



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY

SEASON OF CREATION

A resource to take your
worship outdoors

1 September – 4 October 2024

Introduction

Welcome to the Season of Creation!

As we enter the Season of Creation, I am deeply reminded of the interconnectedness of our faith, our communities, and the Earth that sustains us all. Growing up as a daughter of the Pacific, I've witnessed firsthand the delicate balance of creation—how the ocean's rhythms sustain life and how, in turn, our actions impact those same waters.

I recall stories from my Tongan heritage where the ocean is not just a resource but a living, breathing part of our community, a sacred gift from God that demands our respect and care.

This Season of Creation, with its theme *Hope and Act with Creation*, invites us all to embrace our shared responsibility to protect and nurture the Earth. The theme resonates deeply with our mission as the Uniting Church, where ecological justice and the stewardship of creation are central to our call as disciples of Christ. Romans 8:19-25 reminds us that creation itself groans in anticipation of liberation—a liberation that we are called to participate in through our prayers, actions, and advocacy.

As President, I have emphasised the theme, *Threads of Love, Weaving Christ's love across cultures and boundaries*. This theme is powerfully connected to the Season of Creation, as our care for the Earth transcends all human divisions. Just as we are called to weave threads of love in our communities, we are equally called to weave these threads into our relationship with creation, recognising that every act of care for the environment is an act of love for our global neighbours and future generations.

I encourage you to explore this worship resource and other resources provided for this season and to actively engage. Whether through worship, advocacy or community action, let us come together to protect and renew the Earth, reflecting the boundless love of Christ in all we do.

As we weave Christ's love into the fabric of our daily lives, may we also weave it into the very soil, waters and skies that sustain us, honouring God's gift of creation with every step we take.

In doing so, let us also acknowledge the deep wisdom and spiritual connection of First Nations peoples to this land. Their care for country over countless generations reminds us that creation is not just a resource to be used, but a sacred trust to be nurtured and respected. May our actions reflect this understanding, as we seek to live in harmony with the land, honouring both God and the First Peoples who have cared for this place since time immemorial.

Rev Charissa Suli

President of the Uniting Church in Australia

Tips for holding this service outside

If you're gathering for outdoor worship, inviting people to be present and attentive to the space is the most important thing. Spend more time in silence than you normally might. Go at a slower pace. Worship can be shorter, more informal and more inclusive.

The resources below offer minimal words, and encourage impromptu or spontaneous prayer. Try to avoid requiring everyone to have screens or pieces of paper in their hands. Adapt this resource as needed.

The leader should only need a single page of scripted text. You might bring hard copies of *Together in Song* to avoid printing and screens.

Allow the place itself and the Holy Spirit to lead you. Encourage people to relax and be themselves. With children that means actively exploring, gathering sticks and leaves, looking for signs of life and having fun. Adults can be encouraged to be mindful and to share their experiences with each other.

It is essential that any outdoor space chosen for worship is safe. If you are gathering by water, be aware of water safety particularly for children in your community. Encourage people to look out for each other.

Be aware of any accessibility needs in your community. Choose a space that is inclusive, for example, a park or garden with easy parking and seating available. You may be able to meet on your own church grounds where seating can be arranged as needed. Make sure those who need to sit can sit, and that all will be able to see, hear and participate.

Treat the space with respect and leave it as you found it.

Service of Worship

Call to Worship

It is encouraged for the worship leader to memorise this call to worship so that they can look at the people and creation as they invite everyone to worship.

Friends, it is the Season of Creation!
Let us worship God,
Creator,
Christ, and
Holy Breath.

May the Creator be with you.
And also with you.

Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of First Peoples is a way of paying respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whenever we gather together and an important expression of our covenant commitment to walk with First Peoples. Include in your Acknowledgement the name of the traditional lands on which you gather. You might like to acknowledge the ongoing connection to Country and care for creation by First Peoples in your place.

For example words to use go to:

<https://uniting.church/acknowledgement-of-country-in-the-ucal/>

Blessing for a sacred place (Aunty Rev Dr Denise Champion)

Leader: Arrawatanha Ngapala Nguthana
All: **Most High, Our Maker**
The land you have given us, your children.
Look on this place ... [name where you are]
this special place where you live;
this special place where your glory rests.
Look upon this sacred place where your name is
honoured.
Help us keep it as our Ancestors did.

Leader: Althaninda
All: **Happy are you.**

Invitation to be present to God's world

Take a minute to fully 'arrive' in this space. Settle into a comfortable position, stilling yourself. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your breath. Gradually expand your attention to the sounds and sights of the world around you.

Allow silence.

