

## **Humanity Sunday – For leaders of the church service**

These Sundays are Seasons of Creation Sundays, so, each different aspect of creation is the focus of each Church Service. This Humanity Sunday gives the church a golden opportunity to celebrate the mysterious wonder and the beauty of humanity. It is also important to take this opportunity to confront the challenges and responsibilities that fall on all humanity regarding our fragile and threatened environment.

### **Aims and objectives**

**Main Aim.** To engender a sense of awe and amazement of humanity, to celebrate the complex unity as well as the potential of human beings and then to be thankful.

Other important aims are,

1. To explore what ‘dominion’ and ‘made in God’s image’ mean, in the context of the Genesis readings, and in doing so, compare the 2 creations stories in Genesis.
2. To prompt reflection on the different ways of living within our fragile environment.
3. To acknowledge the godly dimension of all that is.
4. To significantly discern the gospel’s Good News for the day.

**Resources offered** (The leader is encouraged to choose from these resources and use them.)

#### **A. Background reading and commentaries on Bible readings.**

Quotations from Bible commentaries are included because, with more lay people conducting church services, they would probably not have the private theological libraries that many clergy have.

#### **B. Thoughts and information about the human being.**

Background reading, some of which is used in the suggested liturgy. Choose what you wish.

#### **C. Suggestions for congregational participation.**

Dialogues, individual contributions, and a children’s game are all included in the suggested liturgy.

#### **D. Lyrics to traditional hymn tunes.**

4 of my sets of original lyrics are used in the suggested liturgy. Norman Habel has also written many lyrics that could be used. Some of these can be accessed in the Seasons of Creation services, on the internet. <http://seasonsofcreation.org/>

## **E. Prayers and Prayer suggestions.**

A Creation Prayer, and suggestions for other prayers are included in the suggested liturgy.

## **F. A suggested liturgy.**

The suggested liturgy below takes about 45 minutes, which includes time for congregational participation, the children's game and Prayers of the People, etc. It is suggested that, without interrupting the flow of the service, short commentaries could be given, to explain some of the Bible readings. The dramatized reading in the liturgy below has been taken from the Uniting Church's Seasons of Creation services, on the internet. My suggested liturgy follows the lead of the services on the internet, by giving opportunity for members of the congregation to participate, and by having dialogues and the dramatized reading. Doing something a little different!

## **Resources detailed**

### **A. Background reading and commentaries on Bible readings, recommended in the liturgy**

There are 2 creation myths in Genesis. It is helpful to read both stories right through at one sitting, - Genesis 1:1 to 2:25. The 1<sup>st</sup> creation myth is told in Genesis 1:1 - 2:4a. The 2<sup>nd</sup>. myth is in Genesis 2:4b - 25. There are two myths because they come from different traditions of early Jewish religious thought. The 2<sup>nd</sup> myth was written down, but only after a long period of 'oral tradition', in which, for centuries, the story was told by fathers to their sons.

Biblical historians tell us that Genesis 1, the 1<sup>st</sup> creation myth in the Bible, was first written down about 500 BCE (**B**efore the **C**ommon **E**ra), about the time of or a little time after the Exile, as stated below by Brueggemann, and it encouraged hope and purpose in the many Jewish people who had experienced captivity in Babylon. This Exile lasted for about 40 to 50 years.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> myth, in Genesis 2, was written at about 1000 years BCE, i.e. 500 or more years earlier than Genesis 1. Both these myths are obviously conditioned by the wisdom and imaginations of the writers. So, Genesis 2, being much older than Genesis 1, reflects a much older imagination of God and view of reality. However, both myths come to us from 2&1/2 to 3 thousand years ago. This is essential to know, when we consider their important meanings and teachings. Walter Brueggemann, a German Old Testament biblical scholar, and author of over 30 books, has stated in one of his lectures, dealing with the Exodus, that - *The Bible is an act of imagination. It is not a package of certitudes. It is an act of imagination that invites our faithful imagination which makes it possible for us to live faithfully.* We need to keep this in mind every time we seek to understand what the Bible teaches.

