

Healing our hearts, healing the land: An ecumenical Earth Day service

We invite congregations to gather outdoors in a place that needs healing – maybe a city park, riverbank, or stretch of woods. Bring whatever tools you need (e.g., gloves, trash bags, rakes, shovels). This 90-minute, family-friendly liturgy includes time for walking, outdoor cleanup, and prayer. It could be followed by lunch or refreshments. Please feel free to adapt the service to your own needs and location. Invite the public!

Stop 0: Gather in God's Name

Officiant

We gather today to explore God's holy land, land that was first named holy by the (Pocumtuck, Norwottuck, Woronoco, Agawam, Nipmuck, and Abenaki*) peoples.

*These are the Native people who originally lived in the region now called Western Massachusetts. To carry out a land acknowledgment for your area, visit <https://land.codeforanchorage.org/>.

The earth brought forth vegetation:
plants yielding seed of every kind,
and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.
And God saw that it was Good.

God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind,
and the cattle of every kind,
and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind.
And God saw that it was Good.

We come today in the name of God that calls things Good.

Stop 1: Confession and Absolution

Officiant

Holy and merciful God,
we confess that we have failed to honor you
by rightly claiming our kinship with all your creatures.
We have walked heavily on your earth,
overused and wasted its resources,
taken for granted its beauty and abundance,
and treated its inhabitants unjustly,
holding future generations hostage to our greed.
Have mercy on us and forgive us our sin.

Renew in us the resolve to keep and conserve your earth as
you desire and intend,
with grateful and compassionate hearts,
through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

The priest

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

A deacon or lay person using the preceding form substitutes “us” for “you” and “our” for “your.”

Stop 2: The Word of God

Celebrant The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew (Matthew 6:28-33).

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and [God’s] righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

(If there is no Communion:

Before the reading: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

After the reading: Here ends the reading.)

*Invite participants to stay in silence for 10-15 minutes as we explore the area around us. Gather everyone back with a bell.

“The Word is very near you; it is on your lips and in your hearts.” Share a word or experience that you hear now.

Stop 4: Clean Up!

Stop 5: Prayers and Sharing of the Peace

The Leader and People pray responsively

Blessed God, whose love calls the whole creation into covenant with you, and who puts in our hands responsibility for the care of the earth and its creatures: we pray for all to whom you have given life and being, saying,

“Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.”

For the well-being of the earth; for its resources of water, air, light, and soil, that they may be tended for the good of all creatures, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the waters of the earth; for their careful use and conservation, that we may have the will and the ability to keep them clean and pure, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the mineral and energy resources of the planet, that we may learn sustainable consumption and sound care of the environment from which they come, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the animals of the earth, wild and domestic, large and very small, that they may know the harmony of relationship that sustains all life, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures of the earth who do us harm and those whose place in your creation we do not understand or welcome, that we may see them as beloved creatures of God, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For all who shape public policies affecting the planet and its creatures [especially _____], that they may consider wisely the well-being of all who come after us, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For all those engaged in conservation, in agriculture and ranching, in aquaculture and fishing, in mining and industry, and in forestry and timber-harvesting, that the health, fruitfulness, and beauty of the natural world may be sustained alongside human activity, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures and the human beings of your world who are ill, or in danger, pain, or special need [especially _____], and for all who suffer from the unjust, violent, or wasteful use of the earth's resources or their devastation by war, that all may one day live in communities of justice and peace, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the gifts of science and technology and for those who practice these skills, that they may be wise, visionary, and compassionate in their work, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures and the people of the earth whose lives and deaths have contributed to the fruitful abundance of this planet [giving thanks especially for _____], we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

Peace

Officiant Peace with yourself.
Peace with Creation.
Peace with one another.
The peace of Christ be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

The Ministers and People may greet one another and the living world around them in the name of Christ.

Stop 6: The Holy Communion (or skip this step and go straight to Stop 7)

The Great Thanksgiving

Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People **We lift them to the Lord.**
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Celebrant
This day we join with all creation in the chorus of praise that rings throughout eternity:

Celebrant and People

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Celebrant

We praise you, God,
source of all life.

You made all of the creation as
Your spirit moved over the water.
You spoke and brought all things into being.
You saw that it was good.
You spoke, breathed, and made us in your image.
You saw that it was Good.

Yet we rebelled against you and what you had named Good.
We violated your creation.
We abused one another.
We rejected your love.
Yet you never ceased to care for us
and prepared the way of salvation for us.
You called us into covenant.
You delivered us from slavery.
You sustained us in the wilderness.
You raised up prophets.

In fullness of time,
you sent your eternal Word,
made mortal flesh in Jesus.
He lived with us
in the midst of your creation.
He embraced us as his children,
welcoming us to sit and eat with you.

On the night he was betrayed,
Jesus took bread,
blessed it,
broke it and gave it to his friends, saying

“Take, eat:
This is my Body which is given for you.”

Then Jesus took the cup of wine,
blessed it and gave it to his friends, saying
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
for the remembrance of me.”

We proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Celebrant

May the Holy Spirit that swept over the water on that first day of creation,
pour Herself on these gifts
that they may be to us
the Body and Blood of Christ
and make us your new creation.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
to you be honor, glory, and praise,
now and forever. **AMEN.**

As our Savior Christ
has taught us
we now pray,

People and Celebrant

Our Father in heaven...

The Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant This is living Bread, given for all Creation.

People **All who eat this bread share in Christ's Body.**

After Communion, the Celebrant says
Let us pray.

Celebrant and People

**God of abundance,
you have fed us
with the bread of life and cup of salvation;
you have united us
with Christ and one another;
and you have made us one
with all your people and your whole creation.
Now send us forth
in the power of your Spirit,
that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue forever
in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Stop 7: Prayer for Going Forth

Celebrant

Dear God, Creator of the earth, this sacred home we share:
Give us new eyes to see the beauty all around and to
protect the wonders of creation.
Give us new arms to embrace the strangers among us and
to know them as family.
Give us new ears to hear and understand those who live
off the land and sea, and to hear and understand those
who extract its resources.
Give us new hearts to recognize the brokenness in our
communities and to heal the wounds we have inflicted.
Give us new hands to serve the earth and its people and to
shape beloved community.
For you are the One who seeks the lost, binds our wounds
and sets us free,
And it is in the name of Jesus the Christ that we pray. **Amen.**

Blessing

Tend the earth, care for God's good creation,
Bring forth the fruits of righteousness.
May the source of all things Good,
pour God's blessing upon all things created,

and upon you God's children,
That you may use God's gifts to her glory
And the welfare of all creation;
Blessed be the Name of the Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Celebrant Let us go forth into all Creation, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.
People **Thanks be to God.**

This service was created in 2023 by the Rev. Anna Woofenden (Rector, St. John's Episcopal Church; member, Creation Care Leadership Circle, Diocese of Western MA) from material adapted by Jess Kotnour from Enriching Our Worship; St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, San Francisco; and Season of Creation: An Ecumenical Celebration (released in 2022 by the two Episcopal dioceses in MA).