

Planet Earth Sunday

Introduction

Earth refers to the fragile green blue planet, that chunk of stardust in the solar system we now call home. Earth is also the domain that is filled with God's glory, the living presence of God that appeared on Sinai, in the tabernacle, and that now permeates Earth itself (Isaiah: 6.3). God's same glory is revealed in the Word made flesh from the Earth and born on planet Earth (John 1:14).

Setting

To capture the sense of Earth as our planet home, a model of Earth or the solar system may be constructed in the sanctuary. It is helpful to emphasize the special character of Earth as a living planet in comparison with other planets, comets, or even stars. Children may wear costumes to represent, or they may carry symbols, of the various planets reflecting the contrast between other planets and planet Earth. Or they may be dressed as astronauts viewing Earth from space. Scientists and artists in the community may help with conceptualizing Earth as a living planet. Earth may be a large globe suspended above the altar.

Special Focus

A special focus for this service is the unique nature of our planet, the amazing mystery of life on our planet, and the bond we have with Earth as our precious home.

Themes

In our call to worship, we invite all the domains of Earth to worship with us. In our confession to recall how we have become alienated from Earth and how all have treated it as an endless resource to be exploited. In the readings, we discover the story of Earth being born (Genesis 1), how the Word continues to be the impulse that creates in Earth, and the amazing truth that the Word is born of flesh and blood on Earth. Earth is where Jesus is born, made of the stuff of Earth—a message reflected in the Affirmation of Faith.

Optional Liturgies

Another Earth liturgy, which draws on the rich traditions of Genesis 1, is entitled *Song of Earth* and appears in *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004).

Songs

A special song/hymn written for Earth Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known Easter hymn *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*. The words follow.

SONG OF EARTH

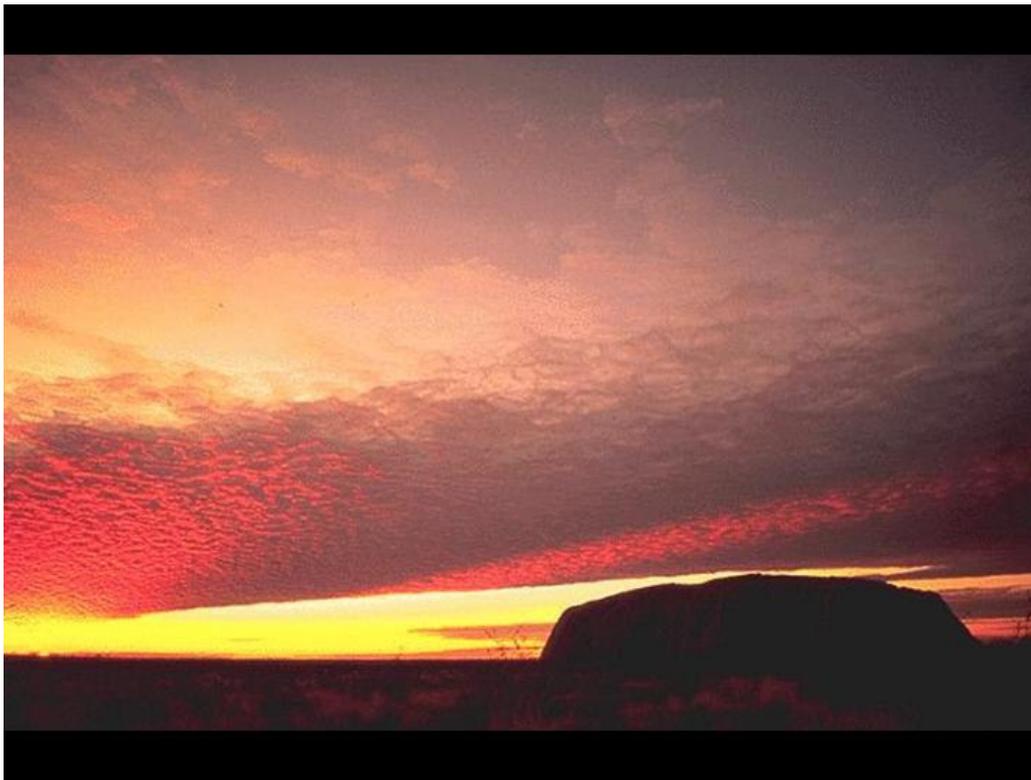
1. Hail the Earth that first appeared. Alleluia!
When a word from God was heard. Alleluia!
Let the Earth arise and be. Alleluia!
Filled with living mystery. Alleluia!
2. Hail the rainbow flying high. Alleluia!
Spun by God across the sky. Alleluia!
Giving Earth a solemn word. Alleluia!
Never to unleash a flood. Alleluia!
3. Hail the planet blue and green. Alleluia!
Where the face of God is seen. Alleluia!
Glory filling all the Earth. Alleluia!
Celebrating every birth. Alleluia!
4. Hail our body made with clay. Alleluia!
Given breath to praise and pray. Alleluia!
Clay God honored by God's birth. Alleluia!
As a human life on Earth. Alleluia!
5. Hail the groans of Earth in pain. Alleluia!
From the weight of human sin. Alleluia!
Longing for the Christ who died. Alleluia!
All creation to revive. Alleluia!

