

Gather

Welcome worshippers to worship with fragrant leaves or branches. Offer one to all who enter.

Call to worship

Come through the boundary of the night into the light of this new day.
Come to remember what is under your feet,
and be surprised by what is being planted.
Let us grow together in our praise and delight,
feeling the wind tickle our branches,
and the groundwater feeding our roots.
You and I, let us move in this gentle breeze to live and move and have our being.
Let us find the beauty and wonder in being God's offspring together.

Sing: Creator and Poet Sandra Sears Seasons 3-10

**Father and Mother, creator and poet,
speaking your wisdom in forest and glade:
telling your glory in ocean and river,
pouring your pleasure on all you have made.**

**Christ of the cosmos, you sang into being,
galaxies spinning through measureless space;
coming among us, and sharing our weakness;
singing your songs of redemption and grace.**

**Spirit, you danced at the dawn of creation,
rising, rejoicing on jubilant wings.
Yours is the rhythm of cycle and season,
yours is the heartbeat of all living things.**

**God, you have made us of stardust and spirit.
Etching your image on ev'ry cell.
We are your love song, your poem and rhythm.
All co-creators, your story to tell.**

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Opening prayer

Grow with us, God, to understand what it means not only for us to be your offspring but to share this identity with the trees and rocks and creatures creeping, crawling, flying and climbing through Forest's boundaries. Open us to find our first neighbours and teachers in Forest today. Help us to look and listen, touch and hear the goodness and wisdom you have planted. Ground us in this wisdom so we can grow more and more into your mystery. Amen.

Remembering

Take the fragrant symbol you received at the door, rub it between your fingers. Share with the person next to you a rich childhood memory of Forest, the bush, or a special tree.

We remember the first garden when God planted Forest as God's offspring.

**We remember the gardens and the forests of our childhood,
the places we played in the past when we felt close to Earth and to trees.**

We remember and rejoice.

Thank you, God, for trees, for Forest filled with mystery and wonder!

Adapted from seasonofcreation.com

Prayer of confession

Begin in silence. From a central place in the worship space, preferably where the sound can be amplified by a microphone and seen, have someone break a series of sticks and twigs. Let the sound echo through the space before following with these words of prayer.

Each tender twig is so fragile.

We hold your creation in our hands, O God.

We hear Forest's cry in that small snap, and we are sorry.

We are sorry for trampling through the forest.

We are sorry for our carelessness while camping.

We are sorry for our insistence on progress that destroys the homes of so many birds and bees, quolls and bilbies, koalas and tree frogs.

We hear Forest's cry. O God, forgive us.

**Sing: Where are the voices for the earth?
Where are the eyes to see her pain,
wasted by our consuming path,
weeping the tears of poisoned rain?**

**Sacred the soil that hugs the seed,
sacred the silent fall of snow,
sacred the world that God decreed,
water and sun and river flow.**

**Where shall we run, who break this code?
Where shall tomorrow's children be,
left with the ruined gifts of God,
death for the creatures, land and sea?**

**We are the voices for the earth,
we who will care enough to cry,
cherish her beauty, clear her breath,
live that our planet may not die.**

Shirley E Murray

Words © 1999 Hope Publishing Company 88.88.

Reflection on this hymn/song by Shirley E Murray

<https://youtu.be/NMvoIFwU8Q4>

Douglas Galbraith discusses this hymn

Words of affirmation

From the moment we are born, we feel the grace of God coming off the wind and whispering from Forest. We are always whole and always part of creation's wholeness, no matter what we do. May we remember our sacred oneness, now and always. Amen.

The Peace

The peace of God be with you all.

In God's justice is our peace.

Brothers and sisters,

Christ calls us to live in unity with each other and with the whole of Creation

We seek to live in the Spirit of Christ.

Let us pass the Peace of Christ

Engage

Opening the word

Genesis 2:4b–22

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground;⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Imagine Eden as the first home of towering plants and forest habitats. Maybe it looks like the first forest you ever knew.

