

Contents

For Project Reconnect users: about this liturgy and DVD	2
copyright notice.....	3
Setup ideas	3
Opening reading: our place in the cosmos (muir)- abridged (DVD)	3
Opening prayer:	3
Welcome/introduction (optional DVD/download).....	4
Optional song: Ashes to Ashes (DVD/download).....	4
Introduction to <i>Breathe on Me Breath of God</i>	4
Song: When the light of first creation	4
Confession (this follows especially from <i>Breathe</i>).....	5
“all ages” input (DVD/download)	5
Song: Several options on DVD	5
Offering	5
Reading:.....	5
Reflection (DVD/download).....	6
Responding.....	6
Song: Several options on DVD	6
Notices?.....	6
Intercession.....	6
Song: Several options on DVD	6
Sending forth/Blessing	6
Exiting song: Now Unto Him is on DVD	6

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](#) 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>.

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For Project Reconnect users: about this liturgy and DVD

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 team’s!

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. It is also on the DVD in the extras folder with a couple of books.

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.

The image shows a DVD menu screen for 'SEASON OF CREATION HUMANS'. The menu is divided into two columns. The left column contains sections: INTRODUCTION (green), CHURCH GARDEN STORY (purple), YOUTH: RECONCILIATION (purple), HUMANS REFLECTN (blue), QUESTIONS (STILL) (blue), OUR PLACE- MUIR (brown), and BIOCENTRIC HOPE (brown). The right column contains songs: ASHES2ASHES, BREATHE ON ME, WHEN THE LIGHT(C), WHERE WIDE SKY (C), WHERE WIDE SKY, LORD OF EARTH (C), LORD OF EARTH, WHEN I NEEDED (C), BROTHER SISTER, WE ARE YOUR PEOPLE, MAY THE FEET (C), and NOW UNTO HIM. Callout boxes provide details: 'A UC community garden, 5 min story' points to CHURCH GARDEN STORY; 'A talk by UC youth to the rest of us, and the nation' points to YOUTH: RECONCILIATION; 'Suggested reading to start the day.' points to OUR PLACE- MUIR; 'Humans as part of the story of God and Life, not the centre of it. By Jason' points to BIOCENTRIC HOPE; 'The songs. Those with © have copyrighted lyrics projected on the screen.' points to the song list; and 'STOP PRESS: A couple of extra reflections, one on Genesis, one on evolution, have been added here. People might want to watch them after church or at home.' points to the 'WHEN I NEEDED (C)' song.

Hopefully the colour coding makes it easy to distinguish the various sections.

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 are instrumental (thanks Ruth!) only due to difficulties getting good singing audio. Thanks to Bellingen Uniting for helping with some of the songs this week.

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 a ... by Jason John, MNC ecoministry” would do.

Songs on the DVD menu which have a (c) after them include lyrics which are copyrighted. To use them, you will need to have a license like CCLI, giving you 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.

Some way of emphasising the diversity of humanity within your congregation, either with the people who take an up front role, or by using multiple languages in one of the prayers.

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 reading: our place in the cosmos (muir)- abridged (DVD)

This can either be played off the DVD, or the text is at the end of this document if somebody would like to read it instead.

Opening prayer:

God of 70,000, million million *million* stars and countless planets.
We give thanks for your interest in ours.
God of uncounted millions of species
We thank you for your interest in ours.

Revealed to us humans (as/by) a human
Still within and amongst us by your Spirit.
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

Welcome/introduction (optional DVD/download)

Alternatively, or in addition, you might like to use some of the following text:

This is humanity Sunday, the second 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 be humans living on Earth, as part of creation.

We draw on four possible stories.

Are we the Adam, created from the Adamah to rule the planet well together?

Or the servants and protectors of creation, here to tend God's garden.

Perhaps the neighbours of other creatures, now that we have spread so far around the world?

Or part of the great evolutionary family of life on Earth? Maybe a prodigal child wasting the family's resources, but hopefully coming to our senses as we look around us.

However we see ourselves, we gather as disciples of Christ to pray for God's kingdom to come on Earth as in Heaven.

Optional song: Ashes to Ashes (DVD/download)

A song by Andrew Dutney, the new president of the Uniting Church, written in the 80s.

People might like to start trying to sing along if they heard it last week.

