

River Sunday

(United States Version 1)

The Fourth Sunday in A Season of Creation

This Sunday we worship with the rivers in creation.

We worship this Sunday beside a river with all the water life from the river. Ideally this worship would take place beside a river or a waterfall. The mysterious world of a river can also be experienced in a church building by using symbols of the fountains, streams, and rivers that fertilize our land. These may include reeds, fish, frogs, and other creatures. At the center of the church or sanctuary, water flows over rocks. This water can also symbolize Christ as the water of life.

Invocation

Leader In the name of the Creator, the fountain of life,
in the name of Christ, the pulse of life,
and in 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
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

P A planet pulsating with your presence,
a presence quivering in the forests,
a presence vibrating in the land,
a presence pulsating in the wilderness,
a presence 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!
The whole Earth is filled with your glory.

Invocation/Call to Worship

(Leaders may call creation to worship from different points in the place of worship.)

L We invite the rivers to worship with us:

P the Mississippi, the Hudson,
and all the rivers that flow to the sea.

L We invite the streams to sing:

P perch, sunfish, and flashing bass,
trout streams and gleaming fountains.

L We invite the fauna to praise God with us:

P loon, heron, and mallard duck,
dragonflies and sleepy tortoises.

L We join with the waters in praising God:

P **waterfalls singing upstream
and ripples dancing at the river mouth.**

L We celebrate the song of the river!

P **Sing, river, sing!**

Procession and Song

(The children enter the church with symbols of the river—tall reeds, shiny rocks, and banners or balloons portraying turtles, frogs, and other river creatures. They are paraded for all to see and placed beside the flowing water at the center of the sanctuary. Two children may carry pitchers of water that are poured into the flowing water.)

Refrain/Reflection

(After each verse of the refrain we pause to reflect silently on God's close presence in creation, especially in the rivers. These interludes may include soft music, silence, or sounds of the river.)

Be still and feel the presence of God,
the presence pulsing, pulsing through Earth,
be still and feel the pulse of God.

(Interlude)

Be still and hear the Spirit of God,
the Spirit breathing, breathing through Earth,
be still and hear the breath of God.

(Interlude)

Be still, behold the glory of God,
the glory filling, filling this Earth.
be still, behold the face of God.

Melody: 'Be Still and Know That I Am God'
Words: Norman C Habel

Confession

(A small piece of rosemary, a sprig of holly, a leaf, or another plant may be given to each worshipper as an aid to remember.)

L As we take this in our hands we remember and confess:

**P. We remember the rivers God created
in Eden and across our planet,
rivers that are the lifeblood of Earth
and the soul of all that lives.**

**We remember the streams of our past,
the pools and ponds where we played
and felt the soft caress of water,
the touch of life on our skin,
and the feeling of celebration
as we splashed and played.**

L. Jesus Christ, water of life, hear our cry.

**P We regret that we have become alienated from Earth
and treated this garden planet as a beast to be tamed,
as a domain to be dominated,
and as a place to be ruled for our gain.**

L We remember and confess how we have violated and polluted
the rivers of our garden planet.

*(Representatives approach the flowing water at the center with symbols of how we
have polluted our waterways. These may include two large bowls of water. Into
one is poured red dye representing the toxins we have allowed to flow into the
rivers, and into another is poured crude pieces of waste. These bowls are held
aloft and then placed near the flowing water.)*

**P. We are sorry.
We have polluted our rivers with poisons.
We have treated our streams as waste dumps.
We have drained our wetlands of life.
We have turned living waters into currents of death.
We are sorry. We are sorry.**

Absolution

L Christ hears your confession from the Jordan,
forgives your sins against the river,
and calls you now to open your ears and your hearts
to revive rather than to desecrate the rivers
pulsing through our planet.

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

L. I speak for Christ:
I invite you to come home to Earth,
and I call you to care for this planet with love,
to care for its rivers as I have cared for you,
and to join me in healing creation.

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

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.

Gloria in Excelsis

L Glory to God in the highest!

P And on Earth peace with our kin in creation!