Words: © Norman Habel 1999

*First Sunday in the Season of Creation
(United States Version 1)*

Planet Earth Sunday

We worship with our planet home



*“Let the heavens be glad and let Earth rejoice”
Psalm 96:11*

PLANET EARTH SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with planet Earth. We join the Psalmists and rejoice with Earth. We sing with Earth, our planet home spinning through space. We celebrate Earth as a sacred place, a sanctuary filled with God's presence.

Gathering

Leader In the name of God, who creates planets,
the name of Jesus Christ, born on planet Earth,
and the name of the Spirit who envelops our planet. Amen.

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

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

P **Holy! Holy! Holy!**
Earth is filled with your presence.

Procession and Song

We join in song with the children, perhaps dressed as astronauts, as they enter the church holding symbols of our solar system—sun, Earth, moon and the other planets. They place these symbols in a circle near the altar or in front of the sanctuary. We rejoice as children spin around in space before putting their symbols in a set place. They may hold up the symbols while the Call to Worship is shouted from the corners of the church.

Call to Worship

L1 Planet Earth, spinning silently through space:

P **Celebrate your beauty and your grace,
your special place in our solar system.**

L2 Planet Earth, gleaming green and blue:

P **Rejoice in your ocean currents,
as they dance and swirl with hope.**

L3 Planet Earth, pulsing with life:

**P Join in praise with all your fauna and flora,
as they sing their songs to the Lord.**

L1 Planet Earth, enveloped in the breath of God:

**P Bless all your creatures this day,
with the life-giving breath of God.**

L2 Planet Earth, our precious, fragile home:

**P Celebrate, with all your children,
God's presence in our planet home.**

L3 Spin, Planet Earth, spin!

P Sing, Planet Earth, sing!

We name, silently or aloud, other creatures or parts of the Earth, and we invite them to join us in praising our Creator.

L1 We celebrate the song of our planet!

P Sing! Planet Earth! Sing!

Remembering

We use a leaf, a stone, leaves or some other symbol to assist us in stirring our memories and connect with creation.

L Take the symbol you received at the door, rub it between your fingers, and share with the person next to you a special memory of Earth as a planet that stirred your spirit and your sense of wonder.

L We remember planet Earth with wonder.

**P We remember our excitement,
when we first saw the orb of Earth,
the mystery of a living green-blue planet,
a fragile speck of stardust,
made into a magnificent home.**

L We remember and rejoice.

**P Thank you, God, for the privilege
of seeing Earth anew from space.**

Confession

L As we hold these symbols aloft,
we remember and confess
that we have become alienated from Earth
and viewed this planet as disposable,
a source of endless resources,
a mere stopping place on our way to heaven.

Representatives walk through the church with (harmless) spray cans that represent just one of the ways we have polluted the atmosphere and helped produce greenhouse gases and global warming. A green veil may then be placed over the symbol of planet Earth.