After a time, people could be invited to call out the sounds, smells, sights they have noticed. After each one, all respond with: **"Thank you, God of creation!"**

Conclude with a short, spoken prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Prayer of confession (Rev Alex Sangster)

This prayer of confession and water ritual can be used inside or outside.

For outside worship

In some contexts, it may be possible for the leader to get into the water to lead this prayer. Please only do this in shallow water (like a riverbank) and only if you can be assured it is safe. Alternatively, you could use a large bowl or pour water on the ground.

We gather here by the waters
the water shaping earth
the water in our bodies
the surging, the birthing, the baptism, the tears
we gather and we say
we are sorry

(SUNG) Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison

For the pollution and the pain and the disrespect and drought
for all that we have inflicted upon the waters of the world
we are sorry

Here, you could invite people to name their own confessions.

(SUNG) Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison

We sit by the waters,
we lay down and we weep
we say yes to the invitation to wash our apathy away

(SUNG) Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison

If you are worshipping inside or otherwise able to, for example if you have a speaker, play some music here (one suggestion is 'A River' by David Benjamin Blower. This is available to stream)

Invite people to touch or pour the water as the song is playing.

Hear Christ's love to you all
Remember young Stuart Moodie who, in 2019
managed to rescue more than 100 native fish on the Mole River,
in far northern New South Wales,
by catching the fish by hand in muddy water
and moving them into larger waterholes.

Healing is possible.
Cleansing is possible.
We can form a mighty river of justice and peace.
Everything is possible with the love of God. Amen.

Hearing the Word

A couple of readings have been suggested:

- Amos 5:21-24
- Isaiah 43: 15-21

You may like to include both or just one of these readings, or choose your own. You may like to use a few different voices, perhaps from different generations.

Responding to the Word

Depending on the context, you could respond to the reading/s in a few ways. When worshipping outdoors, informal and interactive works best. Possible options include:

- *A brief reflection (see reflection prompts and themes for inspiration)*
- *A brief discussion, either among the whole group or in pairs*
- *A song*
- *Walking a labyrinth*
- *Silence, prayer and meditation*
- *Invite people to reflect on images of creation from your local community or region*

Prayers of the people

People are invited to offer their own prayers for creation out loud or could be invited to pray in small groups. You could pray as a community, with people each contributing a line.

As you gather people back or prepare for the sending, you could invite them to share what they will do this week to care for creation or to work for justice and peace.

Words of Mission

The leader asks the people:

*“What is the word of mission we will carry with us as we go?
What word or image has struck you in our gathering together?”*

*Invite people to call out a word, phrase, or image which has struck them
in the gathering.*

When all who wish have been included a blessing is offered.

Blessing

And may the blessing of God,
Fount, pulse, and breath of life
Be with you, and remain with you evermore,
Amen.

Additional resources

A blessing for the Season of Creation (by Jessica Morthorpe)

As we gather in this season, may our eyes be open for God's face shining through creation,
and our ears be open to the words of creation's songs of praise.
May we worship among the wattle in a cathedral of the sky.
May the scent of eucalypt and petrichor be our incense.
May the rhythms of our liturgy be breath and wind and wave.
May the bees give their sermons, and the birds their wisdom.
May ripples and dandelion seeds carry our prayers to the ears of God.
May the freedom from walls widen our hearts and fill them with compassion.
And may we find peace in celebrating the rituals of time, season and growth.
May this be for us a sacred time to remember God's first gift to us,
and our first responsibility – to love and care for creation.
Amen.

Reflection prompts and themes

- Amos 5 (Let justice roll down like a river)
- Isaiah 43 (A way in the wilderness, streams in the desert)
- Water as a giver of life
- Water as powerful
- Living water
- Water as a symbol of baptism
- Water as cleansing

Song suggestions

Organisers of this service can decide how and where music might be best used.

If you are holding this service outside, it may work best to choose a short chorus that can be repeated rather than a few longer songs, unless you have transportable music or songs are well known! If your community would like to, you could spend some time learning songs during the Season of Creation that could then be sung outdoors.

- Kyrie Eleison (TiS 736)
- 'Come Holy Spirit' (Iona) (TiS 710)
- Bless the Lord, my Soul (Taize, TiS 706)
- Lord Jesus Christ, Lover of All (John Bell)
- How long (Robin Mann)
- For you, deep stillness (Robin Mann and Julie Perrin)
- Morning has broken (TiS 156)
- Beautiful Things (Gungor)
- I, the Lord of sea and sky
- The Summons (Will You Come and Follow Me) (John Bell, David

Peacock and Graham Maule.) CCLI Song Number 4983527.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBq1YtpQL8>

- Gather Us In (TiS 474)

Acknowledgements

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You may be interested in books by Aunty Rev Dr Denise Champion, [Anaditj](#) and [Yarta Wandatha](#).