Hymn of Praise

Prayer for the Day

P. God, our Creator, whose glory fills our planet, help us to discern your vibrant presence among us and our kin in creation, especially in the rivers, the streams, and the waterways of Earth. Help us to empathize with your creatures who are suffering and to serve you as agents for healing the rivers. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and restores all things in creation. Amen.

Readings for the Fourth Sunday in Creation

Old Testament Genesis 8:20–22; 9:12–17 “God’s promise to Earth”
After the flood, God promised that Earth and all of life on Earth will be preserved by God, in spite of the sins of human beings.

Psalms Psalm 104:27–33 “God’s sustenance of Earth”
The psalmist celebrates how God sustains all life on Earth through the Spirit and calls on God to rejoice in God’s own creation.

Epistle Revelation 22:1–5 “God’s healing for Earth”
When creation is restored, a river will flow directly from God with trees of life growing on either side to bring healing to all nations on Earth

Gospel Matthew 28:1–10 “God’s celebration with Earth”
The resurrection of Christ was also celebrated by creation. An earthquake accompanies the advent of the angel and the rolling of the stone.

Sermon

Creation Creed

**P. We believe that God creates all things,
renews all things, and celebrates all things.**

**We believe Earth is a sanctuary,
a sacred planet filled with God’s presence,
a home for us to share with all creatures.
We believe every creature joins us in praising God.
We see many suffer with Earth
because of human crimes against creation.**

**We believe that God became incarnate
as a part of Earth, Jesus Christ,
that he lived and breathed and spoke among us,
suffered and died on a cross,
for all human beings and for all creation.**

**We believe that the risen Jesus Christ
fills the whole creation,
reconciling all things to God,
renewing all things.**

**We believe the Spirit renews life in creation,
groans in empathy with every suffering creature,
and waits with us for the rebirth of the whole creation.**

**We believe that with Christ we will rise
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation,
reconciled, restored, and renewed.**

Offertory

Offering Prayer

L. God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our thanksgiving and as a sign of our concern for those in need, including all our fellow creatures on Earth.

P. With all creation, we bless our Creator.

Prayers of the People

Creation Prayer

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the hills and the trees.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit,
groans from the deserts, the plains, and the winds.**

**Jesus Christ, make our souls sensitive to the call of our kin,
species in pain calling from land, sea, and air.
Jesus Christ, teach us to care. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace

The Great Thanksgiving

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 the Maker of heaven and earth.

P **It is right to join every creature in praising 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.

You chose human beings
to be your servants on Earth,
to care for our garden home;
you suffered when they desecrated
the Earth and its waters and lands.

Your Spirit was the life impulse in all things,
restoring the broken and healing the wounded,
groaning in anticipation of a new creation,
stirring with new life born of water and the Spirit.

You chose to be born a human being,
to become a part of Earth,
to suffer, die, and rise from the dead

to redeem humankind, restore creation,
and reconcile all born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your presence is the living power 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
and all things that exist
are full of your presence
and glorify your name. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

In response to the great mystery of this sacred meal we proclaim our faith:

**P Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

**C 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 with all our kin.**

Hymn/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 (with Song)

Dismissal Blessing

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 worshippers return from the Eucharist they are invited to place a
candle in a sand-filled candle stand in memory of one of their kin in
the river who has become extinct in recent years.)*

Thanksgiving

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.**

Commission

L **Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,**

honoring the rivers God has created
to provide all creatures with the water of life.

P **We follow our Lord, the crucified Christ,
we will listen for cries of injustice from Earth,
we will groan with a creation burdened by our sin.**

**We will follow our Lord, the risen Christ,
we will be partners with Christ in healing our planet,
we will join the Wounded Healer as he restores all things.**

**We will care for creation.
We will nurture the rivers.
We will love our kin.
We will celebrate life.**

Blessing

L May the God who is above all and through all and in all
fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in Earth,
the pulsing of Christ through Earth,
and the dream of the Spirit
that all will be reconciled, renewed and restored,
through Christ our wounded healer.

Dismissal

L Go in peace, serving Christ.

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

Recession Hymn

(As the children leave the church with all the symbols of the river, the living things of the river join us in thanking God. Children may also remove and carry out the symbols of pollution.)