

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Call to Worship & Acknowledgement of the Land** by Sue Carleton, Shallow Lake UC, Shallow Lake, ON

We have been blessed with a land of abundance to live in, a land that provides for us, a land that offers us places of silence and tranquility, a land that is home. We honour the Indigenous Peoples who have lived on and cared for this land for thousands of years. We truly appreciate what we have received in this land and we offer our thanks to God for this abundance. We appreciate the diversity of this country and the blessing of all the people who reside here. We thank God for allowing everyone the freedom to worship as they individually choose. We thank God for our places of worship and for the people who worship and give thanks with us. On this Earth Sunday, we lift our voices to God in praise.

**Gathering Prayer**-by Jeffrey Dale, Shining Waters Region, Barrie, ON

This prayer is inspired by the prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assis.

God, make me an instrument of understanding. Where there is stigma, let me bring knowledge.

Where there is wrong, let me bring clarity.

Where there is despair, let me be filled with light.

Where there is anger, let me sow the words of love.

Where there is inaction, let me be the first to advocate.

O Creator, grant that I may not so much be the person who thinks I have all the answers, but be the person who accompanies others on the journey of learning. May my heart and mind be so open that I am able to understand what needs to be. May my soul and being be a presence in a time of great need. And may I remind myself that through love and community, we can build a stronger existence. Amen.

**Ministry of Music***As a Parent Holds a Child*

**Gathering Hymn** *It's a song of Praise to the Maker*, MVU # 30

It's a song of praise to the Maker, The thrush sings high in the tree.	Refrain And by the Spirit you and I Can join our voice to the holy cry	It's a call of life to the Giver When waves and waterfalls roar.	It's a hymn of love to the Lover; The bumblebees hum along.	It's the chorus of all creation; It's sung by all living things.
It's a song of praise to the Maker, The gray whale sings in the sea,	And sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.	It's a call of life to the Giver When high tides break on the shore. Refrain	It's a hymn of love to the Lover; The summer breeze joins the song. Refrain	It's the chorus of all creation; A song the universe sings. Refrain

**Prayer of Confession** -from: *Truth and Action, UCC Website*

Holy One, we are blessed to live in a land of plentiful resources. We are blessed to have rules of law that protect our human dignity. We recognize that these blessings are not extended to others. We recognize that our privilege allows us to exploit others. We recognize that, in this country and overseas, mining and drilling have allowed us to reap the rewards of natural resources while also harming your creation and fracturing communities. We recognize the harm caused by our want for more. Heal us in our desire for ever more resources. Forgive those times when we do not speak up against injustice and embolden us to be agents of your change in this world. For the beginning of the kingdom. Amen.

**Words of Assurance**

**L:** Scripture assures us, The Lord is Our Shepherd, we shall not want (Psalm 23). "Whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows everything" (1 John 3:20). As a shepherd cares for scattered sheep, our God cares, forgives us, and calls us into community. Members of the one flock – we are forgiven.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

**Offering Invitation & Prayer**-by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine, ON

Take and bless these offerings, O God, that, through them, we may find connection with our aching world. In our joyful giving, may we find hope and healing for ourselves. In our offering, may we foster delight in others, which brings healing laughter. Amen.

**Hymn** *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, VU # 291

Refrain All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small, All things wise and wonderful, In love, God made them all.	Each little flower that opens, Each little bird that sings, God made their glowing colours, God made their tiny wings. Refrain	The purple- headed mountains, The river running by The sunset and the morning That brightens up the sky. Refrain	The cold wind in the winter, The pleasant summer sun, The ripe fruits in the garden, God made them, every one. Refrain	The rocky mountain splendour, the lone wolf's haunting call, the great lakes and the prairies, the forest in the fall. Refrain	God gave us eyes to see them, And lips that we might tell How great is God our Maker, Who has made all things well. Refrain
--	--	---	--	---	---

## Children's Ministry What can you do for Earth Day?

### Children's Prayer

Dear God: We love you and everything you created. All living things serve a purpose on earth ... even mosquitos ... although, we have to admit that they are a little annoying. We know that we haven't always appreciated all that you created and so we ask for your help. We want to learn how to treat Mother Earth better. Please bless us and bless Mother Earth. We love you and thank you for our teachers, our church, our communities, and our families and friends. Amen.

