

Humanity Sunday

(United States Version 2)

Introduction

Humanity refers to human beings as an integral part of creation. All human beings are encompassed. Human beings, as part of creation, are kin with all other living creatures.

Setting

Artists are invited to create a sanctuary scene that celebrates both the diversity of all human beings and their kinship with creation. A special symbol of our kinship may be a large whale whose tail rises up before or behind the sanctuary. The whale is a special symbol of what humans have tried to dominate, but who is now coming home to be with humans again. Visuals of large whales killed and of other whales now playing could be included on a screen. (Thousands of whales are still killed every year, especially by Japanese fleets).

Special Focus

This service may include several sections in dramatized form. These are attached as options at the end of the liturgy. The first section of this optional form is a dramatization based on the three readings for the day, with a conflict emerging from the first two and a resolution arising from the third. A second dramatic dialogue takes place during confession as we listen to the voices of whales past and whales present. The voices of the whales return with the commission at the end of the service.

Themes

In our call to worship, we invite all peoples of all lands to worship with us. The way we have related to creatures such as whales in the past and our current concern for this species is typical of how humanity has related to the rest of creation. The readings highlight that we have, in the past, chosen the mandate to dominate (in Genesis 1:26-28) over the commission to serve (in Genesis 2:15). The message of Mark 10:42-45 offers a Gospel answer. The return of the whales is a sign of hope. The risen Christ is the source of our hope.

Optional Liturgies

Another liturgy that comes to terms with the force of Genesis 1:26-28 is *Song of Healing* in *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004). Especially

powerful is the dramatic dialogue between humanity and Jeremiah, who speaks for Earth. Dramatized options are attached below.

Songs

A song/hymn based on the image of waters flowing down from the heights of Eden (Genesis 2) and the throne of God (Revelation 22:1-2) to bring healing to all humanity, to all nations on Earth, is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known hymn *Morning has Broken*. The words follow.

SONG OF HEALING

1. Healing is flowing, deep in the waters,
Flowing from Eden, flowing from old.
All through creation, God sends forth waters,
Oceans of healing, for all the world.
2. Healing is rising, fresh with the morning,
Healing is rising, bursting with grace.
Christ, our rich healing, deep in creation,
Heal Earth's deep wounds and rise in this place.
3. Healing is offered, leaves from the life tree,
Healing is offered nations at war.
Come, wounded Healer, torn by the violence,
Rise from the grave, bring peace to our shore.
4. Healing is given, flows from forgiveness,
Healing is given, flows from our faith.
Christ, give us heart to love your deep healing,
Living forgiveness, even in death.
5. Healing is rising, free in Christ's body,
Healing is flowing, free with Christ's blood.
May this deep healing pulse through our bodies,
Heal the world's wounds still bleeding and red.

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

Humanity Sunday

We worship with all humanity and all creation



*“Hear this all you peoples, give ear all inhabitants of the world,
both high and low, rich and poor.”*

Psalm 49.1-2

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

1. *This Sunday we worship with all humanity, peoples of all ethnic origins. We celebrate the kinship between humanity and the rest of creation. We rejoice that humans who bear the image of God now understand that image in terms of their role as servants who follow Christ, the true image of God. Flags of diverse peoples may adorn the sanctuary.*
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, who creates all peoples,
the name of Christ, who gives new life to all peoples,
and the name of the Spirit, the same breath in all peoples. 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**. The minister or members of the congregation may invite peoples of all nations to worship in these or similar words.*

Peoples from every corner of creation,
Celebrate with all creatures on Earth!

Young and old across the planet,
Rejoice in the day that God has made!

Native people of every land,

Help us sense the spirit deep in each land!

People of every color, in every place,
Celebrate with us the diversity of creation!

All humanity on Planet Earth,
Praise God for our planet home.

Sing, peoples, sing!
Sing, creation, sing!

- 7. A hymn or song may follow that celebrates all humanity. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church dressed in the attire of diverse nations and carrying symbols or flags of various nationalities.*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

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

As we rub this symbol in our hands we remember that we are all human beings created by one God.

O God, we thank you for the wonder and wisdom of the many tongues of humanity.

We remember and confess that we were created in God's image to serve and sustain our planet.

Christ, the true image of God, hear our cry.

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

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

9. *A Confession. Symbols of racism and human torture may be raised in the sanctuary as a reminder of our past treatment of fellow humans.*

We have treated our fellow human beings shamelessly, abusing some because of ethnic differences and alienating others because of differing backgrounds.

Christ, our God become flesh, we are sorry. We are sorry.

As human beings, we have dominated nature, killed our animal kin without concern, and plundered our planet with abandon.

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 humanity. The presiding minister declares the absolution.*

Christ hears your confession and forgives your sins against humanity.

**Christ, teach us to love all human beings
as your children and all creatures of Earth as our kin.**

I speak for Christ:

I invite you to come home to Earth as one
by rejoicing with all creation.

