

Earth Team Worship Spring 2003

Preparation

The 'Eye of the eagle' CD is playing, cushions are arranged in a circle, a cross and symbols from nature are in the centre.

Reading 1

Call to worship

Leader: We are called to worship by the cuckoo's song in springtime. Like the cuckoo, God can be mysterious and harsh, mournful and beautiful; colourful, or plain and humble. God calls us to worship as a bird calls for its mate, from far off we hear a faint ringing sound and we fly to meet our love. Let us worship God

<a candle is lit>.



Prayer of thanksgiving

<leader is rotated around the circle>

Leader1: God, we take the first harvest of the spring and offer it to you. We take our freshest thoughts and truest feelings and bring them to you. We find our joy in the cycles and flow of our breath, in and out, in night and day, in seasons of warm to cool to warm. We find our joy in the being of ourselves, in the colour of flowers, and in the fire of our hearts.

All: We live with less with passion.

Leader2: God, we take the first harvest of our hearts' love and offer it to you. To love we have to release our pain and our fear, we pray for your hand to stretch out and touch us. Each and every time you release us so that we may love, we will dedicate this love to You. Out of love we reduce our consumption that others may have a chance to live and feel your love for them.

All: We live with less with love.

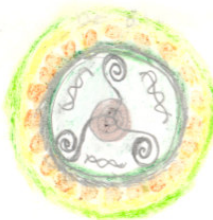
Leader3: God, we take the harvest of our thoughts and reflections and offer them to you. We have thought hard about energy and water and food. Help us now to live, with limits set with joyful hearts. We pray that laughter and sunshine and rain will sustain us.

All: We live with less with all we need.

Leader4: God, we take the harvest of our friendship and offer it to You. Let us rest for a time and feel the great joy of work well done, and work done side by side with friends. Help us to remember and cultivate the subtle art of friendship during all of our days on earth. Help us to share and swap and trade and bless.

All: We live with less, with each other.

All: Amen



Reading 2

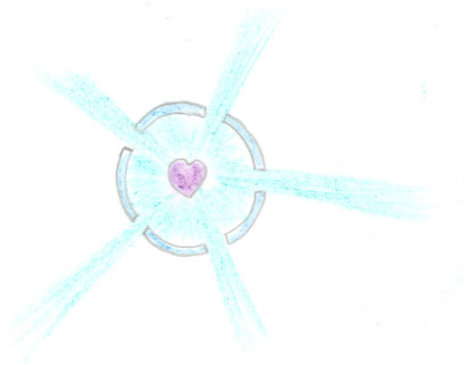
Liturgy of Calling

Leader: We have been gathered together as the Earth Team.
We come for different reasons.

For a moment, close your eyes, and find your reason.

Perhaps it is beyond reason, perhaps it is just a feeling.

Relax your mind, and see if you can tune in to what is God's calling for you. We'll just sit in silence for a few moments and reflect.



...

When you feel ready, and if you can find some words or movement or symbol, I'd like to invite you to share your calling with the group.

.....

<time of sharing>

Leader: In springtime we hear the calls of wild creatures, and we hear the call of God. Let us honour each other's calling and work together to serve our God.

All: I honour my call; I honour your call.

We are all called and gathered together by God's gentle song of love.

Reading 3

Stretch Confession Prayer

<Each prayer is on a separate piece of paper, with the theme marked on the opposite side. People are encouraged to take a prayer and read it.>



Leader: God, we are all stretched and hurting and confused. The brokenness between our species and the planet we call home, is so great it overwhelms us. How can we be of the same race who plunder and poison? And yet we cause harm too, ourselves, when we fail to forgive, when we fail to accept our weaknesses, when we fail to love. God, don't let us be blinded to our own faults as we crusade and campaign and rage against the wrongs and injustices inflicted upon the earth. On our difficult journey we need our eyes both closed and open – closed to the despair and overwhelming grief, but open to our own humanity, and open to the fire of passion for justice and goodness.

All: God, forgive us when we fail to act in love; heal us when we are hurt and stretched and broken, touch us with your love and simple grace; be with us and be within us, we pray.

Liturgy of belief

Leader: We gather today as the Earth Team. What do we believe?

Let us pause to reflect and hear each other's beliefs, which may be different from our own.

If you have brought some words or a symbol to represent your belief, you may like to share them now.

....



Leader: God, we offer to you our faith. Help us to serve you by living out our faith. Help us to live our belief and share it with the world with confidence and grace.

All: Help us God, bring our faith alive. Amen,

Reading 4

Prayer for the Earth Team

Leader:

Lord Creator,

We are your children.

We ask for your blessing on us.

