

# *Sky Sunday*

## *(United States Version 2)*

### *Introduction*

**Sky** refers to the all the domains of creation above and around Earth. Sky especially refers to the domains close to Earth—the wind, the clouds, the air—the atmosphere.

It is important to note that the term translated ‘heavens’ in the Old Testament normally means sky, not some abode of God far above. It is the sky in Psalm 19 that proclaims God’s glory, God’s visible presence on Earth.

### *Setting*

It is appropriate to create a sense of sky in the sanctuary with various symbols of domains around Earth—stars, galaxies, clouds. Images of sunrise, moonlight, and storms can be projected on screens. The special focus below suggests that we string prayer flags or streamers across the sky above the worshippers.

### *Special Focus*

A special focus for this service is the use of prayer flags in all the colors of the rainbow. In a number of cultures, flags with prayers written on them are waved or suspended on cords in the air for the wind to carry the prayers to God. The spirit in the wind aids us as we direct our prayers to the skies. Each person may wish to write his/her own prayer on a standard prayer flag that is suspended on chords above the altar or above the worshippers. Children may also bring flags, wave them in the procession, and locate them in sand boxes around the altar. These prayers may reflect our concern for creation: “Help us heal creation.” “Help us keep the trees.” “Help us save the birds.”

### *Themes*

In our call to worship we invite all the domains of the sky to worship with us. In our confession, we recall how we have polluted the atmosphere. In the readings, we become aware that the skies not only announce the presence of God in Earth, but also that the skies mourn/grow dark in empathy when Earth below is wounded. More specifically, the sky grows dark with mourning when Christ hangs on the cross. The skies are in tune with the presence of God revealed on Earth, whether in majesty or in misery.

## *Optional Liturgies*

Another sky liturgy, which draws on the traditions of Native Americans, is entitled *Song of Sky* and appears in *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004).

## *Songs*

A special song/hymn written for Sky Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known hymn *Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken*. The words follow.

### **SONG OF SKY**

1. Lord of suns and stars exploding  
Galaxies and swirling skies,  
Where you chose to show your glory  
Took the heavens by surprise.  
Lord of solar winds and wisdom,  
Super stars that blow our mind,  
Choosing such a fragile planet  
Hardly seems a grand design.
2. On this piece of stardust swirling,  
On this spinning spot in space,  
Life itself was born like music,  
When you showed your hidden face.  
What an honor to be chosen,  
Silent planet blue and green,  
Filled with glory, grace, and gardens,  
Where the breath of God is seen.
3. What is even more amazing  
We have poisoned Earth like fools.  
Help us change our way of living,  
Love the Earth and love her rules.  
Help us stem the tide of traders  
Leaving Earth an empty store;  
Join us now Creator Spirit,  
Come renew your Earth once more.

Words: © Norman Habel 1999

*Third Sunday in the Season of Creation  
(United States Version 2)*

## *Sky Sunday*

*We worship with the skies above*



*“The sky proclaims the glory of God, and the firmament  
announces the work of God’s hands.”*

*Psalm 19:1*

# *Third Sunday in the Season of Creation*

## *(Australian Version 2)*

### GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

*This Sunday we worship with the skies. We celebrate with the clouds, the winds, the dusk, and the dawn. We listen to the sounds of the sky proclaiming God's presence. We stand in awe before the vast reaches of space above us and thank God for this fragile piece of stardust we call Earth.*

- 2. A psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung when the presiding ministers enter or after the greeting.*
- 3. An Invocation, such as the one that follows, may be said before or after the greeting.*

In the name of the Creator, who colors the sky,  
the name of Christ, who died under dark skies,  
and the name of the Spirit, the wind in the sky. Amen.

