

*Fourth Sunday in the Season of Creation  
(Australian Version 1)*

**River Sunday**

*We worship with creation in the rivers*



*'The river of God is full of water'. Psalm 65:9*

## ***RIVER SUNDAY***

***Welcome! This Sunday we worship beside a river among all the river life in our sanctuary. We celebrate the water flowing in our sanctuary, water that symbolises Christ, the water of life.***

### ***Invocation***

**Leader**            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.

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

***As the following words are sung softly, we become conscious of God's presence. After the refrain is sung, we pause in silence and listen to sounds from creation in the silence.***

Be still and feel the presence of God,  
the presence pulsing, pulsing through Earth.  
Be still and feel the pulse of God.

Be still and hear the Spirit of God,  
the Spirit breathing, breathing through Earth.  
Be still and hear the breath of God.

Be still, behold the glory of God,  
the glory filling, filling this Earth.  
Be still, behold the face of God.

Melody: Be Still and Know That I Am God  
Words: Norman C Habel

### ***Procession and Song***

***We join in song with the children as they enter the church holding symbols of the river—tall reeds, shiny rocks, yabbies and banners portraying platypuses, frogs and other river creatures. We rejoice as the children pour water from pitchers into the water in the sanctuary.***

## *Call to Worship*

*We celebrate with creation as worship leaders, from different points in the church, call the rivers and creatures from the rivers to join us in worship.*

L1 We invite the rivers to worship with us:

**P the Murray, the Darling  
and all the streams that flow to the sea.**

L2 We invite the country creeks to sing:

**P perch, eel and platypus,  
trout streams and gleaming fountains.**

L3 We invite the fauna to praise God with us:

**P ibis, heron and mountain duck,  
dragonflies and sleepy tortoises.**

L1 We join with the waters in praising God:

**P waterfalls singing upstream  
and waves dancing at the river mouth.**

L2 We celebrate the song of the river!

**P Sing, river, sing!**

L3 We invite you to name creatures of the river  
to join us in worship.

*We name, silently or aloud, other creatures from the river and invite them to join us in praising our Creator.*

L1 We celebrate the song of the river!

**P Sing, river, sing!**

## *Remembering*

*We use a river stone or some other symbol to assist us to stir our memories.*

- L      Take the river stone you received at the door, rub it between your fingers and share with the person next to you a special memory of the streams, ponds or wetlands you have enjoyed.
- L      We remember the rivers God created in Eden and across our planet, rivers that are the lifeblood of Earth and vital for all that lives.
- P      We remember the streams of our past, the pools and ponds where we played and the feeling of celebration as we splashed each other.**
- L      We remember and rejoice.
- P      Thank you, God, for rivers, streams that flow with the water of life.**

## *Confession*

- L      As I hold these symbols aloft, we remember and confess that we have become alienated from Earth and have polluted the rivers of our garden planet.

*Representatives approach the flowing water at the centre with symbols of how we have polluted our waterways. These may include two large bowls of water. Into one is poured red dye representing the toxins we have allowed to flow into the rivers and into another are tipped crude pieces of waste. These bowls are held aloft and then placed near the flowing water.*

- P.      We are sorry.  
We have polluted our rivers with poisons.  
We have treated our streams as waste dumps.  
We have turned living waters into deathtraps.  
We have wasted precious waters in luxury living.**

L We are sorry.

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

### *Absolution*

L Christ hears your confession from the river Jordan  
and forgives your sins against the river.

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

L. I speak for Christ:  
I invite you to come home to Earth  
by rejoicing in our rivers.

P **Shalom! Shalom!  
We are coming home!**

### *Christ Have Mercy*

L As we come home to Earth,

P **Christ, have mercy.**

L As we seek to love our home,

P **Christ, have mercy.**

L As we seek to care for our kin,

P **Christ, have mercy.**

### *Glory to God*

L Glory to God in the highest!