### Children's Hymn O Beautiful Gaia, MVU # 41

Refrain O beautiful Gaia, O Gaia, calling us home. O beautiful Gaia, Calling us on.	Soil yielding its harvest, O Gaia, calling us home. Soil yielding its harvest, Calling us on. Refrain	Waves crashing on granite, O Gaia, calling us home. Waves crashing on granite, Calling us on. Refrain	Pine bending in windstorm, O Gaia, calling us home. Pine bending in windstorm, Calling us on. Refrain	Loon nesting in marshland, O Gaia, calling us home. Loon nesting in marshland, Calling us on. Refrain
--	--	--	--	--

### Lord's Prayer

*Children Leave for Sunday School*

### Prayer of Illumination -by Laurie Lloyd, Collier Street UC, Barrie, ON

This prayer is inspired by Psalm 19: Gracious God, you have created our blessed sun and set it upon its joyful, heavenly course. As we receive your word today, help us to love and know you and your perfect law, as reflected in your good creation and in the words of scripture. Thus, may the purified words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts, produce fruit worthy of you; gifts and praises as consistently beautiful as the daily splendour of sunrise and sunset. In Christ's name, we pray, trusting in your grace. Amen.

### Scripture Reading

1 Peter 1:17-23, (NIV)

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

### Hymn Touch the Earth Lightly, VU # 307

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently, nourish the life of the world in our care: Gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,	trust for the children tomorrow will bear.	We who endanger, who create hunger, agents of death for the creatures that live. we who would foster clouds of disaster,	God of our planet, forestall and forgive!
---	---	---	--

Let there be greening,  
birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and  
air that is sweet,  
health in God's garden,  
hope in God's children,  
regeneration that  
peace will complete.

God of all living,  
God of all loving,  
God of the seedling,  
the snow and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us,  
Christ reconnect us,  
using us gently and  
making us one.

**Reflection**-written by: *Edna Miller, Newtonbrook UC, Toronto, ON -Used with permission. The United Church of Canada. Adapted.*

**Narrator** The story of the Prodigal Son is so familiar to us that we are tempted to think it has nothing new to say to us. After all, it was written, or rather spoken, by Jesus 2,000 years ago. It may not seem relevant today. But what happens if we substitute Mother Earth in there instead of the forgiving father. In Proverbs 8, our Bible tells us that creation was a co-operative venture of God and Wisdom, also known as Sophia, Gaia, or Mother Earth. So, let's retell the story with Mother Earth substituted for the father and the prodigal son and brother being played by a prodigal daughter and sister. Mother Earth has two children. The younger one, the Prodigal, represents developed nations like Canada and Europe, the older child is playing the part of developing nations like Nigeria or Columbia. So, to begin our story, the younger one said to her mother:

**The Prodigal** Mother Earth, I want my inheritance NOW! Give me my due. It is MY right. I have earned it. I am worth it. I need it. It's available all around us. Others have it. I want it all now too. Others don't hold back. Why should I? The world is my shopping cart.

**Narrator** So, the child took all she could get. The more she had, the more she wanted. The latest clothes, the most modern electronics, exotic trips, the latest conveniences, rich food, too much food. She took it all and used much of it, well mostly. Until her air was full of smog, her water full of pollution, her food full of foreign chemicals and genetic mutations. When she came to her senses, she said,

**The Prodigal** "I have messed things up. I have lost contact with the land. I will go back to Mother Earth and say ..." I have committed a grave injustice against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called a child of God.

**Narrator** And here we run into doubt about this story. Will Mother Earth be able to forgive? Will she say...

**Mother Earth** Quick! Bring me the best robe and put it on her. Put a ring on her finger and sandals on her feet. Bring in the harvest and prepare it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this child of mine was dead and is alive again. She was lost and is found.

**Narrator** Or will she have to say...

**Mother Earth** Oh, my child. I've been waiting a long time for you to come to your senses, for you to have a little respect for me. But it just keeps getting worse. You are using up my resources faster and faster. I can no longer keep up. I can't adapt fast enough to meet your demands. Your consumption is unsustainable. Did you have to wait until only the dregs are left for you to live on, before you woke up to what was happening?

**Narrator** Meanwhile, we know that people who have never had the opportunity to enjoy the riches of earth to the extent that many of us have, are rightfully angry. The part of developing countries will be played by the sister of the Prodigal daughter.

**Sister of Prodigal Daughter** Why should you get the party? Look, all these years I have lived frugally, while you were wasting my inheritance, guzzling gas, flushing water down the drain, stripping the forests, grabbing all the minerals, the metals, the gems. I've received very little of all that. I want to party, too!

**Narrator** How do we respond? Who responds? Mother Earth? Can Mother Earth forgive when her resources are depleted? Does God respond? Maybe we ought to listen a little more carefully to the anger in God's voice, as shared through the prophets, when God cries out, "I abhor your empty worship, your proud, selfish, all-consuming ways. You are breaking your covenant, your agreement with me to live in community with earth, all its people and creatures. Your ways are not my ways." So declared God through the prophet Amos (5:21-24, adapted).