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, as we reflect on the ways that humans have sought to dominate creation help us to hear the cries of creatures. Fill us with your risen power. Help us to serve and preserve our planet home and to celebrate life with people from all lands and all nations. In the name of Christ, the Risen Servant, who is the true image of God among us. Amen

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

14. *All may sit for the first three readings for the Second Sunday in Creation and rise for the Gospel. After each reading the reader may say:*

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

15. *A reading from Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7-8, 15, 19.*

‘To rule or to serve Earth?’ — Does creation in the image of God mean domination of all creation? Or does the reading from Genesis 2 interpret the first text to mean ‘serve’ Earth?

16. *Psalm 8 may be said or sung.*

‘What are human beings’ – The Psalmist declares that humans are honored by God with the responsibility of being stewards over the creatures of Earth.

17. *A reading from the Philippians 2:1-8*

‘When Christ became human’ – The message of Paul is that when Christ became human it meant emptying himself of divine power and dominion and becoming a servant, a slave.

18. *The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark 10: 41-45*

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

‘Not to be served, but to serve’ – Jesus warns his disciples against seeking power and dominion like that of the Romans. The disciples are to serve like Christ, rather than be served. The Son of Humanity came to serve, not to be served.

This is the Gospel of the Lord,

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

19. *A Children’s Address: A story may be told by a storyteller or by means of a puppet. A hymn or song suitable for children may be sung. The following children’s song may be used.*

*God made the whales!
God made the whales!
God made the whales to swim and play!
So when you go watching the whales swim
Watch for God who made the whales.
(Melody: "Oh when the saints go marching in")*

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 our kin.
This we believe.

God became flesh and blood,
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.
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 Holy Spirit renews life in creation,
groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
and waits with us for the rebirth of 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.

God, our Creator, as we reflect on the ways that humans have sought to dominate creation. Help us to hear the cries of all creatures. Fill us with you risen power. Help us to serve and preserve our planet home and to celebrate life with people from all lands and nations. In the name of Christ, the Risen Servant, who is the true image of God among us. 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 with suitable prayer, such as the one that follows.*

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 peoples in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

With all creation we praise 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, 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, to renew creation, and to 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.

**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 an authorized 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
share Christ with one another
and all our kin.**

29. ***During the communion, various 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 on the planet 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 all kin in creation..*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,
so that we, all peoples, and all our kin may live.

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

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

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

33. *A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal. All peoples are invited to join us in thanking God, as the psalm writer says, 'Hear this all you peoples, give ear all inhabitants of Earth, both high and low, rich and poor' Psalm 49:1-2.*

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 with the pulsing of Christ in creation,
through whom all things are reconciled and renewed.
Amen.

35. *The presiding minister or another minister may say:*
Go in peace,
serving Christ and loving Earth!
We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.

OPTIONAL LITURGICAL UNITS

Dramatized Readings for Humanity Sunday

Reading 1: Genesis 1:26-28

Reader 1:

*Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of Earth, and over every creeping things that creeps on Earth.
So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them.
God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon Earth.*

Reading 2: Genesis 2:7-8, 15, 19

Reader 1:

Then the Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life. And the human being became a living creature.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East. Then the Lord God took the human being and put the human being in the garden of Eden to serve and preserve it. (to till it and keep it – NRSV)

Then out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal in the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the human being.

Voice 1 I am the first human being, the voice of the human being in Reading One. I am Adam and Eve. I am humanity!

Voice 2 I am the first human being, the voice of the human being in Reading Two. I am Adam and Eve. I am humanity!

Voice 1 God made me in a special way. The word of God in Genesis 1 says so!

Voice 2 And God made me in a special way. The word of God in Genesis 2 says so!

Voice 1 I am created in the image of God. Do you understand? The very image of God!

Voice 2 I have been made personally by God. Do you understand? By God's own hands!

Voice 1 I am like God, created in God's own likeness.

Voice 2 I am liked by God. I even live in a garden where God likes to walk and talk!

Voice 1 I have human reason. That makes me superior to all other living creatures! Superior! Get it!

Voice 2 I am flesh taken from Earth itself and formed by the breath that comes from God, just as the other creatures. So I am kin with all other creatures. We are family! Do you understand family?

Voice 1 Family? Fiddlesticks! I have dominion over all creatures. I dominate! I tame! I rule all other creatures.

Voice 2 I have a partnership with all other creatures. We are friends.

Voice 1 I am authorized by God to subdue Earth, to harness nature, to put creation under my feet. Yes, to control your friends!

Voice 2 I have been given the responsibility by God to serve Earth and preserve it, to care for Earth as God's garden.

Voice 1 I can conquer creation. I rule! I rule!

Voice 2 I groan with creation. When you rule, I suffer. I suffer!

Voice 1 I am the king of Earth. I bear the image of God! I am king over creation! I rule!

Voice 2 I am a servant on Earth, caring for creation.

Voice 1 I am king, God said so! God said so!

Voice 2 I am a servant, God said so!

Voice 3 Wait just a minute! Stop your arguing!

