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A liturgy for the Season of Creation (SoC) 2012: Earth Sunday. Source:

<http://ecofaith.org/mnc/soc>

You might also like to use elements of the original SoC liturgy: www.seasonofcreation.com, or the Seasons of the Spirit resource, which now also follows the SoC.

This liturgy was written to accompany the [ProjectReconnect](http://www.projectreconnect.org) DVD resource (which includes an all ages reflection, adult reflection, additional readings with video accompaniment and songs. You can also download the videos free at <http://ecofaith.org/mnc/soc>.

Instead of using video, you could organise to hold worship outside this month, and use the Earth itself to speak to you of God.

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For Project Reconnect users: about this liturgy and DVD

Welcome to the Season of Creation for 2012!

Thanks to the project reconnect team for inviting me to contribute to these DVDs. Over time, “contribute” shifted to “produce the whole thing” as I thought of new possibilities, though technical and time limitations meant that many of them were scaled back- maybe next year! Any technical glitches in September’s DVDs are my fault, not the regular teams!

I provided this liturgy which uses all or most of the resources on the DVD, so that you have a complete package if that is what you are looking for.

Of course, you might only pick a couple of things off the DVD and write your own liturgies, or be using the original Season of Creation resources, or even the Season of the Spirit resources.

The DVD itself has been arranged so that everything is on the one menu screen, so you don’t have to dive into submenus for the songs.



Hopefully the colour coding makes it easy to distinguish the reflections, all ages talk, extra resources and songs.

It has been a steep learning curve, both technically, and in terms of what seems to work when speaking to a camera instead of a live gathering, I hope you find the included material helpful in our common quest to live better on the Earth, as disciples seeking the reconciliation and renewal of all creation (for us Uniting Church types, that’s from the *Basis of Union* chapter 3).

Some songs appear in more than one version, usually one with and without lyrics, which you can play depending on whether you have the relevant CCLI license to screen words in public. The ones with copyrighted lyrics end in (c). Others have public domain lyrics and so only one version.

Some songs in earlier weeks are instrumental only due to difficulties getting good singing audio. Thanks to Ruth Roberts for playing them for me at short notice!

If you have a computer, this document, and possibly some extra videos, can be found in the extras folder on the DVD.

copyright notice

This liturgy was prepared by Jason John as part of the MNC Uniting Church ecoministry , and you are free to do whatever you like with it except sell it. If used unaltered, acknowledgment would be great. If altered, something like “based on ... by Jason John, MNC ecoministry” would do. To use the video versions of the songs from *Together in Song* you will need to check that you have permission to project the words in worship.

Setup ideas

You might like to play one of the many CDs of forest birds or forest noises in the background for the entirety of the service, or if your location suits, just open the windows!

In lieu of the other video resources, you could play “Home” (<http://homethemovie.org>) silently in the background, which has stunning images of our planet and what happens upon it.

A globe of the Earth, as big as possible, or even a big blue exercise ball, placed on a pedestal, would work well with the optional reading and all ages talk for this week.

You might want to appoint someone to jot down notes during the discussion, and/or to watch the reflection before hand, to use in the prayers of intercession.

Opening poem: Gerald Manly Hopkins 1844-89 adapted (DVD/download)

Don't hurry it as you read it. It will need practice to get the pacing right.

The Earth is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do we then now not wreck our rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears our smudge and shares our smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because God's Spirit over the bent
world broods with warm breast and with *ah!* bright wings.

Call to worship:

The Earth is full of the goodness/kindness of God
Let all the Earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe!
The LORD looks down from Heaven; and sees all humankind.
God is watching all the inhabitants of the Earth (Ps 33)

The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof! (Psalm 24:1)

Come let us worship the God of all the Earth!

Opening Song: for the beauty of the Earth (DVD/download)

Opening prayer:

God of 70,000, million million *million* stars and countless planets.
We give thanks for your interest in ours.
Genesis depicts you brooding over the face of the Earth, and walking through the garden
We gather as followers of the one whose dusty feet trod the Earth as he healed and taught and prayed.
You are welcome here.
We pray for a sense of your presence here amongst us, and an openness to what you have to say to us this morning.
Give us ears to hear and the courage to respond.
God, your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.
Amen

Introduction (DVD/download)

As well as on instead of the DVD introduction, you might like to draw on these ideas...

This is planet Earth Sunday, the first week of the Season of creation, which is being celebrated by churches around the world today.
Started with Norman Habel and the Victorian Synod of the Uniting Church, and is now part of the lectionary for many churches globally.
Today we reflect on what it means to live on this Earth, which seems to huge to us, but to God is a tiny marble hurtling through space.

We are, as Genesis 1 puts it, truly Earthlings. The Adam created from the dust of the Adamah, the Earthling from the dust of the Earth.

We gather to be encouraged to live well on the Earth, as disciples of Christ praying for God's kingdom to come on Earth as in Heaven.

Song: Ashes to Ashes (DVD/download)

A song by Andrew Dutney, the new president of the Uniting Church, written in the 80s. It would probably be a good idea to just listen this week, and maybe start to sing along in future weeks.

Introduction to *All My Hope*:

(this song follows well from Andrew's song, which ends "where are the visions of hope for the Earth?")

There is much to despair about in the way some humans are treating the planet, but also many reasons for hope. If we had no hope we wouldn't pray "thy kingdom come on Earth..."

Let's sing together to remind ourselves of the ultimate source of our hope: the one within whom we all live and move and have our being...

Song: All my hope on God is founded (TiS 560) (DVD)

Song: God gives us a future TiS 687 (DVD)

Confession (this follows from the songs above)

Holy Spirit, we have asked to be taught to read the signs,

We have committed to meet the challenge of our troubled times.

