

# Earth Sunday Service: For the Love of Creation - FLC Website Version

## April 16, 2023

< This Earth Sunday Service was developed by The United Church of Canada to encourage their communities of faith to participate as part of Together for the Love of Creation Earth Week, and is offered here to fellow members of the FLC as a resource that you may wish to creatively adapt for your own context and denomination/group.>

### Intro

This service is an invitation for communities to act, learn, and pray for climate justice as part of [For the Love of Creation's Earth Week](#). Use these ideas to creatively adapt for your context. Congregations may consider holding a [Faithful Climate Conversation](#) before or after the service.

### Prepare

Have a sign with a basket or offering plate and some appropriate symbols for each of the following words:

- **Act:** a symbol of water, or another symbol that tells a story of hope for your community
- **Learn:** seeds, protest placards, word art, prayer wall, or another symbol that conveys the importance of remaining informed and learning what might be the best conditions for growth and transformation
- **Pray:** prayer wall, stones, candles, or another symbol of a living faith in action

Provide each congregant with three different sheets of recycled paper, the first with the word Act, the second with the word Learn, and the third with the word Pray. And provide some extra writing utensils. Alternately, you could have larger sheets of paper with these words at each of the stations that people could write on during the offering or before/after the service.

Review the [interactive map](#) of all the events being organized across Canada. Add your Earth Sunday service as an event. What events are happening online or nearby that you could invite your community of faith to participate in? What events inspire you to draw attention to within your service? How can you hold this common effort in prayer during the service?

With children, consider using [Lessons from Nature about Living with Climate Change](#) from the David Suzuki Foundation.

Please do register your service as an event. You may entice some guests, and registering will enable you to be connected in the future to other climate efforts through For the Love of Creation.

### Land Acknowledgement

### Lighting of Christ Candle

## Call to Worship

Behold, how manifold are God's works!

**God has made them all in wisdom.**

The earth is God's and everything in it.

**Let all of creation praise God's awesome deeds!**

## Opening Prayer

As we gather, we are thankful for your creation:

for light and darkness;

for air, wind, and sky;

for earth and sea;

for seeds, harvests, and plant life;

for sunlight, moonlight, and starlight;

for every living creature, swarming, flying, creeping, and grazing;

for our lives.

In our actions, meditations, and prayers,

may we honour and celebrate your very good creation,

as we seek wisdom on how to share our gratitude and love in good and healing ways.

Amen.

## Opening Hymn

"We Plough the Fields and Scatter" (*Voices United* 520)

"For the Beauty of the Earth" (*Voices United* 226)

## Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Grace

Creator God,

we come before you in a time of crisis.

We know that much of your creation struggles;

we begin to see and acknowledge the changes around us;

we search for the causes and the cures and the collaborative ways we can commit to care for creation.

We want to do what's right

but we don't always know what that is

or agree how best to do it.

Help us learn what we must,

listening to the diverse voices of creation itself.

Help us understand and love what you have loved and called "very good."

Enliven that understanding, we ask,

to allow ourselves to be moved to act as we should and to halt actions that harm.

Guide us as we try to discern how best to truly listen to each other as well as creation and heed your call.

We ask for forgiveness where we have taken too much or cared too little,

for hearts willing to listen and change and will to follow through.

May the knowledge of your presence and the assurance of your love shape our time here and always.  
We pray in your name, Amen.

—From *For the Love of Creation, Faithful Climate Conversations*

### Sung Response

“It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker” (*More Voices* 30)

### Learning Time: Introduce Earth Week and Describe Act, Learn, and Pray

This Earth Week, we are invited with ecumenical partners to Act, Learn, and Pray for Climate Justice.

[For the Love of Creation](#) is a national faith-based coalition for climate justice. It enables us to work together under one banner to mobilize education, reflection, action, and advocacy for climate justice.

Climate change impacts us, the local eco-systems of which we are part, and partners with whom we are connected with around the globe. The impacts of climate change are not borne equally or fairly between rich and poor, women and men, racialized and non-racialized, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, or older and younger generations. The greatest burden of climate change is falling on people in the Far North and global South—those who have contributed least to the problem.

Consequently, there has been a growing focus on climate justice, which looks at the climate crisis through a human rights lens and prioritizes responses and solutions that respect the rights and responsibilities of all peoples, expose and call to account the violations at the root of climate change, and move towards equity, justice and right relations with all people and the earth. Climate justice, racial justice, Indigenous justice, gender justice, and economic justice are all interconnected. The challenge is big, the stakes are high, and working together we are stronger.

*(Note to planners: Some examples of what climate justice can look like are listed as examples on the [Earth Week 2023 - Together for the Love of Creation webpage](#).)*

We, *(name the worship planners in your community of faith)*, have been discussing what these words mean, and for us:

Act looks like... *(describe the things you have placed in your Act station).*

*(For example: Show a picture of Water Protectors, or have the children touch water from a bowl or jug. Water Protectors and those who care for water are important, because water is life! We interact with water every day; not wasting and caring for water is an action we can all take.)*

Learn looks like... *(describe the things you have placed in your Learn station).*

*(For example: Give the children a seed or show them seeds. Seeds represent both a promise and a commitment to be a part in a complex life cycle. To help a seed to grow, we must learn as much as we can about it and the conditions it needs to thrive.)*

Pray looks like... *(describe the things you have placed in your Pray station).*

*(For example: Show the children protest signs or pictures from a climate rally. This is a way people pray with their bodies for a better world and to raise awareness of climate justice.)*

What does “Act, Learn, and Pray” mean for you? We are going to be reflecting on these words and what they mean for us today as we work towards climate justice.

