

Ocean Sunday

(Australian Version 2)

Introduction

Ocean refers to the mass of waters that cover two thirds of Earth's surface, the surging seas and the watery deeps where myriads of species live, many of which are still undiscovered. The ocean is a world of mystery and beauty, of fascinating depths and spectacular life forms. The ocean is that vast domain many of our ancestors crossed to reach all parts of planet Earth. And the waters of the oceans are ultimately the waters of life for all the planet.

Setting

To capture the world of the ocean in worship, it is helpful to create a sense of life in the deep with images of sea creatures on the walls, scenes of rich color and mystery, whales, dolphins, sea lions, angel fish, albatross and so on. Another option is for the children to process into worship as if they were boat people, sailing on a series of sailboats, holding images of life at sea. The church floor then becomes the surface of the ocean. The community worships at sea! Some of the children could be whales, penguins or dolphins swimming alongside the boats. Scientists and artists in the community may help with conceptualizing the ocean as a living part of our planet.

Special Focus

A special focus for this service is the unique nature of our oceans as vast living worlds and the many unknown domains that both surround and continually surprise us.

Themes

In our call to worship we invite all the domains of the oceans to worship with us, even those we have never seen. In our confession to recall how we have started killing our oceans by over-fishing with nets, introducing alien species, polluting with massive waste emissions and killing our coral reefs with global warming. We celebrate the ocean as the source of our waters, the precious waters of life that make this planet unique. Throughout Series C for the *Season of Creation* we are conscious that, according to the Scriptures, Wisdom is both an agent and impulse active in creation.

Optional Liturgies

Another Earth liturgy, which draws on the rich traditions of Psalm 104 and provides additional options is entitled *Song of Water* and appears in *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004).

Songs

A special song/hymn appropriate for this Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known **Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven**. The words follow.

SONG OF THE WATERS

1. Watch once more the windswept storm clouds;
Suddenly the sky has wings!
God has come to rain among us,
Giving hope to all dry things.
Sing a song of splashing waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.
2. Taste the moisture of the morning,
Smoother than the best red wine;
Toast the lifeblood of the planet:
Here's to God's wild wet design!
Sing a song of flowing waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.
3. View anew the dark blue ocean,
Whales cavorting, spraying foam;
God at play with deep sea monsters,
Feeling very much at home.
Sing a song of laughing waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.
4. Feel the breath of God move softly,
Gentle mists that brush the skin;
Earth is breathing God's own spirit,
Life renewed from deep within.
Sing a song of living waters,
Pulsing through the veins of Earth.

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*First Sunday in the Season of Creation
(Australian Version 2)*

Ocean Sunday

We worship with the surging seas



“Let the sea roar and all that fills it!” Ps. 96.11

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

- 1. This Sunday we worship with the oceans of Earth, all designed by the Wisdom of God. We join the Psalmists and all the sea to roar with praise. We sing with the surging seas and celebrate the wondrous creatures of the watery deep. With our Creator, we rejoice with whales, dolphins, and other 'sea monsters'. With the Spirit we groan with species that are suffering from human acts of pollution.*
- 2. Sections of a psalm, such as Ps. 104, a creation hymn or an 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 Spirit of God
who hovered over the primal waters.
In the name of the Word of God
who parted the waters for Earth to appear.
In the name of the Wisdom of God,
who filled the deeps with amazing designs. Amen
Holy! Holy! Holy!
The oceans are filled with God's presence.

Christ, we come to into your presence, today,
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,
Holy! Holy! Holy!
Earth is filled with your presence.

- 4. **The Greeting.** The presiding minister greets the people in these or other suitable words.*

The Lord of all Life be with you.
And with your spirit.

- 5. **An Invitation.** The minister or members of the congregation may invite domains of the ocean to worship in these or similar words.*

We invite the oceans to worship with us.
**The deep sea currents and coral reefs,
the mountain peaks on the ocean floor.**

We call the swirling seas to celebrate with us.
**The icebergs that break off from the South Pole,
the calm waters that caress the equator.**

We join all ocean life in songs of praise,
**Whales and dolphins dancing on the surface,
and choirs of angel fish assembled below.**

We summon the seashore to magnify the Lord,
**The pelican, the stingray, the silver gull,
the white caps and waves that splash in praise.**

Oceans, seas and watery deeps,
**Celebrate with all that lives within you,
and roar in praise with us today.**

Roar, ocean, roar!
Roar, roar in praise.

