

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

Outback Sunday

We worship with creation in the Outback



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

OUTBACK SUNDAY

Welcome! This Sunday we worship in the Outback, with the red desert, the rugged hills and the creatures of the wild. We also celebrate the rock at the centre of the sanctuary, a rock that also symbolises Christ.

Gathering

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 outback—rocks, tough grasses and objects from Aboriginal art, together with banners of lizards, emus, dingos and similar creatures. We rejoice as the children place these symbols near the large rock at the centre of the sanctuary.

Call to Worship

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

L1 We invite the Outback to worship with us:

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

L2 We invite the flora to sing in the sun:

**P ghost gums and spinifex,
mallee trees and Sturt's desert pea.**

L3 We join with the fauna of the Outback in praising God:

**P roaming dingos and wallabies, goannas and hovering
hawks.**

L1 We invite the Dreaming to join us in praise:

**P songs of ancient custodians deep in the rock,
spirits of life deep in the sand and the hills.**

L2 We celebrate the song of the Outback!

P Sing, Outback, sing!

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

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

L1 We celebrate the song of the Outback!

P Sing, Outback, sing!

Remembering

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

L Take the Outback rock you received at the door, hold it with
your fingers and share with the person next to you a special
memory of the Outback, a desert or somewhere in the wild.

L We remember the wilderness God created,
the wild places on Earth,
the worlds of wonder and mystery,
the distant Dreamings of the Outback.

**P We remember the wild worlds
and hiding places of our childhood,
where we felt the mystery of caves
and wild creatures in the mountains.**

L We remember and rejoice.

**P Thank you, God, for the Outback,
the wild places that stir us with wonder.**

Confession

L As I hold aloft this symbol,
we remember and confess
that we have become alienated from Earth
and have desecrated sites in the Outback regions
of our garden planet.

Representatives approach the rock at the centre with symbols of how we have polluted the Outback, including a nuclear emblem on a banner, sticks of dynamite and a large bottle marked 'greenhouse gas'. These are held aloft and placed on or near the large rock in the sanctuary.

**P. We are sorry.
We have polluted deserts with radioactive waste.
We have torn holes in the ozone layer.
We have desecrated sacred sites in the Outback.
We have destroyed the homes of wild creatures.**

L We are sorry.

P We are sorry. We are sorry.

Absolution

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

**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 the Outback.

**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 rocks, the deserts and the wild world of the Outback. Help us empathise with your creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the wild world of the Outback. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and renews all things in creation. Amen.

Readings for the Third Sunday in Creation

Old Testament: Joel 1:8–10, 17–20 ‘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.

Psalm: Psalm 18:1–19 ‘The wild forces of creation’
The psalm writer remembers how God employed the fierce forces of creation to intervene and rescue him.

Epistle: Romans 8:18–27 ‘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.

Gospel: Matthew 3:13 – 4:1 or Mark 1:9–13 ‘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 him.

Children’s Address: ‘The Secret of the Centre’
told by a storyteller or by means of a puppet

Children’s Song

If I were a dizzy desert snake,
I’d thank you, God, I have no hair.
And if I were in grumpy goanna,
I’d thank you, God, for eyes that stare.
And if I were in Uluru,
I’d know it was a home for you.
Yes, I just thank you, Father, for being right here. (*Slap rock*)
You gave me a heart and you gave me a smile,
you gave me Jesus, and you made me your child.
Now I just thank you, Father, for being right here. (*Slap rock*)

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

The Offering

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

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 Outback who has become extinct.

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. Amen.

Sending Out

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

**P We will remember the Outback!
We will groan with creation!
We will celebrate with the creatures of the wild.**

L Will you care for creation?

**P We will care for creation!
We will preserve the wild!
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 rocks and banners. We join with the prophet who cries, 'Let the wilderness lift up its voice' Isaiah 42:11.