- *What do you find beautiful about Forest?***
- *How does Forest connect us to God?***

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, “You

may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” 19 So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Sing: Watch/Listen *The Cathedral* Richard Buxvort-Colligen
<https://youtu.be/aiRi-isYISU>

Acts 17:22–28

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23 For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26 From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28 For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

John 7:37-39

On this Earth, our common home, the Word was made flesh and went forth with the life-giving waters proclaiming peace and justice for all creation. Let us hear the Word of the Lord:

“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this Jesus meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

The Affirmation of Faith

**You, O God, are supreme and holy.
You create our world and give us life.
Your purpose overarches everything we do.
You have always been with us.
You are God.**

**You, O God, are infinitely generous,
good beyond all measure.
You came to us before we came to you.
You have revealed and proved
your love for us in Jesus Christ,
God made flesh,
who lived and died and rose again.
You are with us now.
You are God.**

**You, O God, are Holy Spirit.
You empower us to be your gospel in the world.
You reconcile and heal; you overcome death.
You are our God. We worship you.
*(Adapted from the New Zealand Prayer Book)***

Respond

Offering

Prayer of dedication

God of mystery, no longer unknown, you invite us to open conversations, discern connections, and seek always to develop relationships and communities of life and hope. We align our lives with your love for the whole world and join our longing with your desire for all generations to live, move, and be in you. Amen.

Reflection

Reflection by Dr Daniel Vujcich for Common Grace

This reflection was written by Dr Daniel Vujcich as part of Common Grace's Season of Creation 2022 celebrations as we come together in a time of prayer, action, renewed commitment and advocacy for God's beautiful creation, guided by this year's focus to 'Listen to the Voice of Creation'.

Ancient olive trees are a familiar sight in Jerusalem.

Farmers call them "Rumi" which, David George Haskell explains, is "a name for the Romans, whose hands may have planted some of these ancient trees."

Attempts have been made to discern whether the gnarled trees that grow in the Garden of Gethsemane today are the same "Rumi" under which Jesus prayed on the night before he became a victim of their eponymous empire.

(Show picture)

While the trees seem to post-date Jesus, they were found to have been propagated from the same parent plant indicating some attempt to continue the line of an older tree.

That's the thing about trees – they remind us of our connection to the generations that have gone before us, and our commitment to those that will come after us.

In his study of the role of trees in the Bible, Matthew Sleeth points out that trees are used "to teach short-lived humanity about time on a vaster scale". We are reminded that:

Other than God and people, the Bible mentions trees more than any other living thing. There is a tree on the first and last page of Genesis, the first psalm, on the first page of the New Testament, and on the last page of Revelation. Every significant theological event in the Bible is marked by a tree ... [and] every major character in the Bible appears in conjunction with a tree.

If our study of God points us to trees, then studying trees must also reveal to us something about God.

People are often bemused that, despite being an empirical researcher, I am also a person of faith. I consider there to be no contradiction; rather, science is one of the ways that I enter into a closer relationship with a God of mysterious creation.

As the researcher Steve Talbott puts it, “nature is a speaking and science is one sort of translation of this speaking”. So, what does science have to tell us about the trees that form a forest in the Word of God? What does the study of creation reveal about the Voice of Creation?

In *The Hidden Life of Trees*, Peter Wohlleben attempts to synthesise the latest science about trees. We learn that trees in forests are profoundly social beings. Strong trees use interconnected root systems to transfer nutrients to sick ones until they are able to recover. Trees that are under attack from pests use vast underground fungal webs to send warning messages to other trees, enabling them to begin releasing defensive compounds.

[Here is a trailer for a Netflix documentary on *Fantastic Fungi*]
<https://youtu.be/bxABOiay6oA>

And beech trees

[show picture of beech forest]

some of which are 3000 years old and are found all over the world)) synchronise rates of photosynthesis with one another, such that those who find themselves with the good fortune of ideal growing conditions do not leave their less fortunate neighbours for dead: “The trees, it seems, are equalizing differences between the strong and the weak ... Whoever has an abundance of sugar hands some over; whoever is running short gets help.”

These behaviours are not motivated by ideology. Instead, they reflect a natural logic. The forest is a delicate ecosystem. If a tree dies, that ecosystem is disrupted – light streams in through the gap in the canopy, the temperature on the forest floor rises, precious water evaporates. For Wohlleben, “The reasons are the same as for human communities: there are advantages to working together.”

It is not surprising then that Isaiah should prophesy the coming of Jesus by saying that “a small tree will begin to grow” (Isaiah 11:1-4). The glory of interconnectedness is the central message of Christianity. As we continue to learn from the scientists about the urgency of this moment of climate change and environmental crisis, so might we learn

from our faith tradition about the importance of Christian collaboration in meeting this challenge.

But how do we treat our own ancient forests. Our world is ONE and when we mistreat our forests we mistreat ourselves. They are the lungs of the world as well as supporting so many different kinds of life. Recently, in Tasmania, huge old growth trees which existed before the colonisers came, were cut down in a instant.

(Show pictures)

Our forests form part of God's miracle of life and we need to take responsibility for their continued thriving existence

I have placed some information in the News Sheet which gives detail of some of the wondrous symbiosis that occurs in our forests.