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

- 4. The Greeting. The presiding minister greets the people in these or other suitable words.*

The Lord of life be with you.  
**And also with you.**

- 5. These or similar responses are used.*

Christ, we gather in your name  
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.**

- 6. An Invitation. The minister or members of the congregation may invite domains of the sky to worship in these or similar words.*

We invite the skies to worship with us:  
**the subtle orange skies at dawn**  
**and the bold red skies at sunset.**

We join the heavens in praising God:  
**proclaiming God's glory across the globe  
and hailing God's name with the evening stars.**

We join with the atmosphere in worship:  
**the air, the moisture, the oxygen,  
the wind, and all the expressions of God's Spirit.**

We call the clouds to celebrate with storms:  
**to carry the life-giving drops of rain,  
that give hope and healing to Earth.**

We invite the winds to join our petitions:  
**to carry our prayers to God above  
and to breathe our hopes to Christ in person.**

We celebrate the song of the skies!  
**Sing! Skies! Sing!**

We invite you to name sky creatures  
to join us in worship.

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

L We celebrate the song of the skies!

P **Sing! Skies! Sing!**

7. *A hymn or song may follow that celebrates creation, especially the domains of the sky. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church waving prayer flags on which prayers for parts of creation have been written. These flags may be suspended above the sanctuary or the worshippers.*

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

8. ***A Remembering.** A small piece of rosemary, a leaf or some other symbol of remembrance may be given to the people as a reminder of our connection with creation.*

As we rub this fragrant symbol in our hands we remember times when we have been amazed by the sky, both at night and in daylight.

**O God, we thank you for the wonders of the heavens and the  
splendor of the skies.**

We remember and confess how we have polluted our skies with toxins.  
**Christ, who ascended into a cloud, hear our cry.**

**9. A Confession**

We remember and confess  
that we have turned the surrounding sky  
into a new domain to be conquered  
rather than a presence to protect us.  
**We are sorry. We have polluted the atmosphere with waste,  
We have depleted the ozone layer that protects us,  
We have filled our skies with floating toxins.  
We are sorry. We are sorry.**

We are sorry.  
**We are sorry. We are sorry.**

**10. The Absolution.** *The people may sit in silence or they may name aloud sins against the sky or the atmosphere. The presiding minister declares the absolution.*

Christ hears your confession and forgives your sins against the atmosphere,  
**Christ, teach us to love the skies that surround  
and sustain our planet.**

I speak for Christ:  
I invite you to come home to Earth  
by rejoicing under her skies.  
**Shalom! Shalom! We are coming home!**

**11. The Kyrie.** *The minister may add the Kyrie Eleison.*

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.**

**12. The Gloria in Excelsis,** *a suitable hymn of praise or the following invocation may be said or sung.*

Glory to God in the highest!  
**And on Earth peace with all creation!**

**13. The Collect of the Day.** *The presiding minister may say:*

Let us pray.

*The community may pray silently. The following collect is said or sung.*

**God, our Creator, as we look into the skies, we celebrate the wonders of the worlds that surround us. Help us to see your presence in the evening sky, your spirit in the wind, your mercy in the falling rain. Teach us to hear the good news from the sky celebrating the glory of God in Earth. Rejoice with us as we behold the dawn revealing the mysteries of the skies above and Earth below. In the name of Christ who unites heaven and Earth. Amen.**

#### **THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

*14. All may sit for the first three readings for the Third Sunday in Creation, and rise for the Gospel. After each reading, the reader may say:*

This is the word of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*15. A reading from Jeremiah chapter 4 verses 23 to 28.*

‘When the heavens mourn.’ Jeremiah sees Earth return to chaos and the skies respond with mourning.

*15. Psalm 19 verses 1 to 6.*

‘Good News from sky.’ The Psalmist declares that the sky announces God’s presence on Earth, and space proclaims the work of God’s hands.

*17. A reading from the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians chapter 2 verses 9 to 13.*

‘Jesus is now the Cosmic Christ.’ Jesus Christ, after being humbled in death, is exalted above every name.

