

Universe Sunday

(United States Version 1)

Introduction

Universe refers to all that exists, every dimension of time and space, spiritual and material. The universe is both the glittering galaxies that humans have begun to explore as well as distant domains far beyond our imagination. In addition, there are unknown domains deep within each tiny molecule that we have yet to comprehend. All creation is one sacred cosmic reality, a spiritual universe filled with God's presence.

Setting

To capture a sense of the entire universe in worship requires imagination. We need to move beyond a human-centered world to an image of worlds beyond worlds that are connected with our world. One suggestion is to create a massive web of creation, a wide web of coloured cords that stretch from one side of the chancel to the other, with the altar or a cross visible behind the web. At one point in the web, Earth as a green-blue planet can be identified. The sun, stars and other images might be located on the web. Another suggestion is to project onto a wall or onto a screen some scenes of stars, planets, and solar system. Appropriate music may accompany these images.

Special Focus

The special focus for this service is not only the universe in all its immensity and wonder, but also the spiritual impulse or presence that permeates the universe and is connected with each of us on Earth. That impulse is also called Wisdom!

Themes

In our call to worship we invite all the domains of the universe, no matter how great or how small, to join us in worship. In our confession we recall how we have focused on our human selves as the center of the universe and treated planet Earth as a garbage dump. We have also seen ourselves as pilgrims in route to heaven and considered this vast physical universe as transitory and disposable. By contrast, we now celebrate the entire universe as our sacred cosmic home.

Optional Liturgies

Additional liturgies that may be considered are *Sacred Energy: Mass of the Universe* available from Bill Wallace in New Zealand, pathways@snap.net.nz. *The Cosmic Walk* and *Wisdom Sunday* are also on this website.

Songs

A special song/hymn appropriate for this Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known **Amazing Grace**. The words follow.

THE COSMIC CHRIST

1. Amazing is the Christ who died
To void all sin and curse,
Just as amazing is his life
That fills the universe.
2. The risen Christ is more than one
Who waits on some far shore;
In, with and under ev'ry thing
Christ is the living core.
3. The hidden Christ sustains for us
The blueprint of the skies,
The wisdom in each fragile form,
The soul that lights the eyes.
4. The cosmic Christ moves deep below
To heal the wounds within,
When all creation groans in pain
Because of human sin.
5. The universe hails the Christ, the One
Who reconciles all things,
'Til all creation rises new
With healing in her wings.
6. As Christ unites the universe,
Restores this Earth once more,
A cosmic song reverberates,
A rich symphonic score.

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Final Sunday in the Season of Creation
(United States Version 1)

Universe Sunday

We worship with the entire cosmic reality



“Praise him you highest skies” Ps.148.1

UNIVERSE SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with the entire universe, conscious that the universe is a vast sacred space of which we humans on Earth are a such a small but privileged part. We join the Psalmists and call on the sky above and the deep below to shout with songs of praise. We celebrate the wondrous spiritual force called Wisdom which permeates, activates, and unifies the web of worlds that is our universe.

Gathering

Leader Risen Christ,

People **Your presence fills the universe.**

L Cosmic Christ,

P **Your presence pulses
through all galactic space
across light years of time.**

L Living Christ,

P **In this moment we call ‘now’,
in this place we call ‘here’,**

L Make your presence felt among us.

P **Yes, make your presence known!**

Procession and Song

We join in song with the children as they enter the church holding symbols of our universe—stars, galaxies, comets, stardust, black holes, birds and tiny genes. They may place these symbols in a circle near the altar or hang them from a wide cosmic web stretching across the chancel.

Call to Worship

L1 We invite all creation to worship with us.

P We invite glittering galaxies high in the sky to radiate the splendor of God's presence.

L2 We call distant domains of space to celebrate with us.

P We invite nebula, nova, and red giant stars to thank God for their formation in the universe.

L3 We summon that domain of stardust called Earth,

P To pulse with the rhythm of God's presence and celebrate God's glory in this planet garden.

L1 We invite millions of living species to dance with life,

P The turtle, the toad and the elephant, the earthworm, the ant and the dragonfly.

L2 We invite every creature in the web of creation

P To consciously connect with others in this cosmic community called the universe.

L3 Dance, creation, dance!

P Dance with life and cosmic energy!

We name, silently or aloud, other creatures or parts of the universe and invite them to join us in praising our Creator.

L1 Dance, creation, dance!

P Dance with life and cosmic energy!

Remembering

You may use rosemary, eucalyptus or other leaves or pine needles to stir our memories and to connect with creation.

L Take the symbol you received at the door, hold it in your hand, and share with the person next to you a special memory of a moment when you were especially aware that you or your space were intricately connected with a vast world of time and space.

L We are conscious of our place in the universe.

P We remember moments of wonder,
sensing the infinite world of space,
connecting with endless networks in time
and feeling the mystery of the moment.

L We remember and rejoice.

P Thank you, God, for making us aware
of our special place in your web of creation.

