

Storm Sunday

(United States Version 1)

Introduction

Storm refers to the world of the weather, the gales, the lightning, the winds, the hurricanes, the downpours, and the tornados. Storm means the weather we need to renew our planet and the weather that expresses the destructive forces of nature. Storms are events we celebrate in the weather cycle that sustains Earth as a living planet, but they are also events that frighten us and that are destructive of human and non-human life.

Setting

Central to this liturgy is a sense of being surrounded by winds and weather, storm clouds and rain, lightning and thunder. Rain clouds and lightning flashes may be simulated in the sanctuary. The spirals of tornados may be depicted on the walls. Or you may play recordings of storm weather—rain, thunder, and crashing waves.

Special Focus

A special focus for this service may be a ‘storm experience.’ We enter into God’s presence appearing in a storm as God did on Mount Sinai. Sometimes, in the Old Testament, God is depicted as riding on clouds with the winds serving as messengers racing ahead. At other times, God’s voice is portrayed as thunder. God often seems to be present deep within a storm. For Elijah, however, God was not present in the storm or in the earthquake, but in the silence.

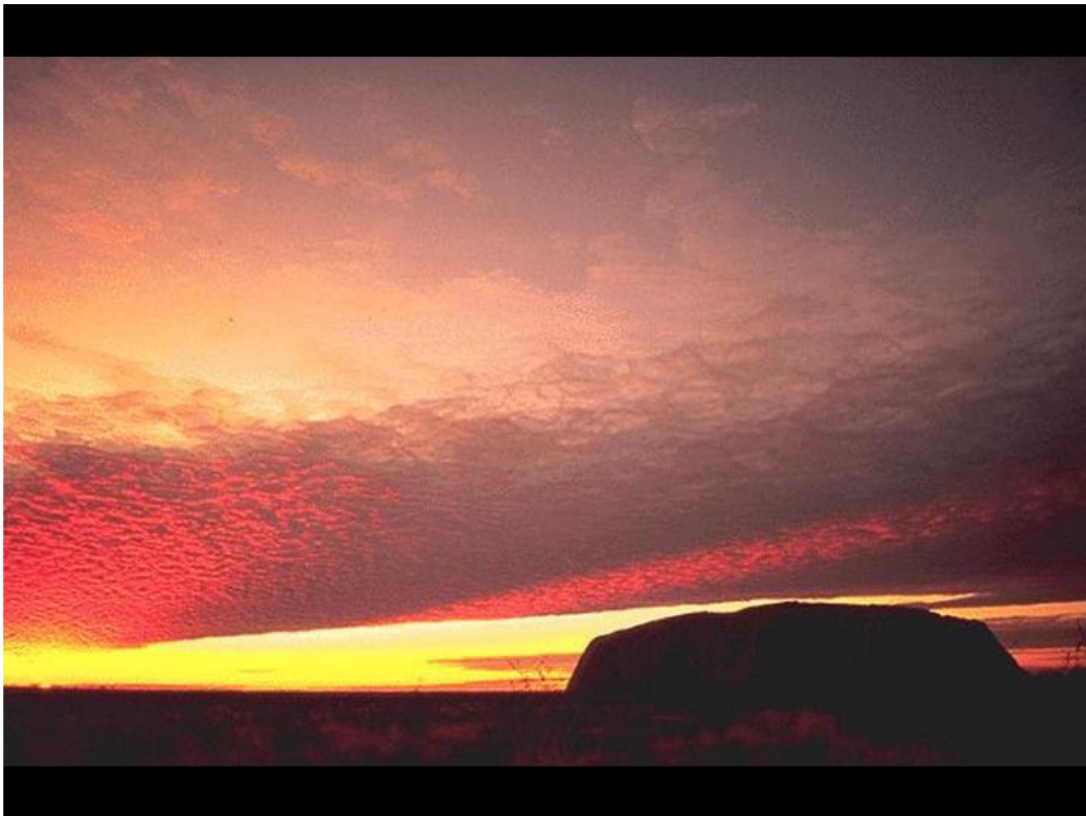
Themes

In our call to worship, we invite all the domains of the weather to worship with us. As we do, we wonder at the power of storms and the fierce expressions of the elements. In the readings, we become aware of God’s presence revealed in the power of nature. We also learn that God discerns the Wisdom embedded in creation—especially in the wind, the rain, and the lightning. We are aware that global warming has changed weather patterns around the world. Tornados, hurricanes, and cyclones are intensified and on the increase, as are other extreme weather patterns. Yet Jesus Christ, who was surrounded by fierce forces at the last supper and on the cross, is present also in the stillness after the storm. He knows the way of the storm.

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

Storm Sunday

We worship with the winds and the weather



*“You make the clouds your chariots, you ride on
the wings of the wind and you make the winds your
messengers” Ps. 104.3-4*

STORM SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with the storm. We sing with the winds, the clouds, and the thunder. We feel the awesome events of nature. We experience the stillness before the storm, the frightening fury of the winds, and the destructive aftermath of the tornado. We experience God's presence in all these things. We experience God's presence in the storm.

Gathering

Leader In the name of God,
 present in the thunder of the storm.
 In the name of Christ,
 present in the stillness after the storm.
 In the name of the Spirit,
 present in the winds of the storm.

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