## Hymn

“Called by Earth and Sky” (*More Voices* 135)

## Scripture: John 20:19-31

Jesus appears to the disciples and to Thomas

## Reflection

People in your community might be in different places about climate change: from acceptance and hope to denial, futility, and despair. Whether we are in denial about climate change and doubt that there is anything happening, or are aware of climate change and doubt that our actions and those of others can make a difference, both have the same outcome: the status quo, which is the earth’s continued destruction.

Today, we encourage you to help your community to personally experience climate change, to touch the wounds of creation, just as Thomas was invited to personally experience and witness Christ’s wounds. This may look like personal testimonials on how climate change is affecting your community; stories from partners about how it is affecting their communities; testimonies about the power of creation.

We pray that these experiences and testimonies will lead towards a transformation, hope and renewal of purpose, just as the wounded, risen Christ encouraged the disciples to break free from the status quo and from fear, and to continue Christ’s ministry of healing all of creation. Testimonies and stories of those who act, learn, and pray for climate justice can be shared.

## Music

“We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky” (*More Voices* 143)

## Invitation to Offering

You are invited at this time to consider the multiple ways that you can give to the life, work, and ministry of this church and the wider church for the sake and love of creation.

We often think of our treasures as our monetary contributions. <You may wish to insert here an opportunity to give a donation to a group affected by climate change or advocating for climate justice>

We are also asked to offer our time and talents for the love of creation. On the sheets of paper provided, please take a moment to write, draw, or reflect on how you will share your unique gifts for the sake of creation.

- How will you **Act** towards climate justice? (*hold up the Act sheet of paper*)
- What do you need to **Learn** more about to be a better advocate for climate justice? (*hold up the Learn sheet of paper*)
- What is your **Prayer** for climate justice? (*hold up the Pray sheet of paper*)

### Ministry of Music

Perhaps a musical selection that focuses on creation care.

### Offertory and Music (silent time)

*(During the offertory, if people come forward in your community, invite them to add their Act, Learn, and Pray cards to the appropriate baskets, or add their thoughts to the sheets at each station, and to possibly take or interact with the symbols that you have prepared.)*

*If the offering plate is passed around, also pass around the three baskets—act, learn, and pray—from your stations and have them processed up with the offering.)*

### Doxology

#### Dedication Prayer: Acting, Learning, and Praying for Climate Justice

God of Creation,  
we are thankful for your awesome work in creation,  
you have weaved all of life together,  
and it is very good.

We are grateful for all that protects and cares for your good works:  
the sunlight and water that sustains life,  
the earth that grounds and nourishes life,  
and the earth-beings that care for and protect life.

#### God of Creation,

**we give thanks for all whose actions care for your good works!**

And we ask your blessings on the actions we offer here and on the actions of those across the church and beyond during this Earth Week.

*(The Act offering plate might be lifted up, or in a smaller community some of the actions may be read out loud.)*

Together,

**we are stronger.**

As we care for your creation,  
provide us with the humility and curiosity needed  
to continually learn about the marvels of your works,  
and to deepen our understanding of how our actions,  
good and bad, affect all of creation.

**God of Creation,**

**we give thanks for the opportunity to learn and grow with your good works!**

And we ask your blessing on the intentions we offer here today and on the intentions of those across the church and beyond during this Earth Week.

*(The Learn offering plate might be lifted up, or in a smaller community some of the actions may be read out loud.)*

Together,

**we are stronger.**

Although the journey is hard,  
and our hearts might be afraid and filled with doubts,  
may we continue to act and learn towards climate justice,  
with the confidence and strength of your presence guiding us.

**God of Creation,**

**receive our prayers for the love of your good works.**

And we ask, in your love, to answer the prayers we offer today and the prayers of those across the church and beyond acting together during this Earth Week.

*(The Pray offering plate might be lifted up, or in a smaller community some of the actions may be read out loud.)*

Together,

**we are stronger.**

May we continue to follow in the way that you are leading with hopeful and daring hearts,  
until we have reached your commonwealth of justice and peace for all.  
Amen.

## **A New Creed**

### **Prayers of the People**

Creating God,  
For the care that we can give and receive as your creatures,  
we give you thanks.

For the care of...

*(name people and communities that offer and receive care)*

Thank you.

And we ask for your care and protection over...

*(name people and places in need of God's care).*

As you receive the prayers of all creation, receive our prayers...  
(*open space for silence or communal prayers*).

We gather these prayers with the prayer Jesus taught us...

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Closing Hymn**

"We Have This Ministry" (*Voices United* 510)

### **Commissioning and Benediction**

Go and act, for the care of creation.  
Go and learn, for the sake of creation.  
Go and pray, for the love of creation.  
And may  
the care of God enfold you,  
the passion of the Risen Christ embolden you,  
and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit empower you,  
now and forever,  
Amen.