**Mother Earth** O, my children. Your mother is dying in many places. Forgiving, I may be. But dying, none the less.

**Narrator** No, Mother Earth is not likely to die. God did promise never to destroy the earth again. But earth is losing her vitality. If drastic changes are not made soon, she will not recover for a very long time. Most scientists state that the "tipping point," the point of no return, is only a few years down the road. If we don't act now, the ramifications for humanity are daunting. Civilization as we know it could disappear. Life could become an endless struggle for survival. We don't need a party with special robes and fancy rings. We need to act before it is too late. This is a significant moment in which we have a window of opportunity.

**Mother Earth** This awareness of the effect you humans are having on me began early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This awareness has been picking up steam ever since. You can hardly pick up a paper without reference to climate change and climate catastrophe. I think it is an issue with real theological, economic, and political ramifications.

**Prodigal** But we aren't at the point of doing enough about it to turn the situation around, yet many wise and knowledgeable researchers warn that to survive, we must urgently adopt a new, sparser lifestyle.

**Prodigal Sister** Take a minute to consider this. Humans must relate to the planet in a way that is mutually beneficial. Yet our society, with its big and bigger houses, its miles and miles of paved roads, its piles and piles of pre-packaged produce, is moving further and further from the care of Mother Earth. How much are we willing to limit our consumption for the sake of the future of the planet and future generations? And what will it take for these measures to become widespread – through all nations of the world – both developed and developing nations.

**Prodigal** Each of us can do our bit, but recycling and reducing our consumption of earth's resources is only a beginning. We need the political will, too.

**Prodigal Sister** Scientists are agreed on the seriousness of the problem, but politicians don't tend to listen to scientists. They listen to the people. So, scientists are trying very hard to educate the people and motivate us to action so that we put pressure on our politicians. We no longer have time to wait for others to do it. We need to act now.

**Narrator** As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans 2,000 years ago, the earth is in bondage, waiting in hope (Romans 8:19-21). Where there is hope, there is faith. Where there is faith, miracles can happen.

**Mother Earth** Reach out to me, my children, not in despair, not in discouragement, but in hope of making a difference. Reach out because this is God's world. Reach out because God is calling to you to care responsibly for one another and for creation. And remember that God is with you in your efforts, encouraging, supporting, and guiding. I will heal, if you care for me and live with respect in creation.

*(Children hug Mother Earth)*

**Children and Mother Earth** Amen.

**Prayers of the People** *-by Mary Grant, Forest Hill UC, Fredericton, NB*

O God, just as our own lives tend to experience disharmony, so it is in all of your Creation. We ask that your Spirit give us the energy to make hard personal decisions about how we treat the environment. The world is a long way from the garden of Eden. Each of us needs to consider and change our own behaviours even as we work together to preserve the universe with actions louder than our words.

As nations, we lack harmony with other nations in caring for Creation Help us find common ground based on the teachings of faith. Help us treat others as we ourselves want to be treated. As individuals, our actions toward others are not always exemplary. Sometimes this comes from a fear that we will say or do something wrong or disrespectful. Help us to learn from others and not be afraid to meet others with respect and open minds.

Open us to the presence of your Spirit, to hold back from jumping in to help when and where help is not needed or requested and to nudge us forward when help is needed. Help us work for equality and restoration of harmony for all your people and for Creation.

In silence, we bring the concerns about which we feel deeply. We know you understand these concerns even if we cannot find the words to express them. (a time of silent prayer)

In the name of God, the Creator, Jesus, the Teacher, and the Holy Spirit, the Enabler. Amen.

**Parting Hymn** *We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky*, MV 143 (v. 1 & 3)

We cannot own the sunlit sky, The moon, the wildflow'rs growing, For we are part of all that is Within life's river flowing.	With open hands receive and share The gifts of God's creation, That all may have abundant life In every earthly nation.	When bodies shiver in the night And weary, wait for morning, When children have no bread but tears, And war-horns sound their warning,	God calls humanity to wake, To join in common labour, That all may have abundant life, In oneness with their neighbour.	God calls humanity to join As partners in creating A future free from want or fear, Life's goodness celebrating,	That new world beckons from afar, Invites our shared endeavour, That all may have abundant life And peace endure forever.
--	--	---	--	---	---

**Benediction** *-by Robin Wardlaw, Toronto, ON*

Go from here, not as owners of the sunlit sky, but as those who share it with all creatures. Go from here, not as owners of creation, but as those who live in a caring, respectful relationship with creation. Go from here to celebrate life's goodness. Work for the new world that beckons in the promise of Christ, the promise of love, and abundant life for all.

**Choral Amen**