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas and streams, O whales and all that move in the waters. All birds of the air, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- L** Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild, and all you flocks and herds. O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- R** Let the people of God glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever. Glorify the Lord, O priests and servants of the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.
- ALL** Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; sing praise and highly exalt God for ever. In the firmament of God's power, glorify the Lord, sing praise and highly exalt God for ever.

## COLLECT 1 <sup>7</sup>

God our Creator,  
you have made us one with the earth,  
to tend it and to bring forth fruit;  
may we so respect and cherish  
all that has life from you,  
that we may share in the labour of all creation  
to give birth to your hidden glory,  
through Jesus Christ in the creative power of the Holy  
Spirit,  
Amen.

## COLLECT 2 <sup>8</sup>

Creator God, sustainer of the universe,  
who has named all things and keeps them close:  
breathing life into the world,  
infusing beauty throughout creation,  
and binding all in the goodness of love.

Teach us to love your world.  
Inspire us to live in harmony with all living creatures.  
Forgive us our folly.  
Repair the damage we have wrought.  
And enlighten us to live afresh in communion with your  
earth.

We pray in the name of Jesus, image of the invisible God  
and the first born of all creation,  
in unity with your Holy Spirit of power and life, one God of  
wonder and Glory. Amen.



## SUGGESTED READINGS

Genesis 1: 27-2:3 or Genesis 2:4b-22

Psalms 65 or Psalm 111

Romans 8: 18-26

John 1: 1-14

## A PRAYER<sup>9</sup>

(Dede Korkut, Turkish Poet)

May our big shade tree never be cut down  
May our forests never thin out  
May our clear running streams never dry up  
May we never be deprived of hope  
May our wings never be broken  
May our household fire keep burning  
May our torch never die down

## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH 1 <sup>10</sup>

We share a common earth.  
We stand among each other.  
We share our planet.  
We share birth, death, hunger and love.  
The water becomes our blood and  
we are one sea.  
Living things die for us.  
And we die, returning to soil, sea and air.

We are the people of pain and fear,  
we are the people of anger and joy,  
we are the people of compassion and joy.

In all of us is a longing  
for a life that has not yet come,  
for a world that is free and just,  
a dream of hope for all people.

## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH 2 <sup>11</sup>

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 flesh and blood,  
became a piece of Earth,  
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.

Together We believe the Holy renews life in creation,  
groans in empathy with a suffering creation  
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.  
We believe that with Christ we will rise  
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.

## INTERCESSIONS 1 <sup>12</sup>

We praise you, God, for the resources of our earth.  
We ask for grateful hearts as we pray:  
**We thank you, God of life.**

For the light of day, awakening us to service:  
**We thank you, God of life**

For the refreshment of water, cleansing us of sin:  
**We thank you, God of life.**

For the sounds around us, reminding us of neighbours and community:  
**We thank you, God of life.**

For fresh air, filling our bodies with renewed energy:  
**We thank you, God of life.**

For this new day, offering new opportunities for loving and living:  
**We thank you, God of life.**

God, your love is everlasting!  
You shower us with blessings and provide for us in need.  
Listen to our prayer and bring all creation into oneness.  
Let us reverence earth as our home, and each other as sister or brother.  
Let us be blessed with peace within and without.  
This we ask in the name of Jesus.  
**Amen**



## INTERCESSIONS 2 <sup>13</sup>

Creator God, we praise you for the wonder of human life and of all your creation.  
Help us to treasure these gifts and live gratefully in our universe.  
In this spirit we pray:

For all creation:

**That we do not plunder our resources,  
but use them with awe and respect**

For all living things:

**That they flourish in harmony and interdependence**

For all people:

**That we reverence diversity rather than fear it**

For those who harvest the land and seas:

**That all may enjoy your abundance**

For all who minister in the name of the church:

**That they may cooperate with the Spirit in making all things new**

Gracious God, by your power we are created and by your love, redeemed.

Guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,  
that we may reflect in this divided world  
the unity of your Trinity, a communion of love.  
We pray through Christ, our Lord.

