

***Fourth Sunday in the Season of Creation
(United States Version 2)***

River Sunday

We worship with creation in the rivers.



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

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

1. *This Sunday we worship among the rivers. Ideally this would take place beside a river or a waterfall. The mysterious world of a river can be experienced in church by using symbols of the fountains, streams, and waterways that fertilize our land. These may include reeds, fish, frogs, and other creatures. If possible, the water at the center of the sanctuary is flowing over rocks to symbolize Christ, the water of life.*
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,
in the name of Christ, the pulse of life,
and in 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.** In these and similar words, the minister or members of the congregation may invite creatures of the rivers to worship.*

We invite the rivers to worship with us:

the Mississippi, the Hudson, and all the rivers that flow to the sea.

We invite the country creeks to sing:

perch, sunfish, and flashing bass, trout streams and gurgling springs.

We invite the fauna to praise God with us:

loon, heron, and mallard duck, dragonflies and sleepy tortoises.

We join with the waters in praising God:

waterfalls singing upstream and ripples dancing at the river mouth.

We celebrate the song of the river!

Sing, river, sing!

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

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

We celebrate the song of the river!

Sing, river, sing!

7. *A hymn or song may follow that celebrates creation, especially the world of the river. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church with tall reeds, shiny rocks, balloons and banners portraying frogs, turtles, fish, and other river creatures. These are placed beside the flowing water at the center of the sanctuary. Two children may carry pitchers of water that are poured into the flowing water in the sanctuary.*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

8. ***A Remembering.** A small piece of rosemary, a sprig of holly, a leaf, or another plant, a symbol of remembrance, may be given to the people as a reminder of our past connection with creation.*

As we take this plant in our hands we remember the rivers where we have sailed and played.

O God, we thank you for the splendors of creation and the gift of rivers.

We remember and confess how we have poisoned and polluted the rivers in our garden planet.

Christ, crucified on a tree, hear our cry.

We regret that we have forgotten Earth and treated this garden planet as a beast to be tamed and as a place to be ruled.

Christ, the hope of all creation, we lament our failings.

9. *A Confession.* Two representatives of the people may approach two glass bowls of water beside the flowing water in the sanctuary. Into one may be poured red dye to represent the toxins we have allowed to flow into the rivers and into another are tipped crude pieces of waste. These bowls may be held aloft for all to see.

We have polluted our rivers with poisons, treated our streams as waste dumps, drained our wetlands of life, and turned living waters into deathtraps.

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 rivers. The presiding minister declares the absolution.

Christ hears your confession from the cross and forgives your sins against the rivers.

**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 our rivers.

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 riches of our rivers. Help us to stand in solidarity with your river creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the vibrant world of the rivers. 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 Fourth Sunday in Creation and rise for the Gospel.*

15. *A reading from Genesis chapter 8 verses 20 to 22 and chapter 9 verses 12 to 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.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

16. *Psalm 104 verses 27 to 33 may be said or sung.*

“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.

17. *A reading from Revelation chapter 22 verses 1 to 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.

18. *The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew chapter 28 verses 1 to 10.*

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

“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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord,

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

19. *A Children’s Address: A hymn or song suitable for children may follow.*

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 all creatures.

This we believe.

God became incarnate
a part of Earth, like Adam,
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 center of creation
reconciling all things to God,
renewing all creation, and filling the cosmos.

This we believe.

The Spirit renews life in creation,
groans in empathy with a suffering creation
and waits with us for the rebirth of all 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 plains, and the winds.
Jesus Christ, make our souls sensitive to the songs of our kin, songs of
celebration from the land, the sea, 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 as a sign of our
concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.
With all creation, we bless 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 another 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, restoring the broken and healing the wounded, groaning in anticipation of a new creation, stirring with 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, to renew creation, and to reconcile 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 a 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
also share Christ with one another
and with 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 rivers 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 rivers.*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,

honoring the rivers God has created
to provide all creatures with the water of life.

**We will follow our crucified Lord,
listening for cries of injustice from Earth
and groaning with creation.**

**We will follow our Lord, the risen Christ
to become partners in healing our planet.**

**We will care for creation,
restoring the rivers, loving our kin,
and celebrating life.**

33. *A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal. The rivers join us in thanking God, as the psalm writer says, 'The river of God is full of water' Psalm 65:9.*

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 creation!

We go in peace, serving Christ and tending the Earth.