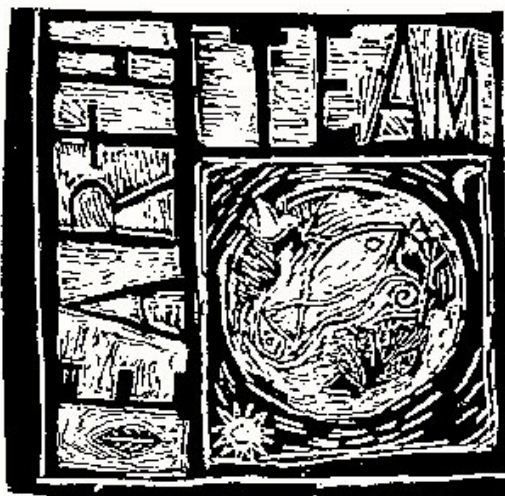
As the Earth Team enters a time of rest and renewal, we pray you will warm our hearts and recreate our joy. Help us to be bringers of good news, when environmental trends are bad, let us be the light that leads the way.

Be with us as we find our way through time, both into the past to discover how to celebrate simplicity, and into the future to discover how to be masters of new knowledge

God we pray you will send us out to work and live and play with faith.

Prayer for the Earth

All: Lord Creator, we go now to plant seedlings of hope, in the soil of the Earth that we love. Guide our hands today and all days to quietly repair and tend your sacred works. Amen.



An initiative of the United Church in Australia.

“Stretch confession prayer” – part of the 14th September Earth Team Liturgy (S.Walsh).

FOOD

I am stretched. I sit down to eat and my whole mind is consumed by thought. Have I been generous or selfish today? How can I help to solve the problems of starvation and poverty? Have I weighed up the issues of packaging, transport and care of the soil in my choices? How much energy did I use to shop for and cook this food? As this food enters and becomes me, I am changed. Does God see me differently?

WATER

I am stretched. I have a long shower and feel both good and bad at the same time. I wash my clothes and wonder about people who can't even find clean water to drink let alone to wash with. I hear about a cyclone devastating a tropical village and I cry tears of grief, that fall on the floor in my safe house in a safe city in a safe, but dry, country. My neighbours are so wasteful with water, but I am commanded by God to love them.

ENERGY

I am stretched. I need energy from fossil fuels to live my life, but the earth is warming up and I feel disturbed and afraid. I command a comforting light with one finger. I can light a flame that warms my house. I can travel across the whole earth in an aircraft and look down upon great beauty. But I cannot find a balance between the flames I light now and the flames my children will be allowed to light. It seems too hard. I place my hope and faith in green power schemes and bicycles, and God seems pleased. Does God wish for me now to preach this good news?

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

I am stretched. I try to decide how much of my life to spend in thought, and how much to spend in feeling. Am I thinking too much and not caring enough? Or do I care too much and miss what is really going on? If I plan for the future will I miss out on God's love and grace right here, right now? Or if I go with the flow will I be swept up in whirlpools leading down into darkness? My God, what do you want most of me – my feelings or my thoughts?

ETHICS

I am stretched. As our environmental problems become more complex, I am confused about what is right and what is wrong. What if genetic engineering could heal all our diseases? How do I weigh up difficult choices involving my family and environmental issues? If I try to calculate the most ethical path will I be seen by God as cold and heartless? If I pray, will I learn more about God's sense of ethics?

ACTION

I am stretched. I feel the pain of the earth as species are dying and the land is being killed off by salt and erosion and chemicals and extremes of weather. I can see small candles of hope in Landcare and Friends groups and Organic farming – but will they provide enough light? How can anything be effective when most people care for nothing more than their toys and money, and governments only care about power? So many actions I could take – campaign, write letters, direct action, prayer. But they could all be futile and lead to depression and despair. God I need you to take my hands and put them to the right work. Close my eyes and move my hands, until my heart knows that goodness and love are burning brightly in this world.

CHURCH

I am stretched. Sometimes I feel like my church creates a lot of environmental problems, yet other times the church brings me together in love with others as the body of Christ, and I feel the grace of God there. Caring for the Earth and caring for people sometimes seem contradictory, but does it have to be that way? Does the church need to become greener, or do green people need to make up the new church? Are God's priorities always about human beings and their problems, or is there a bigger picture of life, in a universe made sacred by God's love?

God, we are all stretched and hurting and confused. The brokenness between our species and the planet we call home, is so great it overwhelms us. How can we be of the same race who plunder and poison? And yet we cause harm too, ourselves, when we fail to forgive, when we fail to accept our weaknesses, when we fail to love. God, don't let us be blind to our own faults as we crusade and campaign and rage against the wrongs and injustices inflicted upon the earth. On our difficult journey we need our eyes both closed and open – closed to the despair and overwhelming grief, but open to our own humanity, and open to the fire of passion for justice and goodness.

Amen.