L Christ, as we come to into this sanctuary today,
 we enter your presence even in the storm.

P **Holy! Holy! Holy!**
 Earth is filled with your presence.

Procession and Song

We join in songs with the children as they enter the church holding symbols of the storms. These can be balloons that are painted as clouds, flags that depict lightning, and drums that express thunder. They place these symbols in the sanctuary.

Call to Worship

As we celebrate with creation, worship leaders may, from different points in the church, call the elements of the storm to worship with us as we remember our questions about fierce storms.

L1 We invite the elements of the storm to worship with us.

P **The wild winds and the dark clouds,**

the lightning flash and the thunder roll.

L2 We invite the hurricane to join us in wonder:

**P The fierce gales and blinding rains,
the crashing waves and swaying trees.**

L3 Where is God in all of this?
Where is God in the storm?

**P God created all things
God created the storms**

L4 Where is God in all this?
Where is God in the storm?

**P Storms can renew life with wind and water
Storms can destroy life with gale and water**

L1 Where is our God in the tornado?

**P As crucified Christ, in solidarity with victims
As risen Christ, bringing life out of death.**

L2 Where is our God in the hurricane?

**P As crucified Christ, suffering with those who suffer in the storm.
As risen Christ, offering new life amidst loss.**

L3 Where is our God in the tsunami?

**P As crucified Christ, identifying with the grieving.
As risen Christ, providing comfort and hope.**

L4 Yes, where is our God in all of this?

P Our God is working for good in all things.

Remembering

We use rosemary, eucalyptus, or some other leaves or pine needles as a symbol to stir our memories of storms and other extremes of nature.

L Take the symbol you have received, hold it in your hands, and share with the person next to you a memory of a storm or extreme weather that awed and frightened you.

We remember fierce storms,
Times when we wondered
about God's role in our world.

P We remember asking, ‘Why?’
‘Where was our God in all of this?’

Confession

L As I hold this symbol aloft,
we remember and confess our doubts.

P We have doubted God’s presence.
We have doubted God’s goodness.
We have doubted God’s love.
When hurricanes and tsunamis have hit,
We have doubted God’s presence.
In the wake of human suffering,
We have doubted God’s goodness.
In the wake of the destruction of nature,
We have doubted God’s love.

L We bring these doubts before you.

P We confess our doubts and uncertainties.

Absolution

L Christ hears your confession,
Receives your doubts and uncertainties,
and assures you of God’s presence in the storm,
assures you that even in the fiercest storm
the healing power of Christ is there to comfort and offer new life.

P Christ, assure us of your presence in all things,
Assure us of your goodness and love.

