

Animal Sunday

(United States Version 1)

Introduction

Animals refers to the all the living kingdoms and species on planet Earth—in the wild, in our lives, and in our soils. In Genesis One, all living species emerge from Earth who is their common mother. In Genesis Two, the first human and all other animals are created from clay and the breath of God. In Job 39, the kingdom of the wild is God’s special concern, no matter how remote or mysterious.

Setting

It is appropriate to create a kingdom of the wild in the sanctuary, with creatures from rain forests, deserts and mountains, and/or the world where humans live with animals in farmlands and gardens. Statues or pictures of known and endangered species can be located among the trees and rocks or flashed onto a screen. In such a context, rare species could be a special focus for the worship domain that is created. Candles may be lit during the service to remember extinct species. You may want to play recordings of sounds of forest or jungle or wetlands.

Special Focus

A special focus for this service is endangered and extinct species. Worship participants may be given a list of endangered and extinct animals with their worship materials. Members may adopt an endangered species and commit themselves to support public efforts to restore that species.

Themes

In our call to worship we express our kinship with the animal world. We are, in fact, a family of animals—both biologically and spiritually. The creatures of Earth are our kin. We have all emerged from Earth and return to Earth. All living things are animated by the very breath/spirit of God. The loss or survival of a given species is a family matter.

It is also appropriate to incorporate traditions from native peoples, many of whom have a rich spiritual kinship with the animal world, sharing a common spirit also with the land where they live.

Optional Liturgies

Some may wish to consider elements of the Blessing of the Animals liturgy or appropriate prayers and rituals from *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004).

Songs

This special song/hymn written for Animal Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. A copy of the song book with music is available from nhabel@esc.net.au

SONG OF THE WILD

1. Will you come back with Me to the birth of the Earth,
Before all its life forms evolved?
Will you sing with the heavens amazed at the sight:
A planet with secrets to unfold?

Refrain:

Will you praise,
Be amazed
With eyes as wide as a child's?
Will you praise,
Be amazed
And sing
The song of the wild?

2. Will you walk home with Me on the way to the wild
And watch baby birds break from their shells?
Do you know how I serve as a mid-wife to all,
The lion, the lizard and gazelle?
3. Will you gather with Me as the wading birds dance,
Preparing to migrate North once more?
Can you fathom the code I have fixed in their souls
To navigate oceans when they roar?
4. Will you sleep with your God in the desert one night
And wake with the creatures of the sand?
Can you fathom the wisdom instilled in their mind
To live without water, sun or land?
5. If you don't feel at home with the rain forest snakes,
If you're troubled when creatures change their skin,
Then surrender the claim that you rule on this Earth
And discover creation as your kin.

Words: © Norman Habel 2000

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

Animal Sunday

We worship with the entire living family of animals



“Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! Praise the Lord!” Ps. 148.10

ANIMAL SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with the entire living family on Earth. We celebrate with birds, animals, reptiles, and all our living relatives. We listen to their sounds, watch their movements, and wonder with them as they praise their Creator. We give thanks for and with all our kin in creation.

Gathering

Leader In the name of the Creator of all animal life,
the name of Christ, the lamb of God,
and the name of the Spirit, the breath in all life. Amen.

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

L Christ, we come into your presence today,
to worship in this sanctuary Earth,

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

Procession and Song

We join in song with the children as they enter the church. Each "animal" carries an adoption card bearing the name of an endangered species that members of the congregation are asked to support with care and prayer. Members are invited to learn more about the endangered species they have adopted.

Call to Worship

L1 We invite our animal family to worship with us,

P **All our kin living on this planet,**
from the busiest bee to the tallest giraffe.

L2 We remember our animal relatives who have become extinct,

P **Dinosaurs, dodos and Texas grey wolves,**
Oregon bison and the woolly mamouth.