**P We are sorry.
We have polluted the atmosphere with greenhouse gases.
We have turned our greed into global warming.
We have helped cause the arctic regions to melt.
We are part of society that loves progress more than the planet.
We are sorry. We are sorry.**

L We are sorry.

P We are sorry. We are sorry.

Absolution

L Christ hears your confession
and forgives your sins against Earth.

**P Christ, teach us to love Earth as our home
and the planet as a precious sanctuary.**

L. I speak for Christ:
I invite you to celebrate Earth as your home
and to revere this planet as God's sanctuary.

**P Shalom! Shalom!
Earth is our home!**

Christ Have Mercy

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.

Glory to God

L Glory to God in the highest!

P And on Earth peace with our kin in creation!

Prayer for the Day

P God, our Creator, as we reflect on the mystery of our fragile planet, we celebrate the wonders of Earth as our home. Help us to discern how we have polluted our planet and to empathize with the groaning of creation beneath us. Teach us to sense the presence of God pulsing through Earth as a living green-blue sanctuary. Teach us to love Earth as our home. In the name of Christ, the Word of God, who is the creative impulse in all creation. Amen.

Readings for Planet Sunday

Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-25 ‘The Birth of Earth’

God creates the physical universe. The central character in the Genesis 1 story is Earth. Earth waits beneath the waters below and, at God’s summons, emerges from the waters like a child. Then, at God’s command, Earth brings forth all the fauna and flora on our planet.

Psalm: Psalm 33:1-9 ‘The Word of the Lord in creation’

The Psalmist summons us all, Earth and her inhabitants, to praise God with song and musical instruments because of what God’s word has done. The Word is the means by which God created the sky, land and all the seas.

Epistle: Romans 1:18-23 ‘Creation proclaims God’s presence’

St. Paul declares that people have no real excuse for thinking that God is not real or that God is not really present. Take a look at creation! It reveals God’s eternal power and divine nature.

Gospel: John 1:1-14 ‘The Word becomes part of Earth’

The Word, which has come before all things and is truly God, is the source of all creation. And that Word, Jesus, becomes flesh and blood, the very stuff of creation. The Word of life becomes part of the living planet Earth.

Children's Address: The Birth of Earth

Prayer: Thank you God for making Earth my home and for finding me wherever I am on my planet home. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

- L Let us affirm our faith together.
- 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 part 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.**
- Women We believe the Spirit renews life in creation,
 groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
 and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.**
- Together We believe that with Christ we will rise
 and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

Passing of the Peace

- L Let us share the peace of the Lord with one another.
- P The peace of the Lord be with you

Song

Sermon/Reflection

Song

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 deep thanks and our concern
for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

P. **With all creation, we bless our Creator.**

Prayers of the People

<p><i>We thank God for a wondrous planet home. We celebrate with all our kin. We pray for all those in need. We name them now. We close with the following prayer.</i></p>
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Creation Prayer

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the land, the seas, and the skies.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit in
creation, groans of longing for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration from the sea, the forest, and the air.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

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 our Creator.

P **It is right to join creation in thanking 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 to be born a human being,
to become a part of Earth,

to suffer, die, and rise from death
to redeem humankind, renew creation,
and affirm all born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your presence is the living impulse 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,
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**

Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Invitation

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.**

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

Distribution Songs

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

<p><i>As we return from the Lord's Table, we light a candle and place it on the sand-filled candle-stand in memory of departed loved ones or in memory of fellow creatures who have become extinct.</i></p>

Thanksgiving

L Let us give thanks for this meal.

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.*

Sending Out

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

Hold again the symbol in your hands
and go forth to serve.

P **We will remember our planet home!**
We will groan with all creation!
We will celebrate with Earth!

L Will you care for creation?

P **We will care for creation!**
We will nurture our planet!
We will celebrate life!

Blessing

L 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 with the joy Christ within you.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

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

Recession and Song

We join the children in song as they process from the church with their symbols of the solar system. We cry with the psalmist: 'Let the heavens be glad and let the Earth rejoice' Psalm 96:11.