

# CARING FOR CREATION



“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it...  
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!” (Ps 24:1, 150:6).

## April 22 is Earth Day.

Genesis (2:15) invites us to “keep” the garden of Eden. *Shamar*, Hebrew for “to keep,” is an act of protection and care-giving. It is the same word used in the blessing “may the Lord bless you and keep you” (Num. 5:24). The Bible portrays God as the source and sustainer of life (Isa. 40:28-29), shepherd (Ezek. 34:15), creator and provider (Ps. 104) and compassionate liberator (Ex. 3:7-8). Our care for creation must reflect God’s care (Living Faith 2.4.1).

## Climate change is...

Climate describes the prevailing weather and temperature patterns of a particular region over many years. The earth’s ecosystem is dynamic and changes. Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, emitted by human beings through the combustion of fossil fuels, are warming the earth’s surface and the oceans. Over the last century, the surface temperature has risen about 0.74 degrees Celsius (a difference of 4 or 5 degrees is the difference between the earth’s current temperature, and the last ice age).

## Did you know?

- By 2100, loss of habitat could result in a 20 % loss of species in vulnerable ecosystems such as the Canadian Arctic and boreal forests.
- In 1995, 166 million people lived in areas lacking sufficient water for basic needs. In 2050, that number will rise to 1.7 billion. The reduced availability of water is one consequence of climate change. Water scarcity is one factor exacerbating the conflict in different regions of the world. Climate change will continue to impact human health and food production.
- The increasing number of hungry people will be one of the most devastating consequences of climate change.
- Rising sea levels increase the risk of coastal flooding, and could cause population displacement. More than half of the world’s population now lives within 60 kilometres of shorelines.

Sources: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Natural Resources Canada.

This resource can be used during an Earth Day service (see page 3 and 4 for an Earth Day liturgy), or any caring for creation initiative. See “what we can do” on page 4 for suggestions.

# Earth Day Worship Resource

## Call to Worship

*Adapted from Living Faith*

**Reader:** The Living God is Lord! Creator of all, Sustainer and Ruler of the universe.

**All: Praise the Lord!**

**Reader:** The Psalmist sings; the earth is the Lord's, the earth and all that is in it!

**All: The whole universe testifies to your majesty!**

**Reader:** God's love permeates all creation.

**All: Come, Holy Spirit; fill us with God's peace.**

**Reader:** Your Spirit renews the world, and all creation.

**All: Praise the God of love and justice! Amen.**

## Prayer of Approach

God of the universe  
All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to you.  
Every heart in every nation worships you.  
You are the Lord and Creator!

You rule with justice, righteousness and love.  
All of creation bows down before you.

Through the sacrifice of your son Jesus Christ, all of creation is reconciled to you. Amen.

## Suggested Hymns

- 667 – God you touch the earth with beauty
- 714 – Wordless, ancient earth's foundations
- 716 – Pray for the wilderness
- 717 – We cannot own the sunlit sky
- 719 – God in great love for us lent us this planet

## Prayer of Confession

We confess, Creator God, that we have not loved creation as you do. We have polluted the land, water and air, disrupted fragile ecosystems and changed the earth's climate. Your creation suffers as a result. We have not honoured our role as stewards of creation. Driven by self-interest and greed we commodify resources and value money and economy before human and environmental wellbeing. In your mercy, we ask your forgiveness.

## Prayer of Assurance

*May also be sung: Book of Praise 561*

Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.

## Suggestions for Scripture Readings

- Creation is sacred—Exodus 3:1-6; 16:26-30
- Stewardship of creation—Genesis 1:28; 2:15 and Deuteronomy 8:7-11
- Renewal of creation—Romans 8:19-22
- Abundance—Luke 12:12-15

## Sermon

### Prayer of the People

O God of all creation,  
Sustainer and Ruler of the universe,  
Your measure is higher than heaven, broader than the sea  
and longer than the length of days.  
You hold in your hands the life of every living thing.  
Your glory is reflected in your flourishing creation.  
You judge the world with righteousness and the people  
with equity.  
Your creation praises you!

Your goodness is in the stars, the sunshine and the clean  
air,  
in the oceans, seas and lakes,  
in the forests and the grass lands,  
in the hills and throughout the valleys.  
Your creation sings of your majesty!

We have polluted and overused river, lake and ground waters.  
We mourn barren earth stripped of nutrients, no longer supporting bountiful harvests.  
We lament melting ice and permafrost that threatens Northern life and peoples.  
We confess our participation in abusing the sacred trust you bestowed upon us to care for your earthly garden of Eden.  
Your creation groans under so heavy a burden.  
Awaken in us reverence for your creation.

We pray for the people suffering the consequences of a warming planet:

We pray for thirsty people:  
where there is drought; where there is no access  
to clean water, let their thirst be quenched.

We pray for hungry people:

where rains do not fall, where soil nutrients have been stripped, where people have no access to land, grant them access to land so that they may be able to grow a bountiful harvest.

We pray for people displaced by rising sea levels, drought, and conflict.

Life is a gift from you, Creator God. Our survival depends on the flourishing of your world.

Your creation weeps for justice and calls for right relations. Open our ears to these cries. Transform our stone hearts into ones of flesh, yearning to serve you.

We pray for scientists, government officials and decision-makers. Embolden them to initiate just policies to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and help countries in the Global South adapt to the impacts of climate change.

