

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

Outback Sunday

We worship with creation in the Outback



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

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

1. *This Sunday we worship in the Outback. Ideally this would take place in the Outback, in a desert or on a rugged mountain. The wild world of the Outback can also be experienced in a church building by using bold symbols of the Outback—rugged rocks and Spinifex, with desert life depicted on banners—located at key points throughout the church, including the sanctuary. At the centre of the church or sanctuary a large boulder or rock rises, with small rocks around it. This rock can also symbolise 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 the one that follows, may be said before or after the greeting.*

In the name of the Creator, the fountain of life,
the name of Christ, the pulse of life,
and 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.** The minister or members of the congregation may invite creatures of the Outback to worship in these or similar words.*

We invite the Outback to worship with us:

Uluru and the red centre, deep gorges and mountain ranges.

We invite the flora to sing in the sun:
ghost gums and spinifex, mallee trees and Sturt's desert pea.

We join with the fauna of the Outback in praising God:
roaming dingos and wallabies, old goannas and hovering hawks.

We invite the Dreaming 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 Outback!
Sing, Outback, sing!

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

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

We celebrate the song of the Outback!
Sing, Outback, sing!

- 7. A hymn or song may follow which celebrates creation, especially the world of the Outback. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church with symbols of the Outback—rocks, tough grasses and objects from Aboriginal art, together with banners of lizards, dingos and similar Outback creatures. These symbols may be placed on or near the large rock in the sanctuary.*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

- 8. A Remembering. A small Outback stone or rock or some other symbol of remembrance may be given to the people as a reminder of our past connection with creation.*

As we rub this Outback stone in our hands we remember the Outback, 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 Outback.

We remember and confess how we have destroyed wild domains in the Outback.

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 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 Outback 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 Outback 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 sit in silence or they may name aloud sins against the Outback. The presiding minister declares the absolution.*

Christ hears your confession out in the wilderness and forgives your sins against the Outback,

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

I speak for Christ:

I invite you to come home to Earth
by rejoicing in the Outback.

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 our Outback. Help us empathise with your Outback creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the wild world of the Outback. 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 psalm writer 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 baptised, 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:** ‘The Secret of the Centre’ may be told by a storyteller or by means of a puppet. 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 piece 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 centre 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 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 salt plains, the winds.
Jesus Christ, make our souls sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration from the sea, the land, 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 one that follows, 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 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 an authorised 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, 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, 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.

**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 authorised 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 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
share Christ with one another
and 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 Outback 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 the Outback.*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,
especially the Outback 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 the risen Christ
to become partners in healing our planet.**

**We will care for creation,
honouring the Outback, loving our kin
and celebrating life.**

33. A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal. The Outback 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 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 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 tending Earth.