P **And on Earth peace with all creation!**

## ***Prayer for the Day***

**P**      **God, our Creator, whose glory fills our planet, help us to discern your vibrant presence among us and our kin in creation, especially in the rivers, the streams and waterways of Earth. Help us empathise with your creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the vibrant world of the rivers. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and restores all things in creation. Amen.**

## ***Readings for the Fourth Sunday in Creation***

***Old Testament:*** Genesis 8:20–22; 9:12–17 ‘God’s promise to Earth’  
After the flood God promises that Earth and all of life on Earth will be preserved by God, in spite of the sins of human beings.

***Psalm:*** Psalm 104:27–33 ‘God’s sustenance of Earth’  
The psalm writer celebrates how God sustains all life on Earth through the Spirit and calls on God to rejoice in God’s own creation.

***Epistle:*** Revelation 22:1–5 ‘God’s healing for Earth’  
When creation is restored, a river will flow directly from God with trees of life growing on either side to bring healing to all nations on Earth

***Gospel:*** Matthew 28:1–10 ‘God’s celebration with Earth’  
The resurrection of Christ is also celebrated by creation. An earthquake accompanies the advent of the angel and the rolling away of the stone.

## ***Children’s Address: ‘The Secret of the Waters’ as told by means of the puppet Drip***

***Prayer: God, we thank you for rivers and the drips  
of water we all share that keep us alive. Amen.***

## ***Affirmation of Faith***

**L**            Let us affirm our faith together.

**Left**        **We believe that God creates all things,  
renews all things and celebrates all things.**

- Right**      **We believe Earth is a sanctuary,  
a sacred planet filled with God’s presence,  
a home for us to share with our kin.**
- Left**        **We believe that God became flesh and blood,  
became 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.**
- Right**        **We believe that the risen Jesus  
is the Christ at the core of creation,  
reconciling all things to God,  
renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.**
- Left**        **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.**
- Together**    **We believe that with Christ we will rise  
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

### ***Passing the Peace***

**L**      Let us share the peace of the Lord with one another.

**P**      **The peace of the Lord be with you.**

### ***Song***

### ***Sermon or Reflection***

### ***Offering Prayer***

**L**    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.

**P**    **With all creation, we praise our Creator.**

## *Prayers of the People*

*We thank God for a wondrous creation. We celebrate with all our kin. We pray for all those in need. We name them now. We close with the following prayer.*

### *Creation Prayer*

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise 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,  
groans 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.**

### *Lord's Prayer*

#### *The Great Thanksgiving*

- L     The Creator be with you and all creation.
- P     **And also with you.**
- L     Open your hearts.
- P     **We open them to our Creator.**
- L     Let us give thanks to the Maker of heaven and earth.
- P     **It is right to join creation in thanking God.**
- L     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, restore 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.

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

## ***Words of Institution***

### ***Invitation***

C     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.

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

### ***Lamb of God***

**P**     **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.**

### ***Distribution***

### ***Distribution Songs***

### ***Dismissal Blessing***

**L**     **Now may the 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.**

### ***Candles for our Kin***

<p><i>As we return from the Lord's table we light a candle and place it in the sand-filled candle-stand in memory of departed loved ones or one of our kin in the rivers who has become extinct.</i></p>
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### ***Thanksgiving***

**P**     **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.**

## ***Sending Out***

L Christ calls you to be his disciples,  
to serve him with love and compassion,  
to serve Earth by caring for creation.  
Hold again the river stone in your hand  
as you go forth to serve:

**P We will remember the rivers!  
We will groan with creation!  
We will rejoice in the waterways!**

L Will you care for creation?

**P We will care for creation!  
We will revive the wetlands!  
We will celebrate life!**

## ***Blessing***

L 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 impulse of Christ within you.

Go in peace,  
serving Christ and loving Earth!

**P We go in peace,  
serving Christ  
and tending Earth!**

## ***Recession and Song***

***We join with the children in a song of joy as they process from the church with their river symbols and banners. We join with the psalm writer in singing, 'The river of God is full of water' Psalm 65:9.***