

Praying with Creation: the Season of Advent & Christmas

First Sunday of Advent through the First Sunday of Christmas

Year C

by Dennis Ormseth

First Sunday of Advent, Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36.

God of Advent, as we enter the season of rest for our land, we await the coming of the righteous Branch of David, who promises to bring justice to our land and to all creatures. May our footprints upon the earth be small and light, a worthy legacy for future generations.

Second Sunday of Advent, Malachi 3:1-4 or Baruch 5:1-9; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6.

God of the wilderness, all the wild areas of the earth cry out for restoration and preservation. May we be mindful of the creatures of the deserts, the oceans and the forests, that the habitat you have given them will survive and prosper, so that they may live in abundance and in peace with all of their neighbors.

Third Sunday of Advent, Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18.

God of light, the daylight shortens as the winter solstice approaches. We await the coming of the Savoir whose light will never darken. Grant us during this Advent and winter nourishing rains and peaceful snowfalls to replenish the earth's aquifers, lakes and rivers. Restore the land so it will produce bountiful harvests for all your creatures. Then rushing rivers, glaciers and waterfalls will join in praising your name at the coming of spring.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Saving God, our time of waiting is nearly over. Fill our hearts and minds with love for your earth, that we may work diligently to reverse global warming, for the salvation of all your creatures. Save us from the desecration of our air, land and water. May the whole universe continuously praise your saving grace forever.

Nativity of Our Lord, Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14.

Lord of the cosmos, you set the star of Bethlehem in the sky to guide us to the infant savior, Jesus Christ. Now please guide the nations to care for the heavens through peaceable communication and cooperative exploration. May we rid your universe of space debris, spy satellites and military weapons.

Christmas Day, Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14.

Generous God, you have bestowed onus grace upon grace through our Savior Jesus Christ. We have been created to live in mutual interdependence with all creatures on your beloved earth. Show us how to live sustainably so that all being are able to live with sufficiency.

First Sunday of Christmas, 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52.

God of all ages, you have brought us to the beginning a new year, and have promised to make all things new. May we in hope rejoice in all the seasons of creation in years to come.

The Season after Epiphany

The Baptism of Our Lord through the Transfiguration of Our Lord

by Carol Masters

The Baptism of Our Lord: Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8: 14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

God of returning light, God who refills the seas, the earth in this season is infused with the brilliance of light held in water: the shimmer of moon on ice, the icy glitter of stars, sun glistening on snow. So infuse us with your Spirit that we may reveal your light to all in need.

Second Sunday after Epiphany: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

God who delights in the land, who brings joy with gifts of water and ground, who bathes us in holy wisdom: help us to give proper care to this planet. Teach us how to assist those who tend her soil, to conserve and to protect your beloved earth.

Third Sunday after Epiphany: Nehemiah 8:1-3; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

God of revealing light, every dawn tells us how intricately your world is knit: Bare twigs snare the sun and clouds, the shifting winds weave a favorable atmosphere, moisture sifts through in mist or snow, and slowly penetrates the waiting soil. Cleanse our hearts as we repent of human pollution and violence; help your people preserve this life-giving air.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

God of surprising light, we expect the sun to rise and to set by appointment, the planet to turn in lawful order, and our days to proceed as we intend. Keep us alive to the miracles of your creative love among us and ignite in us the fire of that love for your entire world.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 138; I Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

Creator God, You reveal your glory and love in the smallest bits of life, cells of our bodies, the microbial substance of soil, segmented insect wings, glistening scales of fish. Come to us, manifest in us your loving care for the humble and small, that we may preserve your abundance.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1; I Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26

Living God, you refresh humankind with the gifts of creation: The waxing light that stirs warmth deep in the earth, water that nourishes roots and stalks, food for the body and fruits of the spirit. Enliven those who thirst for you; grant them the wisdom to cherish your planet Earth and all creation.

The Transfiguration of Our Lord: Ex. 34:29-35, Ps. 99, II Cor 3:12-4:2, Luke 9:28-36
God of changing light, we encounter you in the magnificence of mountains and great oaks, yet in the fragility of butterflies and whole ecosystems. The whispers of disappeared species tear at the web of life. So transform us that we may hear their echoes and understand; that we may see your presence behind the veil.

The Season of Lent

Ash Wednesday through the Sunday of the Passion

by Dennis Ormseth

Ash Wednesday: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Lord, you are sovereign in our land and all the earth. Your reconciling love is steadfast and your mercy encompasses all things. We have deeply wounded your life-giving Spirit. Before we touched this land, it was a Garden of Eden; we are in danger of leaving it a desolate wilderness. Turn your righteous anger from us. Turn us toward contrition for our actions and lead us into right relationships with your whole creation.

First Sunday in Lent: Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 (Ps. 91:11); Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

God of the seasons, as the days lengthen, we look forward in hope to the bounty your love brings forth in our land. When your Son was tempted in the wilderness, he refused the spirit of domination by which we try to gain our daily bread and even to free ourselves from earthly limitations. In this season of renewal, grant us his life-sustaining Spirit, so that we may tend the earth with joy and thanksgiving, and share its bounty with all living things.