One of the most important differences, when comparing these two Genesis myths, is the different images of God they present. In Genesis 1, God is presented as being totally transcendent, making pronouncements, *'And God said...'* Gen 1:3,6,9,14,20,24,26, that bring all things into being, *'And it was so.'* Gen 1:7,15,24. This image presents God as in relationship with creation, but the style of writing suggests a detachment, a distinct separateness. God is not presented as being on Earth. God is 'elsewhere', above and beyond.

However, in Genesis 2, the older myth, God is on Earth, very immanent, always present to what 'he' is doing. God *'formed man from dust of the ground'* 2:7, *'planted a garden in Eden'* 2:8, *'took the man and put him in the garden'* 2:8, *'took the man and put him'* 2:15, *'commanded the man'* 2:16. God is concerned that the man was alone, 2:18. Not having accomplished God's intention with the creation of the animals, God *'caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man'* 2:21, *'took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh'* 2:21, *'he made into a woman and brought her to him'* 2:22. God is certainly busy, and always present.

It could be said that the two creation myths give a balance between God's transcendent 'awayness' and God's immanent presence. God is above and beyond, yet also very present.

### **Genesis 1:1-2:4a - the first creation myth**

Walter Brueggemann in one of his books, 'Interpretation' - Genesis - A Bible commentary for Preaching and Teaching, presents his interpretation on this passage of Genesis on pages 22 to 39. Some relevant excerpts -

Page 25 - *At the outset, we must see that this text is not a scientific description but a theological affirmation.*

Page 27 - *Creation faith is the church's confession that all life is characterised by graciousness. Well-being is a gift which forms the context for our life of obedience and thanksgiving.*

Page 31 - *During the exile (The time of our text), Israel resisted every effort to image God.*

Page 32 - *There is one way in which God is imaged in the world and only one – humanness! This is the only creature, the only part of creation, which discloses something about the reality of God.*

*The image of God in the human person is a mandate of power and responsibility. The image images the creative use of power which invites, evokes and permits.*

Page 37 - *Blessing theology defines reality in an artistic and aesthetic way. Throughout the narrative, God judges the results of his work "good" (1:10,12,18,21,25), and in verse 31, he pronounces the whole "very good". The "good" used here does not refer primarily to a moral quality, but to an aesthetic quality. It might be better translated "lovely, pleasing, beautiful" (cf Eccles. 3:11)*

Page 38 - *The calling of human persons in the vocation of shepherd is offered against an ideology of grasping exploitation and against retreat into irresponsible self-indulgence. It invites a new modelling of humanness after “The Good Shepherd” who does not grasp.*

Fretheim, in his commentary on **Genesis 1:24-31** in the New Interpreter’s Bible (Vol 1 Page 345-346). Some relevant excerpts -

Page 345 -*The phrase, ‘image of God’ has been the subject of much discussion over the centuries. This language occurs only in Genesis 1 -11 (though implied elsewhere, e.g. Psalm 8). .... In comparing the words ‘image’ and ‘likeness’, Fretheim states, - In 1:26, ‘likeness’ may specify the meaning more closely, so that ‘image’ should not be construed in the sense of identity. .... The ‘image’ refers to the entire human being, not to some part, such as the reason or the will. As for ‘likeness’ in body, one may suggest that this notion appears in the later physical appearances of the ‘messenger of God’ (see 16:7).*

*The ‘image’ functions to mirror God to the world, to be God as God would be to the non-human, to be an extension of God’s own dominion. ....*

*A study of the verb ‘have dominion’ (rada in Hebrew) reveals that it must be understood in terms of caregiving, even nurturing, not exploitation. As the image of God, human beings should relate to the non-human as God has related to them. This idea belongs to the world of ideal conceptions of royal responsibility (Ezekiel 34:1-4; Psalm 72:8-14) and centres on the animals. The command to ‘subdue the earth’ (kabas in Hebrew) focuses on the earth, particularly cultivation (see 2:5, 15), a difficult task in those days. While the verb may involve coercive aspects in interhuman relationships (see Numb 32:22,29), no enemies are in view here. More generally, ‘subduing’ involves development in the created order. This process offers to the human being the task of intra-creational development, of bringing the world along to its fullest creational potential. Here paradise is not a state of perfection, not a static state of affairs. The future remains open to a number of possibilities in which creaturely activity will prove crucial for the development of the world.*