We pray for organizations that respond to droughts, floods and other natural disasters, and that work to alleviate poverty and change the systems that produce poverty. Fill them with Christ's mercy. Let your wisdom and love of creation guide their work.

We pray for people who struggle to transform unsustainable systems and lifestyles into thriving, sustainable communities that reflect your love of creation.

Occupy our hearts, Holy Spirit.

Shake us free from the numbing grip of lethargy.

Unseat our complacency.

Energize us with your transforming power.

In you God, we live and move and have our being.

You dance in creation, and invite us to dance with you.

We dedicate our hands, feet and voices to your service.

Our hearts and minds are consumed with love for you.

Our hope for the world is renewal through Christ, in whom all things are made new.

We pray as Jesus taught us:

*Congregation recites the Lord's Prayer.*

## Closing Prayer

*By Joan Masterton©. Used with permission.*

*May be sung to the tune of Hymn # 238, Beneath the cross of Jesus*

### **We rise each day, O Saviour**

We rise each day O Saviour,  
we breathe in deep and slow;

We thank you, God, for breath refreshed,

for air and life to know.

Your Spirit flows and wakes the soul;

our hearts speak gratitude.

Our planet breathes, and  
humans thrive at every latitude.

The noonday sun is high o'er head;  
my thirst calls out to me.

The water in our well is clean and  
cold and sets me free.

Warm rain descends, baptizing us  
in your community;

Creator God, we have enough!  
Thanks for sufficiency.

The shadows lengthen; day is done.

Our fields provide our meal.

The rich soils nourish us again;  
we offer grace and kneel.

Your body and your blood for us;  
salvation lets us live.

Communion with our Christ, our Lord;  
our lives to you we give.

We dedicate ourselves to you,

O God who guards the poor;

Help us to render justice now;  
avoid consumption's lure.

Remind us that we share your gifts  
with children yet to come.

We welcome them, unseen, unheard,  
to the feast of your kingdom.

Creator God, we rise each day  
to choices we must make;

You told us not to be afraid,  
for Christ died for our sake.

We live together in your world;  
we seek to care for all;

New heaven and earth await your time;  
we choose to live your call.

## Blessing

The mystery of human existence is that we belong to God and have been made in the divine image. In God we live and move and have our being. We know ourselves only when we know God. Creator God, our lives must reflect your love and purpose for all creation.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you each day.  
Amen.

# What we can do

- Worship God. Pray, sing, and reflect on our calling to be caretakers of God's creation.
- Invite young people in your congregation to lead an Earth Day worship service, reflecting on their hopes and concerns for the future.
- Invite an Aboriginal elder to share traditional teachings about the relationship between human beings, the earth and the Creator.
- Buy locally. Shop at farmers' markets.
- Host a 100 mile meal at church. Eat less meat.
- Host a congregational star party. Learn about God's ongoing creation in distant galaxies. Invite a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada to show you the night sky.
- Host a community forum on climate change.
- Learn about your ecological footprint ([www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)).
- Conduct an energy audit on your church or home. See ([www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org)) and ([www.faith-commongood.net/gss](http://www.faith-commongood.net/gss)) for resources.
- Plan a nature prayer walk.
- Discontinue use of disposable products when alternatives exist.
- Reduce air travel. This is the single biggest step one person can take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.
- Leave your car at home. Walk, ride your bike or take transit to work one day per week.
- Read about the carbon footprint of the General Assembly (see *A&P 2010*, pp. 440-446).

## Websites

Hold the Ctrl button and click underlined titles to access resource URLs.

Ecumenical organizations:

[KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives](#)  
[The World Communion of Reformed Churches](#)  
[The World Council of Churches—"Time for Creation"](#)

Other organizations:

[The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)  
[The Pembina Institute](#)  
[David Suzuki Foundation](#)

## Resources

Hold the Ctrl button and click underlined titles to access resource URLs.

## Books

*Eco faith: Creating & Sustaining Green Congregations*, Charlene Hosenfeld, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 2009.  
*A New Climate for Theology*, Sallie MacFague, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2008.  
*Joining the Dance: Lenten Reflections about Sabbath and the Stewardship of Creation*, By Cheryl Bradbee, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2007.  
*The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*, Nicholas Stern, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007  
*Keeping Our Cool: Canada in a Warming Climate*, Andrew Weaver, Toronto, Penguin Group, 2008.

## Articles, Papers, Presentations and Statements

*Interfaith Statement on Climate Change* (October 2011)  
*Environment and Climate in Peril: How People of Faith will Care and Advocate for Creation*, speaking notes for the Moderator of the 136th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Rev. Dr. Herbert F. Gale.  
*Climate and Church: How Global Climate Change will Impact Core Church Ministries*, National Council of Churches USA  
*The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth*, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), 24<sup>th</sup> General Council in Accra, Ghana, 2004.  
*Caring for the Planet and Ecology, Energy and Environment in the Social Action Handbook*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2009.  
*Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers*, Fourth Assessment Report, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).  
*Christian Faith and the Canadian Tar Sands*, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives.

## Videos

-*An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore.  
-*Excavating the Alberta Oil Sands with Public Justice*, presentation by John Hiemstra at the Citizens for Public Justice AGM, 2008.

## Tell us your story

How are you and your congregation caring for creation? Congregations and presbyteries celebrate Earth Hour (March) Earth Day (April 22), establish caring for creation teams, host 100 mile meals and reduce the energy consumption of church buildings. Share your story with us!