Second Sunday in Lent: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27 (Ps. 27:5); Philippians 3:17—4:1; Luke 13:31-35

Creator of light and dark, your presence is known in the rising and setting of the sun. With the faith of Abraham we see signs of your promises in both the stars of heaven and the deep and terrifying darkness of the cleft earth. When the rulers of this world threaten to destroy the creatures of your making, the spirit of your Son gathers us as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. May the certainty of our citizenship in heaven inspire and sustain our resolve in caring for your beloved earth.

Third Sunday in Lent: Isaiah 55:1-9, Psalm 63:1-8 (Ps. 63:1), 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 13:1-9

Gracious host of all creation, you freely provide food and drink for all living creatures. You husband the fruitless tree. At our Lord's Table, you nourish us with bread that is broken, and renew our spirit with poured-out wine. Liberate us from our dependence on stores of food and energy seized and held by imperial power. Lest we all perish, move our nation's agriculture into policies and practices that respect the metabolisms of nature and resist the improvident mandates of our capital markets.

Fourth Sunday in Lent: Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 32 (Ps. 32:11), 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Forgiving parent to all creation, your mercy is boundless. We squander the inheritance of this earth as mere commodity to be bought and sold for our comfort and entertainment. We refuse to share its bounty with our brothers and sisters in the great family of creation. Yet you welcome us home, and invite us to celebrate the feast of your new creation with all your children: those who swim beneath the waves of the sea and those who live in its soil; the children of the flowers in the meadows and the trees in the forest; all the children who roam over the land and the winged ones who fly with the winds; and yes, your human children too.

Adapted in part from Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*.

Fifth Sunday in Lent: March 25, 2007, Isaiah 43:16-21, Psalm 126 (Ps. 126:5), Philippians 3:4b-14, John 12:1-8

Creator Spirit, wild animals honor you for your care for us, your people. Help us to honor your care for them. All relationships within your creation are graced with beauty and purpose. You have blessed all creatures with capacity for both joy and care. You bind all things together in love, and mend all brokenness. Help us to love all that you love; help us to resist all abuse, whether of persons or things.

The Season of Easter

The Vigil of Easter through Pentecost Sunday

by Dennis Ormseth

Vigil of Easter: From the Apocrypha, The Song of the Three Young Men, vv. 28-68 (an addition in the Greek version of Daniel between 3:23 and 3:24)

Sovereign of the universe, wellspring of life, fountain of redemption, we praise you. With sun and moon, winds and rain, light and darkness, we glorify you. With rivers and seas, wild beasts and cattle, and all humanity, we magnify you. This night, in the resurrection of your Son, you have revealed the destiny of all creation -- life in your mercy. Glory, glory, glory, to you our God.

The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Day: I Cor. 15:19-26b

Praise to you, God of power and might, for the resurrection of your Son, the first fruits of all who will be raised. He is the certainty that all the universe shall be raised up as your new creation. Fill us with your life that we may walk in the way of Christ as joyful servants of the earth.

Second Sunday of Easter: Rev. 1:4-8

Almighty God, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all life, all time, all things. Fill us with your passion for the earth, that we, like Jesus, may be faithful witnesses to your fierce love for this fragile planet and all its creatures.

Third Sunday of Easter: Rev. 5:11-14

All-holy Trinity, through all eternity your praise is chanted by the heavenly hosts. With them, we join every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the seas, every creature singing -- blessing and honor and glory to you forever and ever.

Fourth Sunday of Easter: Rev. 7:9-17

Jesus, Lamb of God, Shepherd of the faithful, you alone lead us to the water of life. Lead us also in your way of justice and mercy for the waters of the earth, that we may keep them pure for the daily well-being of all your creatures.

Fifth Sunday of Easter: Ps. 148 and Rev. 21:1-6

Holy God, holy mighty, holy immortal, you alone make all things new. All things—sun, moon and shining stars, sea monsters and all deeps, all peoples—all things praise your glory. Fill us with wonder at your great love for creation, and deepen our determination to serve this praise-filled earth.

Sixth Sunday of Easter: Rev. 21:10, 22-22:5

Radiant God, you are the fullness of light for your new creation. Because you are faithful, we await with hope the new Jerusalem, our eternal home, your promised city. As we wait, use us to bless the cities we inhabit, that they may be environments of mercy, justice and peace for all.

The Ascension of Our Lord: Lordship of Christ

Praise to you, Lord Jesus, ascended Sovereign of the universe. Guide and guard this precious blue planet, home for all your creatures. Deepen our commitment to earth, that set in the midst of rivers and deserts, cities and countryside, creatures seen and unseen, we may live to your glory.

Seventh Sunday of Easter: Rev. 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

Jesus, bright morning star, you are the future whom we await and for whom we long. You are the promise of grace that all will be well. In this time of global warming, send us to live as bearers of hope and servants of those whose habitat is threatened, whose future is deeply in doubt.

