

RECOMMENDATIONS



Faith Formation

5. Adopt Liturgies and Seasonal Practices That Revere Creation

“How can we use nature to cultivate an awareness of God? How do we enter a space of reverence, where there are no walls and no ceilings and yet where we find a room we share with Creator Spirit?”

— Sophronia Scott

Recommendation: We urge the Diocese and individual congregations to shine a light on Creation and our relationship with it through liturgies and other seasonal observances.

Background: It is becoming increasingly clear in Christian communities that our faith is not separated from God’s created world outside the church walls. In Genesis, we are reminded that God created all that is and will be and found it to be good, very good. We

have been given a charge to care for all that was given to us to sustain and provide for the air, land, and sea and all that is in them. Destruction of the environment is destruction of the heart of God. Rather than keeping Creation Care and Justice work separate from liturgy, bringing it to worship as a focus has the power to transform our hearts, minds, and actions to address the needs of an increasingly needy planet. Involving the congregation in liturgical action and prayers for God's created world will deepen the interest of the congregation as well as of individuals and families to take their own steps, large and small, all of which will add up to making a difference in the life of the world.

Taking Action:

- **Explore a variety of Eucharistic prayers, Collects, Prayers of the People, and music related to care for Creation.** Consider a theme for the year to weave into each week's Eucharistic celebration. Plan to include youth and all members in a variety of ways, including coffee hours, banners, music, art, bulletin boards, and newsletter information.
- **Establish a Creation season.** Many parishes have done so, usually in the fall. St. Andrew's, Port Angeles, had an eight-week season, opening on St. Francis Sunday and closing with Christ the King; the intervening six weeks were themed differently each year. Here are some examples: mountains, water, sky, color/spectrum (great LGBTQ link), biosphere reserves, "spheres" (atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere), animals, sacraments (grapes, wheat, yeast, honey).

At St. Andrew's all weeks were intergenerational with processions themed to the topic/season. Special music was written, sourced, or collected from across the Book of Common Prayer. They used Rite II Prayer C with some weekly modifications of language for the theme (copies of a sample liturgy can be requested from St. Andrew's), art or objects brought from home related to the themes, a specialized petition for the Prayers of the People, and a seasonal blessing.

- Collects: 19. For Rogation Days, BCP pp. 258–59
- Prayers for the Social Order #27–39, pp. 823–27
- Prayers for the Natural Order #41–44, pp. 827–28
- Many Celtic worship resources from Iona or North Umbria

Results: A congregation intimately involved in Creation Care and Justice through its worship (especially over a short or long season vs. on a single Sunday) will transform the hearts of those who worship. Individuals and groups will benefit from the support of others and be strengthened to do work at home or on the job that advocates for earth care and the justice issues surrounding it. Liturgical practices that ground Creation Care in loving God, the planet, and all who share it make something like recycling not only a good thing to do, but also part of our Christian mission and response to our baptismal covenant to work for justice.

Resources:

- ["Celtic Spirituality and the Environment"](#) is an article filled with references to the ancient past and Celtic thought.
- [Carmina Gadelica](#) is a collection of folk poetry, charms, incantations, blessings, and prayers from Christian and pre-Christian belief in Western Scotland.
- J. Philip Newell is perhaps the foremost author on Celtic Christianity and spirituality. Here are some of his works:
 - [Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation](#)
 - [Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality](#)
 - [Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace](#)
 - [Sacred Earth Sacred Soul: Celtic Wisdom for Reawakening to What Our Souls Know and Healing the World](#)
 - [Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter](#)
- [The Rhythm of Life: Celtic Daily Prayer](#) by David Adam
- [A Holy Island Prayer Book](#) by Ray Simpson
- [The Green Bible](#) with a foreword by Desmond Tutu comes with a 100-page introduction that is an essential read and reference. Contributors include Tutu, NT Wright, St. Francis, and Wendell Berry. Sample articles include "Reading the Bible

through a Green Lens,” “The Power of a Green God,” “Loving the Earth Is Loving the Poor,” and “Teachings on Creation through the Ages.”

- [Stewardship of Creation: A Thirty Day Discipline](#) can be used for personal devotions. Many congregations also include one page at a time as a bulletin insert.
- [Creation Season Liturgies from New Zealand](#)
- [The European Christian Ecological Network](#)
- [Skiturgies: Pageants, Plays, Rites and Rituals](#) offers several resources for the Blessing of Animals and St. Francis.
- [Creation Care Prayers](#) from the Church of England
- The Diocesan [Liturgy and Arts Commission](#) is a tremendous resource for creative liturgical ideas to incorporate, none of which necessarily involve any expense.