**Amen**

## SENDING OUT AND BLESSING <sup>14</sup>

Christ calls you to be his disciples,  
to serve him with love and compassion  
and to serve Earth by caring for creation.  
Hold again the fragrant symbol in your hands  
as you go forth to serve.

**We will remember the forest!  
We will groan with creation!  
We will sing with the trees!**

Will you care for creation?

**We will care for creation!  
We will nurture the forests!  
We will celebrate life!**

May the Spirit of God,  
who is above all and in all and through all,  
fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in Earth  
and the impulse of Christ within you.

Go in peace,  
serving Christ and loving Earth!

**We go in peace,  
serving Christ  
and tending the Earth!**



## Acknowledgements

These resources were compiled for this resource by Rev. David Pitman on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly Working Group on Worship.

- 1 *Season of Creation* website for the First Sunday in the Season of Creation Year A (Forest Sunday) <http://seasonofcreation.com>
- 2 *Season of Creation* website for the First Sunday in the Season of Creation Year A (Forest Sunday)
- 3 *Liturgy in the Forest* © 2002 Garry Deverell
- 4 *New Patterns for Worship* - found on the Church of England website, [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org)
- 5 *Season of Creation* website for the First Sunday in the Season of Creation Year A - (Forest Sunday)
- 6 *Uniting in Worship 1* - The People's Book, Page 139
- 7 *All Desires Known* 1992 Janet Morley SPCK
- 8 written by Gerard Moore
- 9 *Turkey: May Our Forests Never Thin Out* (Islam Online)
- 10 Dorothy McRae McMahon, Adapted from *Celebration of the Unity of all Humankind* Let all the World USPG 1990
- 11 *Season of Creation* website for the First Sunday in the Season of Creation Year A (Forest Sunday)
- 12 & 13 These prayers of intercession were originally written and used at the *Liturgy and Ecology* Conference of the Australian Academy of Liturgy held in Adelaide in January 2007
- 14 *Season of Creation* website for the First Sunday in the Season of Creation Year A (Forest Sunday)

## SUGGESTED HYMNS

Compiled by Rev. Ailson Whish, on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly Working Group on Worship

### *O for a Thousand Trees*

O for a thousand trees to sing  
and join with us this day,  
With ferns and frogs and butterflies:  
a forest hymn of praise.

O for a thousand trees to sing  
and join with us this day,  
with ferns and frogs and butterflies:  
a forest hymn of praise.

Come celebrate with all the land,  
let species rare begin,  
with geese and owls and cockatoo:  
a choir of country kin.

Words: Norman Habel 2004  
Melody: O for a Thousand Tongues

How can we hear creation groan,  
the Outback cry in pain:?  
What desert dragons we rejoice  
when Earth is born again.

Let ev'ry stream and river flow  
in song toward the sea;  
with whale, and seal and albatross  
we thank God we are free!



### **Suggestions from *Songs from a Still Strange Land***

(Douglas Simper (ed) published by Joint Board of Christian Education, 1988)

2 Australian light, Australian tree  
(words: James Tulip, music: Douglas Simper)

23 Here we go down  
(words & music: Rod Boucher)

29 Let hills and mountains sing and shout  
(words: Donald Bell, music: David McCallum arr. Douglas Simper)

42 Seeing God  
(words: Bruce Prewer, music: Douglas Simper)

### **Suggestions from *Common Ground: A song book for all the churches***

(Church of Scotland Panel of Worship, 2007)

44 God's will for creation  
(words: from Carmina Gadelica, music: Gaelic traditional, tune: Rodail)

97 Oh the life of the world  
(words: Kathy Galloway, Tune: Ian Galloway, arr John Bell)

### **Suggestions from *Together in Song***

(HarperCollins Publishers, 1999)

100 All creatures of our God and King

135 All things bright and beautiful

146 God, who made the earth

155 O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder

166 Sing a new song

186 Stars and planets flung in orbit

188 Where wide sky rolls down

203 Fairest Lord Jesus

668 Touch the earth gently

672 Lord of earth and all creation

755 You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace