# The United Church of Canada/L’Église Unie du Canada

# Worship Service—Peace with the Earth

*prepared by Miriam Spies*

## Gathering

### Words of Welcome

Welcome, dear friends, as we enter into a time praising the Divine Messenger,
the one in our midst declaring the gospel of hope and peace.

### Call to Worship

Come and worship the Creator

who gently cares for the land.

**Come and worship Jesus**

**who calms the waters.**

Come and worship the Spirit

who blows through the trees.

### Opening Prayer

Let us give thanks to the Creator today

**For the warm sun and glowing moon,**

For the colourful trees and plants,

**For the flashing rivers and wavy seas.**

We join with the Earth and with each other

**For the healing of the Earth and the renewal of all life.**

Let us be grateful for the time to worship

and be open to our beloved Creator.

### Hymn

To Bless the Earth (VU 783)

### Prayer of Confession

**Loving God,**

**How often do we forget**

**the beauty of the Earth,**

**We confess that we do not always care for our home,**

**We confess that we rely on the conveniences of today’s society.**

**Forgive us when we don’t remember the impact**

**of our decisions.**

**Forgive us when we take creation for granted.**

**Remind us of your path to dignity for all.**

**Teach us to be caregivers in our world.**

**In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.**

### Words of Assurance

For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle. (Isaiah 55:12–13, *NRSV*)

Scriptures teach us to live with gentleness and in hope, not only for ourselves but for all of creation. May we seek this way of living with creation, as our God has longed for. May the age-old vision of Isaiah become the reality of today.

### Response to the Assurance

Like a Rock (MV 92)

## Listening

### Prayer for Understanding or Illumination

O God, you have given us these words to be a light on our paths. Let us hear in a new way today, let these scriptures stay with us to live by.

### Scripture Readings

Isaiah 11:6–9

Psalm 148

### Response to the Readings

Called by Earth and Sky (MV 135)

### Reflection/Sermon

There is enough in the world for our need but not for our greed.

#### Questions to think about/raise

* What are the challenges for peace with the Earth?
* What are the challenges related to peace with the Earth that your country, church, community is facing?
* How are you, as an individual, church, or country, addressing or not addressing the challenges?
* What can we do together?

Peace on Earth includes peace with the Earth. Human beings are called to take responsibility for nature. Today’s challenges in regard to ecology, climate change, and natural resources make it urgent to consider our views and actions.

What are Christian ways to care for creation? What can people of faith do on both the personal and the collective levels?

Justice, peace, and the integrity of creation must be intertwined in the discussion. We cannot speak about one element without having the other in mind. A church is not being the church if it ignores ecological justice.

*The points offered below are ideas presented at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, Jamaica, 2011 (www.overcomingviolence.org) and were offered as challenges to deepen our reflections.*

Example: Tuvalu—group of eight small islands in Polynesia (video on WCC website)

* + Affected greatly by rising sea levels
	+ Need the help of the international community
	+ Moving to more market-based lifestyle
	+ Food insecurity
	+ Leads to disunity of people and creation

#### A voice from Guatemala

* Indigenous values
	+ Heart and energy of wisdom
	+ People live together in respect with nature
* Live out Christian message of life in abundance
* Live out presence of God in everything
* Focus on sacredness of creation
* “Otro mundo es posible”—Another world is possible
* What are some learnings from Indigenous communities?

#### Blessed, sacred creation

* Humanity needs to learn in ways that allow the entire Earth to thrive
* Be cautious with Earth’s resources—hundreds of example of climate change negatively impacting lives in the “two-thirds world”
	+ - Global warming, the rise of sea levels, and the increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and floods affect the most vulnerable populations in our world
* God’s call to care for creation, care for humanity
	+ - There cannot be just peace without peace in creation
* God’s vision of animals living in harmony
	+ - The verses, a transformed creation, seem to set a vision for new heavens and Earth. Since we do not see a transformed creation where wolves can dwell with lambs or leopards with baby goats or calves with a young lion, it is easy to discard this section into a file for some future application. In such a case we are not affected by God’s Word.
		- By favoring the *figurative* interpretation, this passage becomes a description of the work of the Spirit
		- Christ teaches us to be servants of God, of each other. By caring for creation, we are fulfilling that call.

#### Things to do

* Be aware of the impact
* Take action
* Get involved

#### Hope

* Another world is possible! It is here and now!
* We need a change of *paradigm*

### Prayer for Grace

Gentle Creator,

May we live in your way, in the hope of a peaceable kingdom happening today.

May we seek to live with respect in creation so that all may live fully.

### Creedal Response

A New Creed (VU 918)

### Hymn of Faith

I See a New Heaven (VU 713)

## Responding

### Invitation to the Offering

Dear friends, we only have to look around in nature to see God’s love enfolding us. Let us now give in gratitude and thanksgiving.

### Presentation of the Offering

Offertory Hymn: Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow (VU 541)

### Prayer for the Offering

Dear God,

We are all so blessed in the world around us.

We seek to care for creation as you care so lovingly for us.

Accept these gifts and those of our hearts

To continue living your way in the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Prayers of the People

This morning we remember that all our thoughts are prayers. When you hear “O God, hear our prayers,” please respond with “And in your love answer.”

Let us pray.

Everlasting God, today we give great thanks for the world around us. For the trees swaying in the breeze. For the sun warming the waters. For the rain nourishing the land. All these gifts are from you, promises of your love, and we are blessed. Hear our gratitude for the wonder of creation and the abundance of life.

O God, hear our prayers. **And in your love answer.**

Healing and Comforting God, we pray for the church in our world. We remember that we are connected all around the Earth through the love of Jesus Christ. Be with those seeking to share a message, an alternative to corrupt governments and violent societies. May we strive to show loving support, as we all seek the true gift of creation and community.

O God, hear our prayers. **And in your love answer.**

Compassionate God, we fail to live up to being co-creators with you. We recognize the burdens on creation sometimes seem too heavy for us to carry. Help us learn the needs of the Earth when we hear it groaning. Help us care for sisters and brothers in other lands so that they may fully live. Help us learn from them so we also may fully live. Nudge us to the path of deep listening.

O God, hear our prayers. **And in your love answer.**

Tender God, be with us in pain and suffering, loss, and grief. Today we remember victims of natural disasters that devastate our world. We think of those overseas facing incredible droughts and famine. We remember those closer to us who are facing loss. Be near and remind them of your lasting presence.

O God, hear our prayers. **And in your love answer.**

In silence now, we offer concerns and prayers of our hearts, knowing you are always there to listen even when we may not have the words.…

O God, hear our prayers. **And in your love answer.**

### Lord’s Prayer

Let us pray now, with the words Jesus taught us, saying…

### Hymn

You Shall Go Out with Joy (VU 884)

Commissioning/Sending Forth

Let us go out with joy. Let us be ever mindful of the gift of God’s creation. Let us share the blessing of love with all we meet.

### Blessing

May God’s radiant face shine upon you.

May Jesus continue to walk with you.

May the love of the Holy Spirit fill you.

Today and forevermore. Amen.

## Resources:

Ecumenical Call to Just Peace

[www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources.html](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources.html)

World Council of Churches website:

[www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)

International Ecumenical Peace Convocation website: [www.overcomingviolence.org/en/peace-convocation.html](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/peace-convocation.html)