L3 We join our brothers and sisters in praising God,

**P Gliding eagles and watchful cougars,
Gorillas in the mist and polar bears in the snow.**

L1 We summon the kin we have come to love,

**P The stray cat and the backyard dog,
the goat, the pony, and the little lamb.**

L2 All our animal family in all the world,

**P Raise your voices to the skies
in a family festival of praise.**

L3 Sing, family, sing!

P A song of praise for all creatures!

We name, silently or aloud, other living creatures and invite them to join us in praising our Creator.

L1 We celebrate with the entire animal family.

P Sing, family, sing!

Remembering

As we hold the remembrance candle received at the door, we remember birds and animals with whom we have felt a close kinship, creatures that are endangered and species that have become extinct.

L Take the remembrance candle you received at the door and hold it quietly in front of you. Remember birds and animals you have loved or with whom you felt a spiritual kinship. Share your memories with the person next to you.

L Remember too those of our kin who are endangered those who have had their homes destroyed and those who have become extinct, through human greed and exploitation.

**P We hear creation groaning.
We hear fellow creatures crying out in pain.
And we hear members of our animal family weeping.**

Confession

L As you remember, you are invited to come forward
and light a candle to commemorate an endangered or extinct species.
You may name the animal as you
light the candle and remember one of our lost ones

*(Music plays while people come forward to light candles
and place them on a table before the altar.)*

L We share the sorrow of our animal family.

**P We share the sorrow.
We share the memory.
And we are sorry!**

Absolution

L Christ, who was deeply grieved in Gethsemane,
knows your sorrow and shares the suffering of all creatures.

**P Christ, teach us compassion
for the life around us that suffers.**

L. I speak for Christ:
I affirm your compassion.
Come now, embrace those in pain,
and care for those in danger.

**P Shalom! Shalom!
We embrace those in pain.**

Christ Have Mercy

L As we come home to Earth.

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we share Earth with our kin.

P Christ, have mercy.

L As we care for creatures in danger.

P Christ, have mercy.

Glory to God

L Glory to God in the highest!

P **And on Earth peace with our kin in creation!**

Prayer for the Day

P **God, our Creator, we celebrate with all living creatures today. Help us to see your presence, not only in human history but also in the stories of our kin in creation, the great animal family. Teach us to hear the good news of God's loving care ringing through the kingdoms of the wild. Rejoice with us as we behold the mysteries of your Wisdom implanted in all creatures. In the name of Christ who fills heaven and Earth. Amen.**

Readings for Animal Sunday

Old Testament: Job 39.1-12, 26-30 'The Kingdom of the Wild'

God shows Job the kingdom of the wild, over which Job as a human has no control, but where God's Wisdom and nurture are ever present. Each part of nature has its 'way,' a reflection of Wisdom.

Psalms: Psalm 104.14-23, 31 'Survival and Celebration in the Wild'

God not only nurtures and sustains all creatures of the wild, but also joins with them and us in celebration.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1.10-23 'The Wisdom of the Gospel'

The Wisdom of God may be evident in creation. The wise of the world may search for wisdom. The message of the Gospel, however, which may seem folly to the wise of the world, is the ultimate wisdom.

Gospel: Luke 12.22-31 'The Kingdom of God'

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the wild complement each other, says Jesus. God provides for all and wills for all species to survive and thrive.

Children's Address:

Prayer: Thank you God for giving every creature a life that teaches it how to be what it is. And thank you for giving each of us a special life inside that makes us who we are. 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 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 those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.**

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

Prayers of the People

We thank God for a wondrous creation. We celebrate with all creatures in creation. We pray for all in danger and need. 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 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
in creation, 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 all living creatures.

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 before you all 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 creation 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 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 with 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 health and security to Earth and to the creatures of Earth. 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 our kin on 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,
and all creatures in danger or need.

Will you care for creation?

**P We will care for all creatures!
We will nurture our planet!
We will sustain our endangered kin.**

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 Wisdom sustaining this planet
and the pulsing of Christ deep within you.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

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

Recession and Song

<i>We join the children in song as they recess from the church.</i>