Voices 1 & 2 I have God's word on my side!

Voice 3 Sure you have! But do you have the final word? Do you have Jesus' word? Do you? (*Silence*)

Voice 3 Who is the one who reflects the true image of God on Earth? Come on! Who?

Voice 1& 2 Jesus Christ!

Voice 3 Who is the true servant of God? Come on. Who?

Voice 1& 2 Jesus Christ!

Voice 3 And how does Jesus invite us to live? To rule like the Romans and dominate like their Caesars?! Or to follow the way of the cross and serve as Christ came to serve? Listen to his word from the Gospel for today!

Reading 3: Mark 10:42-45

So Jesus called the disciples and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over the, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not to be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Humanity came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Voice 1, 2 & 3 This is the Gospel of our Lord. We are to serve as Christ served.

People Lord teach us to serve.

Confession with 'The Voices of the Whale'

Speakers stand on either side of the whale tail. Images of whales and other relevant scenes may be shown overhead. A musician may play sounds with a double bass recorder, or some other instrument that gives a sense of the mysterious sounds of the deep as background or at points between the words of the speakers. A recording of whale sounds may be used.

- Voice 1** I am the voice of whales long ago. Ancient whales, humpback whales, and the whale that swallowed Jonah. I am a whale.
(Applause)
- Voice 2** I am the voice of whales today, whales that circle your continent and dance with delight near your shores. I am a whale. (Applause)
- People** Welcome, whales, welcome to our worship. (Music)
- Voice 1** I am a large creature but I am not a monster. I am sensitive to the sounds deep in the ocean below and the cries of my calf in a storm. I am something like the soul that feels the mood of the sea.
- Voice 2** I am a special species and not for sport. I have an amazing radar—a compass that guides me across thousands of miles through rough waters back to my home base to give birth.
- People** Welcome, whales, welcome to our shores. (Music)
- Voice 1** Not so long ago, humans hunted us whales and slaughtered us by the thousands. They came in ships and cried aloud:
- Voices 1 & 2** 'We rule the waves! We rule the whales.'
- Voice 1** Humans thought they ruled everything. They did not care. They left blood all over the ocean, along the shores and deep in our memories. And they cried aloud:
- Voices 1 & 2** 'We rule the waves! We rule the whales!'
- People** We are sorry, whales, we are sorry! (Music)
- Voice 2** In recent years something has happened. Humans have become more sensitive, more ready to celebrate life with us along the shore, more ready to save our species. I hear them cry:
- Voices 1 & 2** 'Whales help us wonder! Worship and wonder!'
- Voice 2** In recent years the tide had turned. But many creatures of the sea are still slaughtered senselessly. Thousands and thousands of baby harp seals are clubbed or shot to death in the Arctic North. Some are even skinned alive. Their blood stains the

snow, the ice, and the memories of their kin. Now I hear some humans cry:

People 'Whales help us wonder! Confess and wonder!' (*Music*)

Voices 1 & 2 Will you join with us as we remember the past and promise to care for the wonders of creations.

P **We are sorry.**
As humans, we have slaughtered species without concern.
As humans, we have sought to dominate nature.
As humans, we have been cruel to our kin.
We are sorry. We are sorry.

L We are sorry.

P **We are sorry. We are sorry.**

Absolution

Leader I speak for Christ:
I forgive your sins of destructive domination.
I forgive your lack of concern for creation.

I invite you now to celebrate your humanity
both as servants of Christ and servants of Earth.

People **Shalom! Shalom!**
Let the whales come home!

3. Dramatised Sending Out for Humanity Sunday

Voice 1 What about the whales? Let's not forget the whales!
Voice 2 And all the other creatures that humans have exploited.

Voice 1 We should help save the whales and other endangered species.
Voice 2 And we should celebrate the whales. They're coming back to life—like Jesus Christ did!

Voice 1 What do you mean? What on Earth is the connection between Jesus Christ and whales or any other creatures?
Voice 2 Well, you recall Jesus saying that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so he would be three days and three nights in the depths of Earth, in the heart of creation, and would rise again.

Voice 1 That's right! Jesus did rise again. Jesus was part of Earth,
buried deep in Earth and Jesus rose to bring life to all peoples
on Earth

Voice 2 And to bring life to all creation, including the revival of whales.
Our Lord is the cosmic Christ whose risen presence fills all
creation and gives life to all creatures.

Voice 1 So serving Christ also means serving creation!

Voice 2 And working with Christ to keep life alive on Earth!

Leader Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth and the peoples of Earth.

Will you care for creation?

People **With Christ, we will care for creation!**
With Christ, we will keep our planet green!
With Christ, we will celebrate life!

Blessing

Leader May the Risen Christ, who restores life to all in our planet, fill
you with the his living presence
to praise the Creator and help revive creation.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

People **We go in peace,**
Serving the Risen Christ
and celebrating all creatures--including whales!

Recession and Song

<p><i>We join the children in song as they play like whales and portray the peoples of Earth.</i></p>
