



# KAIROS WORSHIP IN CELEBRATION OF EARTH SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2012

*These texts, prayers, and suggestions for ritual are meant to be a resource for a worship service you might organize in honour of Earth Day. It is grounded in the struggle of Indigenous peoples and the particular challenges they face as a result of increasing global, devastating climate change and resource extraction on traditional lands.*

## Introduction

You may wish to use some or all of these words to open your worship service.

Our Christian faith calls us toward reverence for all creation. God teaches us much about great compassion and great love for all life. Scripture tells us time and again to care deeply for the oppressed, to love each other, and to proclaim and work for justice. In faith we are committed to the transformation of the world. We are committed to transforming our relationship with the planet and with each other, again and again until the whole Earth community lives in life-giving, sustainable harmony.

We are all bound together in a dense, global ecosystem, where the interests of the powerful often clash with the call for climate justice. Though we are all implicated in these issues, we benefit and suffer unequally. Our vulnerabilities are different, our access to resources varies, and our voices are not all heard. Indigenous peoples are among those whose lives are changing the most in the face of catastrophic global climate change. With melting ice, rising seas, drought, and famine, they are pushed away from traditional lands to infertile, fragile places. In addition to the injustices of climate change, poor countries and Indigenous territories rich in natural resources are too often the victims of destructive, irresponsible resource extraction. This “resource curse” means that investors extract wealth from poor countries and Indigenous territories and leave behind a legacy of social inequality, political corruption, and ecological damage.

Our global thirst for resources blinds us to the rights of Indigenous peoples and prioritizes profit over life.

Indigenous cultures, and the wisdom they hold, are also vulnerable. In the face of ecological crises, their own traditional wisdoms and adaptive strategies are ignored, undermined, and shunned.

In this time of worship let us take up God’s invitation to move toward right relationship with the Earth, its Indigenous peoples, and the whole of the created order.

## Gathering

### Words of Welcome

Invite worshippers into a moment of centering and silence, or meditation upon some instrumental music. If possible, invite a representative of the traditional territory on which you are gathered to bring a welcome. If this is not possible, ensure that the territory is named and recognition given to the people who inhabited and continue to inhabit this territory.

### Call to Worship/Opening Words

ONE: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;

**ALL: Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;**

ONE: Let the field exult, and everything in it.

**ALL: Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord!**

ONE: Let us sing for joy before the Lord!

(adapted from Psalm 96:11-13)

## Hymn Selection

There are many hymns that fit the themes found in this worship service. Some are traditional and well-known like "For the Beauty," "All Things Bright and Beautiful," "This is my Father's/Maker's World," "Morning has Broken," "Let All Things Now Living," and "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee." A number of widely used hymnals contain hymns written in or translated to Indigenous languages spoken in North America. You may want to take on learning one of these hymns, or invite native speakers of these languages to perform these hymns in creative arrangements.

### Here are some others you may consider:

- The Earth is My Mother (RS35)
- Honor the Earth (RS35)
- God in great love for us lent us this planet (BP719)
- Pray for the wilderness (BP716)
- Come and give thanks to the Giver (H57)
- God of the earth, the sky, the sea (H53)
- Called by Earth and Sky (MVU135)
- Each Blade of Grass (MVU37)
- O Beautiful Gaia (MVU41)
- Praise the Lord of Heaven! (LW41)
- God, Whose Farm is All Creation (CP261, H391, CB537, EL734, VU300)
- For the Fruit of All Creation (CP259, VU227, H90, CB532, LW563, BP802, 679EL, PH455)
- Touch the Earth Lightly (VU307, EL739)
- The Earth and All Who Breathe (VU295)
- How Marvelous God's Greatness (EL830, LW515)
- Many and Great, O God (EL837, CP407, BP301, H35, VU308, WS16)
- Praise Creation Unfinished (WS26)
- Thank You God, for Water, Soil, and Air (PH437)
- Creating God, Your Fingers Trace (PH605, EL684, H168/325, CP410)
- We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky (BP717)

Key: Voices United – VU, More Voice United – MVU, Catholic Book of Worship III – CB, Common Praise – CP, Worship in Song – WS, Lutheran Book of Worship – LW, Psalter Hymnal – PH, Evangelical Lutheran Worship – EL, Hymnal – H, The Book of Praise – BP, Rise Up Singing – RS

## Prayer of Approach

**ALL: Eternal and Gracious Creator,**  
We come to you this day,  
each with different stories, different pains  
asking for your blessing and your wisdom.  
Guide our hearts and minds into stillness  
as we seek to hear your voice.  
In the sounds of this worship,  
and the silences in between,  
let us grow in the wisdom held by you, O Lord.  
Let us grow in the wisdom held by the Earth,  
by each other,  
and by the blessed safe keepers of traditional  
knowledge.  
In Jesus' name we pray  
Amen.

## Hymn (please see suggestions above)

### Prayer of Confession

**ALL: Faithful One,**  
  
We have erred.  
We have caused the extinction of species,  
of cultures, of language, and  
turned our backs to your Goodness and each other.  
  
We continue to err,  
ignoring those who hold wisdom about our Earth.  
Pushing them to fragile places and infertile lands.  
Sacrificing sustainability for comfort and the  
future for today.  
We assume that everything will adapt, that nature  
will right itself,  
that we don't have to change.

In our darkness, help us find courage  
to grow in understanding of ourselves, each other,  
and our blessed Earth.

In our mistakes, help us find wisdom  
to change our ways and make things right.  
In our guilt and fear, help us find freedom  
to live simply, speak bravely, and act justly.

