

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

Wilderness Sunday

We worship with creation in the wilds.



“Let the wilderness lift up its voice”. Isaiah 42:11

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

1. This Sunday we worship with creation in the wilderness. Ideally this would take place in a wilderness area—in a desert area or rugged terrain. The wilds can be experienced in the church building by using bold symbols of the wilderness—rugged rocks and tough grasses with desert life depicted on banners—located at key points throughout the church, including the sanctuary. At the center of the sanctuary, a large boulder or rock rises with small rocks around it. The large rock can also symbolize Christ as our rock.

2. A psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung when the presiding ministers enter or after the greeting.

3. An Invocation such as follows may be said before or after the greeting.

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.
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.* In these or similar words, the minister or members of the congregation may invite creatures of the wilderness to worship.

We invite the wilderness to worship with us:

**yhickets and rugged terrain,
deep gorges and mountain ranges.**

We invite the flora to sing in the sun:

cactus and tumbleweed, brush and bristle.

We join with the fauna of the wilds in praising God:

**lizards and gila monsters,
rattlesnakes and hovering hawks.**

We invite the spirit of the wilderness to join us in praise:

**songs of ancient custodians deep in the rock,
spirits of life deep in the sand and the hills.**

We celebrate the song of the wilderness!

Sing, wilds, sing!

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

The names of other creatures or parts of the wilderness may be added by members of the congregation.

We celebrate the song of the wilderness!

Sing, wilds, sing!

7. *A hymn or song may follow that celebrates creation, especially the world of the wilderness. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church with symbols of the wilds—rocks, tough grasses, together with banners of lizards, wild dogs, and similar wilderness creatures. These symbols may be placed on or near the large rock in the sanctuary.*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

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

As we take this plant in our hands, we remember the wilderness, a desert, or somewhere in the wild where we have visited or lived.

O God, we thank you for the wonders of creation and the gift of the wilds.

We remember and confess how we have destroyed wild domains of the wilderness.

Christ, from the wilderness, hear our cry.

We regret that we have forgotten Earth and treated this garden planet as a beast to be tamed and as a place to be ruled.

Christ, the hope of all creation, we lament our failings.

9. *A Confession. A symbol of our desecration and destruction of the wilderness may be held high above the large rock in the sanctuary. This symbol may be sticks of dynamite, a nuclear emblem, a large bottle marked greenhouse gas, or some other symbol meaningful to the local community.*

We have polluted deserts with radioactive waste, we have torn holes in the ozone layer, we have desecrated sacred sites in the mountains, and we have destroyed the homes of wild creatures.

Christ, the source of all life, we are sorry. We are sorry.

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

Christ hears your confession out in the wilds and forgives your sins against the wilderness.

Christ, teach us to love Earth as our home. Help us to return home to Earth.

I speak for Christ: I invite you to come home to Earth, and I call you to tend this planet by rejoicing in the wilderness.

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, whose glory fills our planet, help us to discern your vibrant presence among us, especially in the wonders of the wild in wilderness areas. Help us to be in solidarity with your wilderness creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the wild world of the wilderness. We ask this in the name of Christ, who reconciles and renews all things in creation. 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.*

15. *A reading from Joel chapter 1 verses 8 to 10 and verses 17 to 20*

“The mourning of the wild”

Some may assume that only humans suffer anguish

when there is a disaster, whether from nature or war. Joel reminds us that at such times the ground mourns and the creatures of the wild cry out to God.

This is the word of God.

Thanks be to God.

16. *Psalm 18 verses 1 to 19*

“The wild forces of creation”

The psalmist remembers how God employed the fierce forces of creation to intervene and rescue him.

17. *A reading from the Epistle of Paul to the Romans chapter 8 verses 18 to 27*

“The groaning of creation”

The gospel message of this text makes it clear that not only human beings are waiting for liberation. Creation is also longing for that day as a mother about to give birth.

18. *The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew chapter 3 verse 13 to chapter 4 verse 1*

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

“Jesus in the wild of the wilderness”

When Jesus is baptized, the Spirit that fills all of Earth now fills Christ in a special way. In response, Jesus retires to the wilderness to connect with creation. In Mark’s version, the wild animals and the angels join Jesus.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

19. *A Children’s Address: A hymn or song suitable for children may follow.*

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 all creatures.

This we believe.

God became incarnate,
a part of Earth, like Adam,
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 Spirit renews life in creation,
groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
and waits with us for the rebirth of all 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 other suitable prayer.

**Jesus Christ, teach us to be at one 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 from the
deserts, the plains, and the winds.
Jesus Christ, make our souls sensitive to the songs of our kin, songs of
celebration from the land, the sea, and the air.
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 a suitable prayer, such as the following one, may be used.

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 a sign of our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

With all creation, we bless 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 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, 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 death to redeem humankind, to renew creation, and to reconcile 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, 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.

**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 a prayer of consecration, words of institution, or another 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 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.

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

29. *During the communion, 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 their kin in the forests who have become extinct in recent years.*

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 the wilderness.*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,

to serve Earth by caring for creation,
honoring the wilderness that God has created
to evoke in us awe and wonder and praise.

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

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

**We will care for creation,
honoring the wilderness, loving our kin,
and celebrating life.**

33. *A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal. The wilderness joins us in thanking God, as the prophet says: 'Let the wilderness lift up its voice' Isaiah 42:11.*

34. ***The Blessing.** The presiding minister says this or other 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 God who is above all and through all and in all fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in Earth, and 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 creation!
We go in peace, serving Christ and tending the Earth.