



Worship Service Theme: Season of Creation¹
(Sept. 1 to Oct. 4)

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

Natural objects, such as pinecone, leaf, seashell, rock, cactus, plant

Optional: recordings of natural sounds, such as ocean, birdsong, whale song, wind, rain. Play these before and after the service, if desired.

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time today.

The month of September is recognized by many Christian denominations as the Season of Creation. It's a time when the world's Christians are invited to pray and commit to caring for creation. The season ends on October 4, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of those who love and care for the Earth. So today we'll be considering the natural creation around us, its special role in proclaiming God's glory, and our role as stewards of our earthly home.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," together:

¹ Resources gratefully adapted from SeasonofCreation.org.

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:
For the Beauty of the Earth
Amazing Grace

First reading: Psalm 19:1-4 (NLT)

¹ The heavens proclaim the glory of God.

The skies display God's craftsmanship.

² Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make God known.

³ They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.

⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:
Holy, Holy, Holy
Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold

together. ¹⁸ And Christ is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Fairest Lord Jesus

His Eye is On the Sparrow

Interactive Homily: Let's think a little more about creation and our role in caring for the Earth.

- The writer of Psalm 19 says that creation, nature itself, proclaims God's glory. I wonder what you think *glorious* means?
 - Dictionary: "having striking beauty or splendor that evokes feelings of delighted admiration." I love that! Glorious things are things we admire and that make us feel delighted.
- What have you seen in nature that you would consider glorious—things that give you delight? *[have people generate a list]*
 - Stars, Milky Way, Grand Canyon, snowflakes, oceans, desert
 - Even sounds, such as birdsong, waves or running water, thunder ...
- Have you ever used the phrase that something "speaks" to you? As in, "that scenery or that song really speaks to me." I wonder what you think that means?
 - When something "speaks" to you, it doesn't necessarily make a sound. Instead, it stirs something in your heart and soul; it connects you with something greater than yourself.
- One spiritual practice is to observe something slowly and carefully to draw closer to God. Creation is a great tool for this!
 - Picture a special place in your own history: a field, forest, river, urban park. Or use items around you from nature. *(Display items or photos of natural objects.)*
 - Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you consider these natural forms:

- How does this object feel, smell, look, sound?
- How do you identify with this object? What thoughts or memories does it bring up for you? Does it “speak” to you, and if so, how?
- In particular, how does this natural item or thought speak to you about God? *(Examples: a seashell might remind you of the ocean, which could bring to mind vastness, power and peace of God. A mountain might remind you of God’s majesty and steadfastness, that God is unshakeable and eternal. Clouds may remind you of God’s artistry, his ability to look down on the whole earth, and his care for creation by giving us rain.)*
- The beauty and majesty we see, hear, smell, and taste all around us speak to us about how awesome God is.
- God continues to be intimately involved in creation. In the book of Colossians, the apostle Paul stresses a connection between Jesus and the physical creation.² In particular:
 - Christ is the very image of God (Colossians 1:15)
 - Christ is the Creator (1:16)
 - Christ sustains all things (1:17)
 - Christ is the reconciler of all things in heaven and on earth (1:20).
 - Jesus, God’s Word made flesh here on Earth, heals and is healing everything that is broken in this world, bringing glory to God.
- As followers of Christ, we’re part of God’s creation story! We’re called to love and care for God’s creation. What are ways we can honor and be good caretakers of the Earth?
 - *[generate simple ideas for caring for the Earth, e.g., recycling, using less plastic, not littering, turning off faucets and lights when not in use, using a clothesline, planting trees and gardens ...]*

Let’s take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the gift of nature, to consider our role in caring for creation, and to give glory to God as Creator.

(Silent Prayer)

² <https://preachingforgodsworld.org/the-inter-connectedness-of-god-land-and-people/>

Loving God, ... Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not [destroy] it, that we may listen to the world you have created and not close ourselves off from it. God, who listens to every living thing, help us listen as you do.³

Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

All Creatures of Our God and King

This is My Father's World

Third Reading: Quotes for the Season of Creation

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in. —American agricultural scientist and professor George Washington Carver

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. —Chief Seattle, Suquamish and Duwamish Nations

The future of our fragile, beautiful planet home is in our hands. As God's family, we are stewards of God's creation. We can be wantonly irresponsible, or we can be caring and compassionate. —South African Anglican bishop and human rights activist Reverend Desmond Tutu

When I saw my first national park — Acadia — it was transformative. When I looked out at the great beauty untouched by human hand, I thought, "The same

³ <https://seasonofcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SOC-2022-Celebration-Guide-Final-English.pdf>

entity that made that also made me. And if that's beautiful and perfect, so must I be too."— author and national parks ambassador Audrey Peterman⁴

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside. – Anne Frank, 15-year-old Holocaust victim and diarist of Jewish heritage

Suggested Hymns:

Shall We Gather at the River

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Fourth Reading: A Greeting, from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, inspired by Psalm 148⁵

Greetings in the name of our God who is good:
whose love endures forever.

Greetings to you, sun and moon, you stars of the southern sky:
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Sunrise and sunset, night and day:
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Greetings to you, mountains and valleys, grassland and scree,
glacier, avalanche, mist and snow:
give to our God your thanks and praise. ...

Greetings to you, dolphins and kahawai, sea lion and crab, coral, anemone, pipi
and shrimp:
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Greetings to you, rabbits and cattle, moths and dogs,
kiwi and sparrow and tui and hawk:

Elephant, lions, rhinos, and giraffes, ostrich, sheep, cattle, scorpion and dung
beetle:

give to our God your thanks and praise.

Greetings to you, women and men,
Elders and children, women and men,

⁴ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/columns/heidi-stevens/ct-black-visitors-national-parks-balancing-1120-20161117-column.html>

⁵ *A New Zealand Prayer Book/He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*, page 457, Lynn Pedersen 2016, Inspired by Psalm 148 & Song of Creation

Diverse cultures of this rainbow land:
Typists and teachers, cleaners, and clerks,
learners, job-seekers, TV and sports' stars,
All who care, who love and who pray,
Who laugh and learn, who rest and who play.
give to our God your thanks and praise.

Suggested Hymns:

Jesus Shall Reign

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Closing Blessing: Receive a special benediction for the Season of Creation:

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marveled at the lilies of the field,
Who transforms chaos to order,
Lead us to transform our lives and the church
To listen to the voice of all creatures,
That reflect God's glory in creation.⁶

(Strike bell as you say the word "Lord")

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)

Extra Material:

"Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness. Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in the heavens you have made them, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and

⁶ <https://seasonofcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SOC-2022-Celebration-Guide-Final-English.pdf>

precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night.
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us,
and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you; through those
who endure sickness and trial. Happy those who endure in peace, for they will be
crowned.” —St. Francis of Assisi

[Creation] is the divine page that you must listen to; it is the book of the universe
that you must observe. The pages of Scripture can only be read by those who
know how to read and write, while everyone, even the illiterate, can read the
book of the universe. —theologian and philosopher St. Augustine

God has written [the gospel] not only in books, but also in trees and other
creatures. —German priest and theologian Martin Luther