Sing: Mother Earth, Our Mother Birthing (See Strathdee)

C. 1999 Norman Habel

Melody: Praise my Soul, the King of Heaven

**Mother Earth, our mother birthing
Ev'ry creature from the ground,
Jesus too was flesh and breathing,
Kin to all that's green and brown.
Celebrate with all creation:
God has joined the web of life.**

**Sister Air, our sister lifting
Ev'ry creature born with wing;
Jesus shared the breath of forests,
Breath that makes our spirits sing.
Celebrate with all creation:
God has joined the web of life.**

**Brother Water, brother pulsing
Deep through ev'ry vein and sea,
Jesus drank the very raindrops
For our wine and in our tea.
Celebrate with all creation:
God has joined the web of life.**

Father Fire, our father burning

**With the sacred urge to live.
Jesus' death completes the cycle,
Bringing life beyond the grave.
Celebrate with all creation:
God has joined the web of life.**

Announcements

Prayers of the people

*You might play woodland bird sounds quietly during the prayers of the people.
Many tracks are available through an online search for "woodland bird sounds."*

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Pope Francis, Laudato Si'

Litany of Recognition and Honor for Father's Day

**On this day we recognize our fathers and stepfathers,
those who have nurtured and guided us in our lives.**

***We thank You, O God,
for those who have been fathers to us.***

**We honor our grandfathers, our uncles and brothers,
those who have demonstrated love and care to us in our lives.
*We thank You, O God,
for those who have been like fathers to us.***

**We appreciate our teachers, leaders and pastors,
who have been both male and female,
but we especially honour those who have extended
fatherly tenderness and love in our lives in our past and present.
*We thank You, O God,
for those who have fulfilled a fatherly role in our lives.***

**Loving God, You have been both Mother and Father to us.
Abba, Father, we remember how Jesus called out to You on earth,
recognizing that You are closer to us than our earthly parents.
Your love and care for us are felt
in the ways we are loved and cared for by others.
We thank You for all the male figures in our lives
who have shared Your love with us.
We ask that You guide and nurture new fathers and fathers-to-be.
We seek Your forgiveness for fathers who have fallen short,
for models of fatherhood that were limiting rather than embracing,
for that is not Your model.
You are our ever-loving Parent, Father of us all.
Grant Your wisdom to all fathers and fatherly figures
to love their children as You have loved Your children.
*We thank You, O God,
for fatherhood and motherhood,
for the blessing of parents in our lives.***

**Abba, Father,
we pray with those who are mourning the loss of fathers today,
and for those whose fathers were absent or abusive.
Ease their pain on this day, loving God.
May they know Your embrace,
and that You are more than Father or Mother to us—
You are the all-loving, all-caring Parent,
Creator of heaven and earth,
who knows the hairs on our heads.
*We thank You, O God,***

***that You are always with us,
that You will never leave us or forsake us.***

**We thank You for this day,
and ask that You bless all of Your children with Your love,
as a wonderful father loves their child.
*Amen..***

A version of the Lord's Prayer

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the
world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your communion of peace and freedom sustain our hope
and come on Earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and
forever.
Amen.**

(from the New Zealand Prayer Book)

Sing: *O God, you search me and you know me* (Bernadette Farrell).

Seasons 7-28 Words based on Psalm 139

https://youtu.be/mEGc3_D19Vo

**O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.**

**When I walk or lie down, you are before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.**

**You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
in ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.**

**Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.**

**Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.**

**For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.**

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#45150**

Bless

Offer this blessing from Psalm 139, then invite people to offer the blessing to those near them.

Hear this blessing spoken first from your kin, Forest, speaking to you:
You are wonderfully made, one of God's wonderful works!

Turn to your right and left and continue this blessing to your kin gathered here.
Offer each other this same blessing from Forest:

(Name), you are one of God's wonderful works!

Sing: NCH313 *Like a tree beside the waters* (James Martin).<https://youtu.be/XuBgPHYps-Q>

**Like a tree beside the waters,
nurtured by your loving care,
we, O God, your sons and daughters,
your enduring witness bear.
In each passing generation
may your voice of love be heard.
Bless, we pray, this congregation
with you holy, living Word.**

**Like a tree beside the river,
drawing life from holy streams,
fill us with your love forever;
recreate our hopes and dreams.
Through the storms of life sustain us
by the wisdom of your grace.
May the changing of the seasons
find us in your warm embrace.**

**We, beside the living waters,
drink from you eternal life.
Give to all, your sons and daughters,
faith that rises over strife.
O Living God, most glorious,
strengthen us for life today.
By the hope of timeless promise
guide you church upon the Way.**

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