In the name of Christ Jesus we pray,  
Amen.

### Words of Assurance

ONE: Hear the Good News! Humbly repent and you are forgiven. For the Lord makes a way in the desert, and streams in the wasteland, the Lord makes all things new. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chr 7:13-24)

### Response to the Assurance

Sung response may be Taize style (e.g., a repetition of "Kyrie, eleison" to a basic melody, or invite worshippers to greet each other with the Peace of Christ, or simply have the worship leader offer these simple words:

**ALL: Lord, have mercy upon us  
Christ, have mercy upon us  
Lord, have mercy upon us  
Amen**





## Reflection/Sermon

- Consider inviting an Indigenous person to give a teaching or reflection from their tradition on the theme of care for creation, ecological justice, or the role of Indigenous knowledge in the face of climate change.
- You might also wish to seek out denominational resources. Many of our member churches have theological resources on healing and reconciliation that can be a resource. Please check your church's national or regional offices, or their websites.
- If there is someone in your parish, congregation, or region that has been active on issues relating to ecological justice, consider inviting them to reflect on the themes found in this service. Consider reflecting on ecological issues of local concern, including the relationship between Indigenous land rights and resource extraction in your area.

## Response

At this point in worship you may recite a creedal response from your tradition or any widely used creedal response from the Christian tradition. Alternatively, you may find a suitable poem or reading that affirms the importance of storytelling in traditional and Indigenous wisdom about care for Creation. Here is an example:

"Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the Earth is our mother. The rivers are our siblings, they quench our thirst and feed our children. The air is precious to my people, for all things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, humankind, they all share the same breath. And what is humankind without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, we would die from a great loneliness of spirit.

This we know. The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth. Humankind did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever humankind does to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected."

*Adapted from Sealth (Chief Seattle), 1854*

## Hymn

See hymn selection on p. 2 or consider inviting local Indigenous musicians to contribute to the ministry of music at this point in the worship. If you have easy access to the technology, many public video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo) offer a stunning collection of videos of any length that celebrate Indigenous dance and music. These may work well when combined with a few words of introduction.

## Listening

### Prayer for Understanding

ONE: Redeeming God,  
quiet our minds and open our hearts,  
  
so that we may hear your Word  
and be transformed by your will.

Help us to hear your voice and see your face  
in all our journeys.  
Align our footsteps with yours.

Amen

### Scripture Readings

*Any combination of scriptures may be read, here are some suggestions that speak to the themes outlined in this service.*

*According to the Revised Common Lectionary, the readings for April 22, 2012 (Third Sunday of Easter) are Acts 3:12-19, Psalm 4, 1 John 3:1-7, and Luke 24:36b-48.*

*You may also consider Psalm 96:11-13, Genesis 9:8-17, and Romans 8:18-25.*

# Responding

## Offering

*At this point in the service it might be appropriate to ask for an offering. Alternatively, it may be a time to ask those in attendance to commit to some other kind of offering in response to the needs outlined in this service.*

*For example you may:*

- *Organize a visit with a politician to speak about the importance of Indigenous rights and ecological issues.*
- *Write a letter to your Member of Parliament on Indigenous Rights and ecological issues. You can find their name and contact information here:  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>*
- *Become a KAIROS Companion. All the information you need is here: <http://www.kairoscanada.org/get-involved/companions-communities/>*
- *Host a bible study or event related to ecological issues. Try using resources from KAIROS and your own denomination to shape these events.*
- *Participate in KAIROS' "Put Yourself in the Picture" action. We want your best photos of the people in your church, community, school, or family holding a bold sign that says **"Truth, Reconciliation & Equity: They Matter to Us!"** Find out more about this public witness campaign at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/take-action/truth-equity-reconciliation/put-yourself-in-the-picture/>*
- *Invite all in attendance to write on a small piece of paper, perhaps creatively cut out in the shape of a leaf, one action they commit themselves to for the sake of Indigenous rights. Collect these pieces of paper in an offering basket and offer up to God and the community as a response.*

## Prayers of the People

ONE: O God of All Creation

Our hearts fill with gratitude and wonder at all you have made.

We bask in the abundance of creation and are nourished by all that is good in it.

Our thirst is quenched by clean waters, the rivers and oceans team with life.

Our hunger is satisfied by bountiful harvests; the orchards and fields burst with food,

We are comforted and loved by friends and family.  
We freely create and work and play.

**ALL: Every day we are reminded: all life depends on all life.**

ONE: Our hearts fill with sorrow and guilt for the destruction we have caused.  
We misuse the abundance of creation  
And squander the goodness in it.  
Our thirst for resources knows no end, the land and waters die by our hands.  
Our appetite for power blinds us to the vulnerable and the sacred;  
we hurt and oppress each other;  
we freely consume and pollute and destroy.

**ALL: Every day we forget: All life depends on all life.**

ONE: Our hearts fill with courage and hope for a New Heaven and New Earth.  
We heed your call to care for and restore creation, and are energized by the goodness in it.  
Our thirst for justice knows no end;  
our hunger for peace opens us to new ways of being.  
We find joy and support in each other;  
we freely share and cooperate and grow.

**ALL: Every day we learn: All life depends on all life.**

ONE: With ancient words we pray as Jesus taught us...

**ALL: Amen**

## Hymn

### Sending Forth

ONE: Together we are called toward reverence for all creation, to care deeply for the oppressed, to love each other, and to proclaim and work for justice. Go now renewed in your faith. In the name of God, who created all goodness, redeems all that is broken, and sustains all as we journey together toward right relationship with the Earth, its Indigenous peoples, and the whole of the created order.

Amen.

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