*When God conveys blessing (see 1:22; 2:3) God gives power, strength, and potentiality to the creatures. Such action, therefore, constitutes an integral part of the power-sharing image, a giving over of what is God’s to others to use as they will. God will not pull back from this act of commitment, which God renews after the flood (9:1).*

### **Genesis 1:30**

*“And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.*

My comment

*This verse does not speak of nature as we now know it and have observed and researched it. Many animals are carnivores and have been for millions of years. They are meat eaters and not only 'green plants'. More of this in the 'Animal Sunday' liturgy.*

### **Genesis 2:4b-15 & 18-24 - the second creation myth**

Fretheim in his Commentary and Reflections on this myth, (Pages 349-357) begins –

*In the present form of the text, this section is probably intended to describe in detail several days of chap.1, particularly the sixth one. Genesis 2 was likely not understood as a parallel creation account; it probably was part of a larger story, evident particularly vv.5-6, which could describe a state of affairs after 1:9-10 (with dry land in place, but the separated waters not yet providing fertility).*

*Differences from Chap 1, have often been observed (e.g., literary type, structure, style, and vocabulary; centre of concern). But there are also key similarities: God as sole creator of a good and purposeful world, the key place of the human among the creatures, the co-creative role of the human and the non-human, the social character of the human as male-female.*

### **Mark 10.42-45**

PHEME PERKINS, in commentary of this passage, in the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 8 page 654 states –

*Since greatness was a topic of contention among them (the disciples), the other disciples become angry with James and John. A series of sayings (by Jesus) about authority and discipleship, makes the rejection of power and status in the new community clear (vv. 42-44). Only those willing to be slaves in the service of others have any claim to greatness (vv. 43-44). This insistence on service distinguishes Jesus' understanding of the new order, from many apocalyptic visions. Frequently, apocalyptic visions of liberation, picture the afflicted and suffering righteous triumphing over their former masters and persecutors. For example, Daniel 7:27 pictures dominion as passing to the persecuted, who will enjoy everlasting rule over the nations.*

*The reply to James and John highlights the exemplary character of the death of Jesus. The final saying points once again to the Son of Man as the one who has come to serve – not the glory the disciples had in mind.*

## **B. Ideas and information about human beings**

### **1. Our physical body**

Our human heart -

- is a little bigger than a fist;
- is a strong muscular pump, pumping about 7,500 litres of blood through our circulatory system, each day;
- beats about 100,000 times a day, i.e. about 35 million times each year.

Our arteries, capillaries, and veins, which facilitate the flow of blood from all parts of our body to and from our heart, if stretched out in a single long line would measure about 100,000 kilometres.

Our kidneys clean about 200 litres of blood every 24 hours and turn toxins and waste into urine.

Each human cell has around 1.8 meters of DNA. Humans are composed of about 10 trillion cells, a low estimate. This means that each person has around 18 trillion meters of DNA inside of them.

### **2. Our learning capacity seems nearly endless**

We can learn to -

sew on a button,

construct a building, 160 stories high,

make a sandwich,

travel to, and walk on the moon,

complete a jigsaw puzzle,

do quantum physics,

have a shower and get dressed,

transplant a human heart from one human to another,

fix a broken chair,

be a website designer, a wool classer or window cleaner, a politician, a pianist or a pig farmer,

a motor mechanic, a money lender or a magician, a nurse, a navy officer or a novelist, a

ventriloquist, a violinist or a vet, a diplomat or a designer of weapons of war, a therapist, a

theologian, a train driver or a tennis coach; etc., etc. Maybe be multi-skilled, etc., etc.

### **3. We can, with effort**

run 100 metres in less than 10 seconds,  
climb Mount Everest,  
win a football match,  
lift over 450 kilograms,  
gain excellent marks in exams.