*18. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark chapter 15 verses 33 to verse 39.*

**Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

‘Three hours of darkness.’ When Jesus hangs of the cross, the sky turns black in sympathy.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*19. A Children’s Address: A story may be told. A hymn or song suitable for children may be sung.*

*20. **The Affirmation of Faith.** The Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed may be said here or after the sermon, or this Affirmation of Faith may be used.*

God creates all things,  
renews all things, and celebrates all things.  
**This we believe.**

Earth is a sanctuary,  
a sacred planet filled with God's presence,  
a home for us to share with our kin.  
**This we believe.**

God became flesh and blood  
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.  
**This we believe.**

The risen Jesus  
is the Christ at the center of creation  
reconciling all things to God,  
renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.  
**This we believe.**

The Holy Spirit renews life in creation,  
groans in empathy with a suffering creation,  
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.  
**This we believe.**

**We believe that with Christ we will rise  
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

*21. **A Sermon.** This may be followed by a time of congregational reflection involving questions and discussion and mutual encouragement. The sermon may be followed by a hymn that reflects the message of the sermon.*

## **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

*22. **The Prayers.** One or more members of the congregation may lead the people in prayer. The prayers conclude with the following prayer or another suitable prayer.*

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with Earth.  
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,  
cries for justice from the air, the clouds, and the sky.  
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 stars, the rains, and the light.  
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

*23. A hymn or song may be sung.*

#### **THE GREETING OF PEACE**

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.  
**We meet in Christ's name and share God's peace.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

*24. **The Greeting of Peace** may be shared by the people, after which the gifts of the people are brought to the Lord's table. They may be presented in silence or with a suitable prayer, such as the one that follows.*

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 as signs of our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.  
**With all creation, we praise our Creator.**

#### **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

*25. **A Prayer of Thanksgiving.** The presiding minister takes the bread and wine for the communion, places them on the Lord's Table and says the following or another Prayer of Thanksgiving.*

The Creator be with you and with all creation.  
**And also with you.**

Open your hearts.  
**We open them to our Creator.**

Let us give thanks to the Maker of heaven and earth.  
**It is right to join creation in thanking God.**

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.

Your Spirit is the life impulse in all things, renewing the barren and healing the wounded, groaning in anticipation of a new creation, stirring a new life born of water and the Spirit.

You chose to be born a human being, to become a part of Earth, to suffer, to die and to rise from death—to redeem humankind, to renew creation, and to 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.

**Holy, holy, holy, God of all life,  
Earth and sea and sky are full of your presence  
and glorify your name. Amen.**

**26. The Consecration.** The presiding minister says an authorized prayer of consecration, words of institution, or other suitable prayer.

**27. The Lord's Prayer,** if not already used, may be said here or after the communion.

### ***THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION***

**28. The Invitation.** *The presiding minister breaks the bread. The following invitation may be said.*

Come, for all things are now ready.

Come to the table 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.

**May we who share these gifts  
share Christ with one another  
and all our kin.**

**29. During the communion, various psalms, hymns, or anthems may be sung, including the following:**

**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.**

*30. **The Distribution.** The people receive the Holy Communion. As the people return to their places, they may light a candle in memory of departed loved ones or one of our kin who has become extinct.*

## **THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

*31. **The presiding minister says***

Let us give thanks for this meal.

*The people say the following prayer or another suitable prayer.*

**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.**

*32. **The Commission.** The members of the Earth care or Earth ministry team may announce practical plans for Earth care sponsored by the congregation. The congregation may be commissioned for ministry to Earth.*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,  
to serve him with love and compassion,  
to serve Earth by caring for creation,  
especially the atmosphere above  
that gives breath to all creatures on Earth.

**We will follow our crucified Lord,  
listening for cries of injustice from Earth,  
and groaning with creation.**

**We will follow the risen Christ  
to become partners in healing our planet.**

**We will care for creation,  
honoring the skies  
and celebrating life.**

*33. A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal.*

*34. **The Blessing.** The presiding minister says this or another appropriate blessing:*

Now may the penetrating 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.**

*or*

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 pulsing of Christ in creation,  
through whom all things are reconciled and renewed.  
**Amen.**

*35. The president or other minister may say:*

Go in peace,  
serving Christ and loving Earth!  
**We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.**