Yet we confess that sometimes when we do read the signs, we are paralysed and overwhelmed, instead of empowered.

We are stirred to prayer, but confess that sometimes we balk at being loved into action, because we wonder where it would stop.

It is easy to worry so much about the future, that it's easier to stop reading the signs completely.

If we have faltered, God restore to us a hope for the future which is wise to the challenges, yet confident that you are there waiting for us.

Empower us again to our calling: agents of the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.

Reading and all ages input (DVD/download)

The DVD/download uses the poem, "if the Earth" and a reflection on it.

Or you could just read "if the Earth" (included below) and then...

create your own discussion (God does see the Earth like the reading suggests)

use the video or poster from the miniature Earth project (www.minature-Earth.com)

If you like books, and people can handle the idea of God as a woman, *Big Mama makes the World* is a colourful rewriting of Genesis 2.

Song: Where wide sky rolls down (TIS 188) (DVD/download)

Song: Lord of Earth... (TiS 672) (DVD/download)

Offering

In thanks for this wonderful Earth, and to help the church participate in its reconciliation and renewal, we make our offerings: a practical prayer for the kingdom to come on Earth as in Heaven.

Offering prayer

Sung, or just read:

*For the life that you have given,
for the love in Christ made known,
with these fruits of time and labour,
with these gifts that are your own:
here we offer, Lord, our praises;
heart and mind and strength we bring;
give us grace to love and serve you,
living what we pray and sing.*

Words: Carl P. Daw, Jr.

Words © 1990 by Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188.

Reading Genesis 1: 1-5, 26-31

A copy is at the end of this document, using the NRSV

Trad UCA.

In this is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Or

In ancient words we have heard
the Spirit speak anew.

Thanks be to God!

Optional extra Readings from Season of Creation website

Ge 1:1-25, Ps 33:1-14, Ro 1:18-23, Jn 1:1-14

Reflection (DVD/download)

Ecological footprint example (DVD)

You might like to play this 4 minute clip which shows how to calculate an ecological footprint as a follow-up to the reflection, before the questions.

Discussion/Sharing

A. Questions from the dvd/download reflection

- 1 How many hectares should we be trying to live on (are we all equal, do animals matter, future generations, population?)
- 2 What is a "great life" for Christians- what can we say to the world about it?
- 3 Visions or stories of hope: personal, local or global
- 4 What are you going to do about all of this? Even one thing.

B. Or if you have online access, visit <http://powerhousemuseum.com/online/bigfoot> and work out how many planet Earths your congregation needs (on average) to live. Invite an open discussion about what that means for you all. A longer but more accurate version is at <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint/calculators/personal/introduction.asp>

Introduction to *Be Thou My Vision*.

As we seek a vision of hope for the Earth, there are many things which might distract, seduce, or overwhelm us. As we prepare to pray for the Earth and all its inhabitants, let's ask God to be our vision, to help us focus on the task at hand:

Song: Be thou my vision TiS 547 (DVD/download)

Intercession

A time of open prayer, or

A led prayer based on the themes and discussion which follows.

(appoint someone before hand to jot down some notes.)

And/or the "Lord's prayer:" Matthew's version would be best (Matt 6:10ff)

Introduction to *To be a pilgrim/who would true valour see*

It isn't going to be easy to live a "one planet" lifestyle: to share our planet with others and make it a better place for future generations to live than it is now.

It will need bravery, endurance, the ability to rise above the nay-sayers and discouragers, to face up to huge companies who want nothing but profit.

To face enemies and evil, to overcome evil with good.

And according to this song, there is no better place to go to find people with bravery, endurance, positivism and the courage to overcome evil than right here in church.

The church is the place to find strength for the journey! I'll read a modern translation of the first verse of this song, and see if anyone can pick it before we sing:

"If you want to see truly brave people, Come here to church.

Christians never give up when things get tough.

Even if things get *really* hard, they will keep going

because they have promised to follow Jesus' Way together."

Song: To be a Pilgrim (DVD/download)

Sending forth/Blessing

You can play the "May the feet of God" clip, for people to read as a communal blessing

or

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all,
fill us with the knowledge of God's glory in Earth...

or

May the kingdom come, on Earth as in Heaven...
Go as agents of that kingdom

... and may the love of God, the kindness of our Lord Jesus, and the friendship of the Spirit go with
us
Amen

Exiting song: Now unto him (DVD/download)

Acknowledgments for the Season of Creation DVD series...

Thanks to Dr Miriam Pepper for her input on the "humanity" and "sky" Sundays.
Thanks to John from Promised Land studios for helping me extract video from various sources
Thanks to Ruth Roberts for playing some quick instrumental tracks for me
Thanks to Bellingham Uniting Church's Thursday Congregation for letting me record them singing
some tracks
My family "let" me take over the faster family computer to do all the DVD work.
My brother lent me his copy of Premiere Pro for a couple of months which was a lifesaver.

Thanks to the team at Project Reconnect for this opportunity, and doing all the distribution as
usual

The Mid North Coast Presbytery made my ecoministry time available for this project as a gift to the
wider church.

Any errors or oversights are almost certainly mine.

Reading: If the Earth

"If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating a few feet above a field somewhere, people would come from everywhere to marvel at it.

People would walk around it marvelling at its big pools of water, its little pools, and the water flowing between the pools.

People would marvel at the bumps on it, and the holes in it, and they would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it and the water suspended in the gas.

The people would marvel at all the creatures walking around the surface of the ball and at the creatures in the water.

The people would declare it sacred because it was the only one, and they would protect it so that it would not be hurt.

The ball would be the greatest wonder known.

People would love it and defend it with their lives because they would somehow know that their lives could be nothing without it.

If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter..."

- Joe Miller (edited by Jason John)

Reading Genesis 1: 1-5, 26-31

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food."

And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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