For some of us, it takes a lot of effort to walk, talk, get out of bed in the morning or eat breakfast; but we do it.

### **4. We can**

love or hate, and everything in between;  
play by the rules or cheat, and everything in between;  
be belligerent or sensitive, and everything in between;  
be generous or mean, and ...  
be violent or compassionate, and ...  
be dogmatic or flexible, and ...  
listen or always talk, and ...  
be humble or arrogant, and ...  
be patient or aggressive, and ...  
lie or be honest, and ...  
be abrasive or gentle, and ...  
be exclusive or inclusive, and ...  
do all we can to protect our environment or do nothing, and everything in between.  
**I can be myself or try to be something/someone I am not.**

### **AND**

I can look back at all this, particularly my behaviour, and be ashamed or pleased, maybe both, or just not care.

What other creature in all the cosmos can do and be these things? We don't know of any. What about the myriad of unsung heroes who, although seriously disabled, live a full life and inspire others to do the same? And the parents of disabled children who make sacrifices and face challenges, for many years, far beyond the normal? And children who care for their disabled parents? There are so many human heroes. Ordinary people do extraordinary things.  
**I stand in awe of my/your/all humanity.**

### **C. Suggestions for congregational participation**

- 1. Conversation about humans.**  
See in the suggested liturgy.
- 2. Personal sharing.**  
See in the Suggested Liturgy.

**3. Play 'Follow the leader' with the children.**

See in the Suggested Liturgy

**D. Lyrics to traditional hymn tunes.**

There are 4 original sets of my lyrics used in the suggested liturgy. Other sets of lyrics are available on my website, accessible at **George Stuart - Google sites**, or <https://sites.google.com/view/george-stuart>. Follow the links [Singing a New Song](#) and then [32 Themes/Subjects](#).

**E. Prayers and prayer suggestions**

**1. Creation prayer**

See in the suggested liturgy.

**2. Prayer suggestion**

See in the suggested liturgy.

**F. Suggested Liturgy with leaders notes.**

Note. Please feel free to use what you wish and modify what you wish. You may wish to alter to sequence. You may to insert another short reflection.

**Themes.**

Note. The Welcome and the first song set the tone of contemplating our life and our connection to Jesus. We move into a thoughtful section about human beings and how complex and unique in the universe, we all are. We then move into a comparison of the 2 Genesis creation myths, highlighting the different ways we humans can relate to nature and each other. Some interpretation to help understanding, could be useful. We conclude this section with a teaching from Jesus. We then return to the mystery of being human and the 'Good News' of the gospel.

**Welcome.**

**Leader.** We are all welcome. We are all of priceless worth. We are all wonderfully unique.

**Congregation.** *Let us be thankful for each other.*

**We sing together.**



**Worship is celebration.**

Tune Praise my soul/Lauda Anima TiS 134,179

*Worship is our celebration  
Of the wondrous universe;  
Life in all its human beauty,  
In our worship, we rehearse.  
We now sing our affirmation  
In both melody and verse.*

*Worship prompts us to compassion,  
Demonstrating love and care;  
In our worship, inspiration  
Lifts our spirits into prayer;  
We are challenged to live gently,  
Standing by those in despair.*

*Worship fosters true reflection  
On our work of ministry;  
In our worship, in rememb'rance,  
We connect with Galilee;  
As with Jesus, so in service,  
We release faith's energy.*

*Worship is where real belonging  
Re-affirms our human worth;  
And engagement with 'The Mystery'  
In our worship, can give birth  
To endeavours at enhancing  
Human life throughout the earth.*

**Leader.** In this series of church services, The Seasons of Creation, we ponder on our Earth home, the wonders of nature, the cosmos and ourselves. Today, we concentrate on ourselves - Humanity.

Who are we? Why are we here? Where have we come from, and where are we going? For a moment or two, let us think about being a human.

## Conversation about humans.

Note. It is essential for good preparation to be done for all conversations. Together, all participants should read through the material at least twice to make sure that each participant is well prepared.

*Voice 1.* I think we have amazing bodies.