Introduction to *Breathe on Me Breath of God*

(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..."

As we pray this song, we call on God to empower us to be hope for the Earth.

Song: When the light of first creation

Confession (this follows especially from *Breathe*)

We have asked you to breathe on us,
To fill us with your Spirit

We confess that sometimes feel deflated in the face of overwhelming odds
Some of us focus so much on eternal life in the future that we forget
Your call to abundant life for all in the present.

We remember that you are mindful of us, even here on this tiny planet amidst all your great works.
Empower us again to our calling: agents of the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.
Empower us to love all that you love, including this whole glorious earth
And to do what you would do.
Amen.

“all ages” input (DVD/download)

There is no story specifically for youth this week. But there are two video resources.

“Church garden story” is about Gymea Miranda church’s community garden, and what it has meant to their church and the people who use it.

“Reconciliation people” is a statement from young leaders in the Uniting Church, a call to justice for humans and the whole Earth. So it is a message from youth instead of to them!

Another option, 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: Several options on DVD

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.

Reading:

The reading for the reflection is compiled on the last pages of this resource:
Ge 1:25ff; Ge 2:2ff; Luke 10:25ff; Luke 15ff.

Alternatively, the original SoC readings are Ge 1:26-28; Psalm 8; Philippians 2:1-8; Mark 10:41-45

Trad UCA.

In this is the Word of the Lord.

Or

In ancient words we have heard the Spirit speak anew. *Thanks be to God!*

Reflection (DVD/download)

Responding

There is a DVD still you can select which will loop the questions for as long as you need them.

1. Do you mostly relate to the rest of creation as Lord, Servant, neighbour or family member? (and if a family member, what kind)?
2. What's an example of this from your life?
3. Is your church's focus on care of humans, or the reconciliation and renewal of all creation?
4. What is a local environmental issue, and how might your church respond to it using these stories of humanity and our place in creation?

STOP PRESS: At the last minute I did a couple of additional reflections, in 1 take with no editing. One expands on the Genesis1/2 story, and the other on the implications of evolution for understanding our humanity. People might like to watch them after church or at home, or instead of the main reflection (though they have no set questions). If you were really keen you could print "Worshipping Evolution's God" (DVD extra resources folder) and use that to guide some questions.

Song: Several options on DVD

Notices?

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)

Song: Several options on DVD

Sending forth/Blessing

You can read "May the Feet" together off the DVD if you have copyright clearance, or ...

Whoever we are: Leader, servant and protector, neighbour, family member.

Let's take the human Jesus as our inspiration as we walk his Way, & help bring God's kingdom to Earth.

And the love of God, the kindness of our Lord Jesus, and the friendship of the Spirit goes with us
Amen

Exiting song: Now Unto Him is on DVD

Reading: Compilation for the reflection

Read them together with a pause in between each. Four readers might be a good idea.

Ge 1:25 [on the sixth day 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."

Ge 2:2ff In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens... The LORD God formed *Adam* from the dust of the ground- the *Adamah*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the *Adam* became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the *Adam* whom he had formed... the LORD God took the *Adam* and put him in the garden of Eden to serve it and protect it. (*original NRSV til and keep*)

Luke 10:25

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And Jesus said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

Luke 15:

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

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Our ("man's") place in the Universe. John Muir. Abridged.

The world, we are told, was made especially for humans - a presumption not supported by all the facts. A numerous class of humans are painfully astonished whenever they find anything, living or dead, in all God's universe, which they cannot eat or render in some way what they call useful to themselves.

To such properly trimmed people, the sheep, for example, is an easy problem - food and clothing "for us," eating grass and daisies white by divine appointment for this predestined purpose, on perceiving the demand for wool that would be occasioned by the eating of the apple in the Garden of Eden.

It never seems to occur to these far- seeing teachers that Nature's object in making animals and plants might possibly be first of all the happiness of each one of them, not the creation of all for the happiness of one.

What creature of all that God has taken the pains to make is not essential to the completeness of that unit - the cosmos? The universe would be incomplete without us; but it would also be incomplete without the smallest transmicroscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge.

From the dust of the earth, from the common elementary fund, the Creator has made Homo sapiens. From the same material God has made every other creature, however noxious and insignificant to us. They are earth-born companions and our fellow mortals.