- 6. A hymn or song may follow which celebrates creation, especially domains of the ocean. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church holding symbols of the seas. Children may also enter on an ancient sailing ship, like our ancestors. We rejoice with the children as they bring their ship and symbols into the chancel.*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

- 7. A **Remembering**. A bowl of sea salt is passed among the worshippers who are invited to take a pinch and taste it to stir our memories and connect with creation.*

As we taste the sea salt we remember times at the seashore or in the ocean that stirred our spirit or sense of wonder. We remember the sea with amazement.

**We remember the splash of waves on our feet,
the sand between our toes
and the mystery of an endless horizon
stretching out across the ocean.**

We remember and rejoice.
**Thank you, God, for the oceans,
living waters that are part of who we are.**

8. A Confession

We remember and confess
that we have killed reefs,
polluted seas
and turned surrounding oceans
into domains to be conquered.

**We are sorry.
We have polluted Earth's waters with toxins,
and killed millions of species in the ocean.
We have turned our greed into global warming.
We have helped cause arctic regions to melt.
We have loved progress more than the planet.
We are sorry. We are sorry.**

9. The Absolution. The people may sit in silence or they may name aloud sins against the oceans and life in the sea. The presiding minister declares the absolution.

Christ hears your confession and forgives your sins against the seas.

**Christ, teach us to love the seas
as a precious part of our planet home.**

I speak for Christ:

I invite you to celebrate Earth as your home
and preserve the waters of life in God's sanctuary.

Shalom! Shalom! Earth is our home!

10. 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.

11. 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!

12. 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 mysteries of the ocean depths, we celebrate the wondrous design of the seas that surround us. Help us to discern how we have polluted our oceans and to empathise with the groaning of creation beneath us. Teach us to sense the presence of God in the tides and currents of the surging seas. Teach us to care for the oceans and all our waterways. In the name of the Wisdom of God, the creative force that designs and governs all creation. Amen.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

13. All may sit for the first three readings for the First Sunday in Creation, and rise for the Gospel. After each reading the reader may say:

This is the word of God.
Thanks be to God.

14. A reading from Job chapter 38 verses 1-18.

‘The Mysteries of Creation’. A portrait of how God constructed the universe, with deep domains and mysteries.

15. A reading from Psalm 104 verses 24-26.

‘A World Created by Wisdom’. The whole world is formed by the Wisdom of God thereby giving it all its discrete parts, laws, design and purpose.

16. A reading from the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3-10.

‘Jesus is now the Cosmic Christ’. Christ, the Cosmic One, gathers all things together, unites the cosmos and fills the universe.

17. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke chapter 5 verses 1-11.

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

‘Facing the Deep’. Jesus invites his friends to cast into the deep, the unknown. An even greater unknown faces the disciples.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

18. A Children’s Address: ‘The Secret of Percy the Penguin’ may be told by a storyteller or by means of a penguin puppet. A hymn or song suitable for children may be sung.

*19. **The Affirmation of Faith.** The Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed may be said here or after the sermon, or the following 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 piece 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 centre 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.**

*20. **A Sermon.** The sermon may include 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

*21. **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.*

**Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth.
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky.
Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit
in creation, groans of longing for a new creation.
Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration from the stars, the rains and the light.
Christ, teach us to care. Amen**

22. 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.

*23. **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 suitable prayer, such as the one that follows, may be used.*

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 signs of our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.
With all creation, we praise our Creator.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

*24. **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 an authorised 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, renew creation, and 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.**

*25. **The Consecration.** The presiding minister says an authorised prayer of consecration, the words of institution or other suitable prayer.*

*26. **The Lord's Prayer,** if not already used, may be said here or after the communion.*

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION

*27. **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 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.**

28. During the communion, 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.**

*29. **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 our kin who has become extinct.*

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

30. 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 and sea. Amen.**

*31. **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 the oceans of Earth.*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,
especially the oceans around us
and all the life within them.

**We will follow our crucified Lord,
listening for cries of injustice from the oceans,
and the groanings of creation.**

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

**We will care for creation,
honouring the seas
and celebrating life.**

32. A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal.

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

34. The president or other minister may say:

Go in peace,
serving Christ and loving Earth!

We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.