*Voice 2.* Oh. I don't know. I think we're all pretty normal.

*Voice 1.* But what's normal? Did you know that your heart beats 35 million times each year and pumps 7,500 litres of blood each day? We don't have to tell it to; it just happens automatically.

*Voice 2.* Yes, I suppose that's something. No wonder it gets tired after about 70 or so years and eventually fags out! But that's the same for nearly all of us.

*Voice 1.* You're right. We all have a heart. But it's amazing! **(Pause)** Did you know that if you stretched out all your arteries and veins in a single long line, it would measure about 100,000 kilometres?

*Voice 2.* Really? I suppose that's why we bleed, no matter where we cut ourselves.

*Voice 1.* I could go on and on about our physical body! But another thing; Did you know you could have learned to be a philosophy lecturer?

*Voice 2.* Come on! I doubt that very much.

*Voice 1.* Well others have. We can achieve nearly all that we put our mind to. **(Pause)** What are you pleased about being able to do?

*Voice 2.* I don't want to be too full of myself, but since you asked, I can fix a leaking tap. I don't need to call a plumber. Saves quite a bit of money too!

*Voice 1.* That's great. But you know, not everyone can. I wish I could, but I know I can't! I've tried, but with no success. **(Pause)** And yet another thing. You know that we can be nice or nasty. You know we can be honest or tell lies. You know we can be forgiving or hold a grudge. You know that we can try, try, try again until we succeed, or we can just give up.

*Voice 2.* But that's just being human.

*Voice 1.* Exactly. That's what I have been trying to say. We humans are all an amazing piece of machinery. Our learning possibilities seem to be nearly endless. We can behave in a myriad of different ways. **We don't know of any other creature in all the universe that is like us. We are all amazing! Let's give each other a high five!**

**We sing together.**

**It is so grand – Celebrating Humanity.**

Tune Woodlands TiS 161, 411

*It is so grand – humanity on earth,  
For everyone is of such priceless worth.  
Each time we fail, we're open to re-birth,  
And face our future with courageous mirth.*

*It is so grand - the life we can enjoy.  
Unique and fresh for every girl and boy.  
We learn new skills, then practise and employ,  
But let us halt our impulse to destroy.*

*It is so grand - the body, soul and mind -  
So complex yet exquisitely combined.  
Belief, thought, deed - effectively entwined  
Reveal the miracle of humankind.*

*It is so grand – we can but stand in awe  
Of human beauty, godliness and more;  
Let us use power for harmony not war;  
Be stewards of the wealth in nature's store.*

*It is so grand – we humans can display  
A thankfulness for gifts that come our way, -  
The gift of life, the gift of breath each day.  
We are so blest; we need to kneel and pray.*

**Leader to request two members share their job training and experience.**

**Note.** Prior to the service, ask 2 members of the congregation to share what training they had to do and what experience they have had in order to perform their job. Make sure one is a woman and the other is a man. Make it short; a limit of 2 - 3 minutes for each contribution.

**Prayer.**

**Leader.** May we use what we have learnt and the gifts we have been given, wisely, and for the welfare of others. We pray that we will never take our mentors or our teachers for granted. Let us be thankful for all that there is to learn, for the willingness to learn, and for the ability to use what we have learnt.

**Congregation.**      *We are thankful for who we are, and what we can still become.  
So, we pray. Amen*

**‘Follow the leader’, game with the children.**

Note. Tell the children what the game is. Adults can be invited to join in if they wish. Don’t make it too difficult. If possible, use the whole inside church area. After it is finished, thank the participants and comment on the ability, particularly of the children, to do what was requested of them. We can learn quickly!

**Dramatized Readings.**

Note. As these texts are read, worshippers are invited to discern the difference in orientation reflected in these readings. In preparation, this should be read through at least twice. Preparation is essential. For this exercise there are 5 people involved, 2 Readers and 3 Voices. **Those participating need to be very sure at what point they are needed to read;** otherwise, the flow will be interrupted, and the message compromised. A Reflection may be included within these dramatized readings.