Confession

L As I hold this symbol aloft,
we remember and confess
that we have often been selfish,
polluting our atmosphere and
ignoring the needs of others – human and non-human alike -
with whom we are closely connected
in that part of the web of creation
called planet Earth.

Representatives may hold up a large net, like a fishing net, that represents the web of creation around this planet. Another person then cuts through the net and creates a hole, which may, among other things, symbolize the hole in the ozone layer. The hole in the net means that the web of that net is no longer as effective as it should be.

P We are sorry.
We have polluted Earth's atmosphere
We have opened a hole in the ozone layer.
We have turned our greed into global warming.
We have exploited the poor and the vulnerable.
We have ignored our crucial connection
with those parts of creation where we live.
We have loved progress more than the planet.
We are sorry. We are sorry.

L We are sorry.

P We are sorry. We are sorry.

Absolution

L Christ hears your confession
and forgives your sins
against creation.
I speak for Christ:

I invite you to celebrate Earth as your home
a precious part in the web of creation.

P **Shalom! Shalom!**
 Earth is our home!

Christ Have Mercy

L As we celebrate our place in all creation.

P **Christ, have mercy.**

L As we connect with our worlds in all creation.

P **Christ, have mercy.**

L As we care for our corner of all creation.

P **Christ, have mercy.**

Glory to God

L Glory to God in the highest!

P. **And peace to the cosmic community of the universe!**

Prayer for the Day

P **God, our Creator, as we reflect on the mysteries of the universe, we celebrate the wondrous design of creation and the Wisdom that guides its course. Help us to discern how we are connected with living members of the cosmic community. Teach us to sense the presence of the cosmic Christ, whose presence fills and reconciles all forces in creation. Amen.**

Readings for Universe Sunday

Old Testament: Proverbs 8.22-31 'The Wisdom Behind the World'

In this text, Wisdom is portrayed as a woman speaking. She claims to have existed before God created the universe and was a partner with God in the design of each part of the universe.

Psalms: Ps. 104.24-26 'A World Created by Wisdom'

The whole world is formed by the wisdom of God thereby giving it all its parts, laws, design and purpose. That world even includes domains where God 'plays' with wild creatures in the ocean.

Epistle: Colossians 1.15-20 'Christ, the Cosmic Power'

Christ is here introduced as the Cosmic One who is not only a force before all things existed but the one who is now the unifying impulse in all creation.

Gospel: John 6.41-51 'Living Bread from Heaven'

Jesus claims to have been sent by the Father, the creator of the universe. As such, Jesus is that bread from another cosmic realm who offers life to those on Earth.

Children's Address: The Web of Creation

Prayer: Thank you God for connecting us with planet Earth. Help us to care for our planet so that planet Earth stays healthy and we stay happy.

Affirmation of Faith

L Let us affirm our faith together.

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

Men We believe Earth is a sanctuary,
a sacred planet filled with God's presence,
a home for us to share with our kin.

Women We believe that God became flesh and blood,
became a part 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.

Men 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 universe.

Women We believe the 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 of 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

Song

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 our concern for all in need on planet Earth.

P. **With all the universe, we bless our Creator.**

Prayers of the People

We thank God for a wondrous planet home, connected with a web of worlds we call the universe. We pray for all those in need in our world. We name them now. We conclude with the following prayer.

Creation Prayer

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the land, the seas, and the skies.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit in
creation, groans of longing for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration from the sea, the forest, and the air.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

The Great Thanksgiving

L The Creator be with you and with all creation.

P **And also with you.**

L Open your hearts.

P **We open them to our Creator.**

L Let us give thanks to our Creator.

P **It is right to join the universe in thanking God.**

L God our Creator,
source of everything in the universe,
we bring before you this day,
bread and wine
and with it we bring before you the whole creation to say:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Thank you for joining the web of creation
for living and dying among us
to redeem us and all creation:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Thank you for rising to life
permeating the universe with your Spirit
to sustain and heal all things:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Therefore with voices of thanks
echoing through the universe
from the first day of creation
until this very moment in time,
we praise and thank you saying:

**P Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of all life!
All creation is filled with your presence!**

Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Invitation

C Come, for all things are now ready.
Come to the space of this table
To the time of this moment called 'now'.
For here and now,
the Christ who fills the universe,
fills each of you with healing.

**P May we who share these gifts,
share the cosmic Christ with one another.**

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 against the human family,
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 all of Earth's community. In Jesus' name. Amen

Thanksgiving

- L** Let us give thanks for this meal.
- 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 as a precious planet in our universe. 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
to serve Christ by caring for all creatures.

Hold again the symbol in your hands
and go forth to serve.
Will you care for creation?

- P** We will care for one another
We will care for creation.
We will celebrate with the universe!

Blessing

- L** May the Spirit of God, who is the cosmic power
above all and in all and through all,

fill you with an awareness of Christ's presence
permeating the universe
and pulsing within you.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

P **We go in peace,
serving Christ
and loving Earth.**

Recession and Song

We join the children in song as they recess from the church with their symbols of the universe. We cry with the psalmist: 'Praise him you highest skies' Ps. 148.1.