L I speak for Christ:
Your God is not high in heaven
playing wild games with nature.
Your God is deep within each storm.
Your God is the suffering God,
revealed to us at Calvary,
and suffering with all who suffer
in the aftermath of storms.
Your God is the God of resurrection and new life.

P Shalom! Shalom!
God too suffers in our storms.

Christ Have Mercy

L As we name our uncertainties about God.

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we confess our doubts about storms.

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we discover God's healing presence.

P Christ, have mercy.

Glory to God

L Glory to God in the highest!

P And on Earth peace amid storms!

Prayer for the Day

P God, our Creator, as we face the storms of this world, we celebrate the wonders of the wind and the weather. Help us to see your presence in the forces of nature, your presence with those who suffer from natural disasters, and your presence among those who come to their aid. Teach us to recognize that your Wisdom is embedded in all natural forces, a Wisdom that suffers, guides, and heals. In the name of Christ, who is the Wisdom of God renewing all things in creation. Amen.

Readings for Storm Sunday

Old Testament: Job 28.20-27 'God Discovers Wisdom'

Where can wisdom be found? According to the poet in Job, God discovered wisdom embedded in nature, even in the elements of the weather, when God was creating the cosmos.

Psalms: Ps. 29 'God in the Storm'

Thunder, in this Psalm, is described as the voice of God, a powerful force that strikes Earth with great force, while the beings in the heavenly temple respond with the cry of 'Glory'!

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1.21-31 'Christ, the Wisdom of God'

According to Paul, the wise in the world cannot grasp the message of Christ crucified. Ultimately the crucified one is also the source of life and the Wisdom of God.

Gospel: Luke 8.22-25 Jesus knows the ‘Way of the Storm’

The stilling of the storm not only demonstrates Jesus’ capacity to perform miracles; it also demonstrates that he is in tune with nature and knows ‘the way’ of the storm, its inner nature.

Children’s Address:

Prayer: Thank you God for the goodness of storms—for rain and wind and fire that renew Earth. Help us in the destruction of storms—help us to grieve, to gather in hope, and to recover in new life. Amen.

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,
who fed the hungry and healed the sick,
who brought good news to the vulnerable,
who 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 cosmos.

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 those in need, especially those suffering the effects of natural disasters.

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

Prayers of the People

We thank God for a wondrous creation. We celebrate with all the forces of nature. We pray for all those who have suffered from the forces of nature. We pray for all those in need. We name them now. We close 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 air, the clouds and the sky,
cries of our fellow creatures deserted and dying.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit,
groans of longing for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration echoing around us.
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 creation in thanking God.

L God our Creator,
source of everything that is,
we bring before you this day,
bread and wine
and with it we bring all creation to say:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Thank you for being in, with, and under the web of creation,
And 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
For permeating creation with your Spirit—
to sustain and to heal all things:

P Thank you, God, thank you!

L Therefore with voices of thanks
echoing through the cosmos
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!
The whole universe is filled with your presence.**

Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Invitation

C Come, for all things are now ready.
 Come to the table and find peace:
 assurance of God's goodness and love
 amid all the storms in nature and life,
 assurance of Christ's compassion
 no matter how deep the pain,
 assurance that Christ is our hope
 for a renewed creation.

P **May we who share these gifts,
 share Christ with one another
 and with all who suffer.**

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

Thanksgiving

L Let us give thanks for this meal.

P **We thank you Christ for the assurance that comes with this meal. 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 celebrate storms
 and to discern God's Wisdom and God's goodness

and God's suffering presence in all the forces of nature.

Hold again the symbol in your hands.
Will you care for creation?

**P We will care for creation!
We will be in awe before the storm.
We will celebrate God's healing presence amid the storm!**

Blessing

L May the Spirit of God blowing in the wind,
fill you with the knowledge of God's Wisdom in Earth
and the pulsing of Christ within you.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

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

Recession and Song

<p><i>We join the children in song as they recess from the church. We cry with the psalmist: 'You ride on the wings of the wind' Ps. 148.3.</i></p>