**Reader 1: From Genesis 1.26-28.**

**26. Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of Earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on Earth. 27. So God created humanity in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28. God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon Earth.**

**Reader 2: From Genesis 2.7-8, 15, 19.**

**7. Then the Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life. And the human being became a living creature. 8. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East. 15. Then the Lord God took the human being and put the human being in the garden of Eden to serve and preserve it. 19. Then out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal in the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the human being.**

Note. Voice 1 needs to speak loudly and with dogmatic authority, even being slightly aggressive, at least until near the end of the reading, whereas Voice 2 speaks more softly but with conviction.

- Voice 1.*** I am the first human being, the voice of the human being in Reading One. I am Adam and Eve. I am humanity!
- Voice 2.*** I am the first human being, the voice of the human being in Reading Two. I am Adam and Eve. I am humanity!
- Voice 1.*** God made me in a special way. The word of God in Genesis 1, says so!
- Voice 2.*** And God made me in a special way. The word of God in Genesis 2, says so!
- Voice 1.*** I am created in the image of God. Do you understand? The very image of God!
- Voice 2.*** I have been made personally by God. Do you understand? By God's own hands!
- Voice 1.*** I am like God, created in God's own likeness.
- Voice 2.*** I am liked by God. I even live in a garden where God likes to walk and talk!
- Voice 1.*** I have human reason. That makes me superior to all other living creatures! Superior! Get it!
- Voice 2.*** I am flesh taken from Earth itself and breath that comes from God. So I am kin with all other creatures. We are family! Do you understand family?
- Voice 1.*** Family? Fiddlesticks! I have dominion over all creatures. I dominate! I tame! I rule all other creatures! Your family!
- Voice 2.*** I have a partnership with all other creatures. We are friends. We are partners.
- Voice 1.*** I am authorised by God to subdue Earth, to harness nature, to put creation under my feet. Yes, to control your friends!
- Voice 2.*** I have been given the responsibility by God to serve Earth and preserve it, to care for Earth as God's garden.
- Voice 1.*** I can conquer creation. I rule! I rule!
- Voice 2.*** I groan with creation. When you rule, I suffer. I suffer!
- Voice 1.*** I am the king of Earth. I bear the image of God! I am king over creation! I rule!
- Voice 2.*** I am a servant on Earth, caring for creation.
- Voice 1.*** I am king! God said so!

- Voice 2.** I am a servant, God said so!
- Voice 3.** Wait just a minute! Stop your arguing!
- Voice 1.** I have God's word on my side!
- Voice 2.** So do I!
- Voice 3.** Sure you have! But do you have the final word?  
Do you have Jesus' word? Do you? (*Silence*)
- Voice 3.** Who is the one who reflects the true image of God on Earth? Come on! Who?
- Voice 1& 2.** Jesus!
- Voice 3.** Who is the true servant of God? Come on. Who?
- Voice 1& 2.** Jesus!
- Voice 3.** And how does Jesus invite us to live? To rule like the Romans and dominate like their Caesars?! Or to follow the way of the cross and serve as Christ came to serve?

### **Reflection.**

Note. A commentary could be given by the leader, to acknowledge the 2 myths in Genesis, and it could emphasise the intent of the phrases, 'made in God's image' and 'have dominion over...' It could also introduce the challenge of Jesus to serve.

### ***Reader 2: From Mark 10.42-45.***

**42. So Jesus called the disciples and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers, lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43. But it is not to be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you, must be your servant, 44. and whoever wishes to be first among you, must be slave of all. 45. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.**

**Voice 1, 2 & 3.** This is the Gospel of our Lord, the answer of Jesus. We are to serve as Christ served.

**Congregation.** *We have been taught by Jesus to live our lives in service. May we be sincere in our commitment as his disciples, to follow his example and serve.*

*Reader 1.*

Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness.

*Reader 2.*

Then the Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life. And the human being became a living creature.

*Voice 2.* We are both made of dust. So, you should not bully me or try to control me. You’re dust. Just like me.

*Voice 1.* True enough, but we both owe each other and all human beings, deep respect. We are all made in God’s image!

