

A Liturgy for Earth Day
April 22, 2018
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Call to Worship

Leader: Consider the sun, the moon, and the stars.

All: God's power is on display in the heavens.

Leader: Look at the wildflowers in the fields.

All: They reflect the beautiful, creative heart of God.

Leader: Pay attention to the sparrows.

All: God cares for the smallest creatures.

Leader: Listen to the sounds of the wind and the surf.

All: All of nature sings God's praises.

Call to Confession

In confession, we tell the truth about ourselves to the God who created us and already knows the truth about us. In confession, we trust our loving Creator to forgive us once again.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

**Lord, we have sinned, and have harmed our relationship
with you, with each other, and with your good creation.**

**We selfishly hoard resources
that you intend for us to share.**

**We trample across your land
and claim it as our own.**

**We take what we want
with little regard for what others need.**

Lord, forgive us.

**Teach us to value the natural world as your good creation,
and to care for it in ways that honor our Creator. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

We were created by a loving God, whose saving grace is greater than all our sin. In Jesus, the Christ, we are forgiven.

Prayer for Illumination

Lord of all creation, you gave us eyes to see and ears to hear; thoughtful minds and compassionate hearts. Open them, Lord, so that we can meet you in your word this morning, then give us the faith to respond to your word with our eyes and ears, our hearts and our minds. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- **This is “Good Shepherd” Sunday.** Two of the four lectionary texts (Psalm 23 and John 10:11-18) point us in that direction. The focus is not on our role as shepherd/elders in the church, but on our life as sheep, whose well-being is in the hands of the Good Shepherd. In the context of Earth Day, these passages offer a useful starting point for reflection on the dependence/interdependence of the created world (us included!) and on God’s activity as provider.
- **If you aren’t in the mood for sheep, today’s Epistle (1 John 3:16-24) challenges us to turn our loving thoughts (and good prayers) into tangible actions that meet real needs (vv. 16-18).** I think the call to act for the welfare of others includes a call to good stewardship of and care for the planet we share.
- **If pastoral needs warrant something different, consider Matthew 6:25-34.** In times of anxiety, the calming, comforting power of the natural world has been well-attested. Rather than looking to creation with “doom and gloom”-colored glasses, invite your congregation to find peace and encouragement and comfort in the way that God’s power, goodness, and grace are on display in the natural world.

Prayers of the People

Christ Jesus, in you all things in heaven and on earth were created, and in you all things hold together. In you, we find life—and life abundant.

For the gift of life, we give you thanks.

(time of silent prayer)

For the beauty and majesty and wonder of creation, we give you thanks.

(time of silent prayer)

For the bounty of the earth: the food, the clean water, and the air on which our lives depend, we give you thanks.

(time of silent prayer)

When you created the world, Lord, you declared that it was good; but now all creation suffers the effects of sin, and all creation groans for redemption. In the silence, we pray for all who work to restore what has been broken, endangered, or polluted by our sinful choices.

(time of silent prayer)

Lord, empower us as stewards of your creation to honor you in the way we care for the creation. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

“The natural world is God’s. Its resources, beauty, and order are given in trust to all peoples, to care for, to conserve, to enjoy, to use for the welfare of all, and thereby to glorify God” (Cumberland Presbyterian Confession of Faith, 1.12). May the God who has given us so much be

glorified in our giving.

Offertory Prayer

Lord God, we are humbled by your generosity and provision. Receive these gifts as our grateful response to your many blessings, and help us to be good stewards of these gifts and of every opportunity you give us to use them in kingdom-building, life-affirming ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Charge and Benediction

The God who created us cares for us;
the God who gave us life longs for us to live with abundance;
the God who blesses us with resources wants us to steward them well.

Go, brothers and sisters, out into the world that God loves:
and with the blessing of God the Creator,
the grace of Jesus Christ the Son,
and the power of the Holy Spirit,
live and love and speak and act as the people of God. Amen.