**Creation prayer.   Leader.**

**We are present to the Divine Mystery in all things, at all times. We are silent before the limitless Life-force in all of nature; birds and beasts, in rocks and rivers, fish and flowers, bugs and beetles; and importantly, in us human beings; ‘In God we live and move and have our being’.**

**We stand in awe at the energy in lightning storms, in changing tides, in exploding and collapsing stars, in earthquakes and tornadoes, in every atom, in all galaxies and black holes. We pray with thankfulness, that we are part of this interdependent, mysterious reality, that we are connected to all that is, that we can contribute to the well-being of all that is around us. We are thankful we have been given this opportunity and responsibility.**

**We learn from Jesus to love our neighbour as ourselves, and the Earth is our neighbour. We know that to love the Earth is to respect the fragile balances in Earth’s nature, to refuse to exploit Earth’s resources just for the sake of wanting ‘more’, to shun luxury, and to give back to the Earth something in return for the Earth’s constant giving to us.**

**In our time, we recognise the climate change threat that our Earth home is under. May we act as a loving neighbour to it and by what we do and don’t do, work toward the benefit of life, empowering its potential, being humble enough to give it our loving service.**

**This we pray, in the name of the One who gave his all.   Amen.**

**We sing together.**

## **The Power of Love.**

Tune Darwall TiS 108, 187, 371

*Not by the love of power  
But through the power of love  
We listen to our Earth  
For sounds of pain or mirth.  
And when we hear  
Her cries of fear  
We can respond with care sincere.*

*Not by the love of power  
But through the power of love  
In godly acts of care  
Dispel all deep despair.  
In every deed  
Prevent our greed  
From making fragile nature bleed.*

*Not by the love of power  
But through the power of love  
We use authority  
To build more harmony.  
With love so strong  
That conquers wrong  
We build a home where all belong.*

### **The Leader asks the congregation,**

**“What we can do as individuals to enhance the well-being of our home Earth.”**

Note. When contributions are given, the leader makes a list of them. Some of these could be used in the offering prayer

### **Offering.**

#### **Offering Prayer. Leader.**

**As we offer our money to sustain the church and promote the Good News from Jesus, we also make a commitment that, through our lifestyle, we will love our neighbour Earth by ...(from the list).., In the name of Jesus, who showed us how to love each and every neighbour. Amen.**



## **Prayers of the people.**

Note. Suggestion These people may be included. People who suffer with disease, mental illness, and disability. People like the medical profession and others who act as neighbour to those who have suffer. This is the love of Christ in action.

## **We sing together.**

### **Amazing that it should be so.**

Tune Kremser TiS 107

*We know and acknowledge our lives are so blessed  
When love is the ground in which we safely grow;  
This love which is given makes life divinely sacred;  
We find it so amazing that it should be so.*

*The beauty of nature, its songs and its colour,  
Supplying our needs in continuing flow,  
Its constant renewal, the promise in each flower;  
We find it so amazing that it should be so.*

*The goodness of people, their kindness and comfort  
Is seen in a friend and sometimes in a foe,  
Such goodness is given at times with utmost effort;  
We find it so amazing that it should be so.*

*When list'ning to Jesus, observing his living  
He points to the truth and a way we might go;  
We learn from his caring and by all his forgiving;  
We find it so amazing that it should be so.*

*When love gives us purpose, God lives in our being;  
Not separate or distant, but here and on show;  
For God from within is the source of our well-being;  
We are forever thankful that it should be so.*

## **Sending out.**

### **Congregation.**

*Let us go out with the peace and love of Jesus in our hearts and so love our Neighbour, our mother Earth home. Let us be sensitive to her well-being, conscious of her hurting, and determined to bring healing. Let us love her in what we do and refuse to do. So may we bring about God's dream and our dream for our beloved Earth.*

**Leader.**

**A Franciscan Blessing.**

**May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart. Amen.**

**May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace. Amen.**

**May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy. Amen.**

**May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world; so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.**

**Go with peace, hope and love in our hearts. Live by the trust we have in Jesus. Amen.**