Pentecost Sunday: Ps. 104

Holy Spirit, you are the Lord, the giver of life—all life—lilies and dandelions, predators and prey, and life forms not esteemed, which cleanse the earth and make it habitable. Creation lives by your common grace. Raise us up to walk this earth faithfully with justice and compassion for all living things.

The Season after Pentecost

The Holy Trinity through the Reign of Christ Sunday

by Dennis Ormseth

The Holy Trinity: Prov. 8:1-4, 22-31 Ps. 8 Rom. 5:1-5 Jn 16:12-15

How majestic, O Lord, our Sovereign, is your name on earth and in the heavens. All creation is aglow and warm because of the work of your hands. Kindle in us not only a sense of wonder at these marvels; but arouse in us a deep sense of responsibility to care for what you have made and done. How majestic, O Triune God, is your name on earth and in the heavens.

Second Sunday after Pentecost: 1 Kings 17:17-24 Ps. 30 Gal. 1:11-24 Lk. 7:11-17

Out of love you have revealed yourself to us in Jesus Christ. All creation calls on your Spirit as its comforter and healer. Even the dust of this distressed earth longs for renewed power to give life. Heal this broken world, especially where your creatures are hungry, afflicted, at war, or in any need, and inspire us to be faithful disciples of the one in whose name we have been baptized, called, and sent.

Third Sunday after Pentecost: 2 Sam. 11:26-12:10, 13-15 Ps. 32 Gal. 2:15-21 Lk. 7:36-8:3

Because you are a forgiving God we are happy and your creation is hopeful, for there is no reason for us to hide our sin. We confess that our imperial ways waste the habitat of your most vulnerable creatures, both human and other kind. By your mercy restore to us, as to the woman of the city who anointed Jesus with oil, the joy of loving and righteous use of the gifts of your creation.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: Isaiah. 65:1-9 Ps. 22:18-27 Gal. 3:23-29 Lk. 8:26-39

While we are a rebellious and provocative people, you are a patient God, judging and forgiving. In Jesus, all creatures of earth see your mercy. If in him there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, can there be humankind and other kind? Liberate your whole creation -- even our homely friends, the pigs -- from those powers that would keep us from enjoying its goodness all our days.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21 Ps. 16 Gal. 5:1, 13-25 Lk. 9:51-62

Our hearts are glad, our souls rejoice, and our bodies rest secure in you, O God, our Protector. Your son Jesus restrained his disciples from violent and destructive actions. We pray for strength to resist in our selves and from others those actions which deprive the neighbors you have commanded us to love of either their lives, or their neighborhoods.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23 Psalm 49:1-12

Colossians 3:1-11 Luke 12:13-21

Spirit of God, you infuse all creation with manifold and astounding meanings and purposes. We often see only what benefits humankind, and are blind to the full riches of your creation. Lift our vision to see more clearly the love you have for all life.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost: Genesis 15:1-6 Psalm 33:12-22 Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 Luke 12:32-40

Gracious Creator, your promises are written into the fabric of the universe. Teach us to read them with the insight of faith, and deliver us from the anxieties and fears that hinder their fulfillment.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost: Jeremiah 23:23-29 Psalm 82 Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Luke 12:49-56

God of all, you are far off as well as near. You see what may be coming, and so judge justly. As Jesus noted, we do read changes in the weather rather well. But changes in the climate confound us, and we find right decisions about our impact on it difficult to make. Give us wisdom to so faithfully care for the earth's atmosphere, that all living creatures might share its benefits with justice and peace.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Isaiah 58:9-14 Psalm 103:1-8 Hebrews 12:18-29
Luke 13:10-17

Healing God, we look forward in hope to the day when by your mercy all things in your creation will be renewed and restored. You promised that your faithful people will be known as “repairers of the breach.” Give us courage to lead our nation in care of the earth, and to assist you in the healing of all its inhabitants.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4; Psalm 37:1-9; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

Faithful God, we are impatient people—too ready to gather in goods we have not earned, too ready to emulate those who gain power through exploiting others, too unready to serve where we can’t see the reward. Teach us the patience of a watered land. Teach us to cultivate and tend the spirit, that we may bring forth your harvest of justice.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost: 2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c ; Psalm 111; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

Healing God, your faithfulness extends to all lands and peoples, even those we perceive as enemies. We pray for our earth: bring healing and wholeness where human pride and greed threaten to bring ruin. Heal our pride, Lord; bring peace, Lord.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost: Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5; Luke 18:1-8

Lord, we would lift our eyes to the majesty of your creation; we yearn to protect and share the beauties of this earth. But we confess our inability to raise our sights to you; we confess our weakness in wrestling with the cares and injustices of this world. Grant us the faith to see beyond ourselves to your enduring care.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: Jeremiah 31:1-34 ; Psalm 46; Romans 3:19-28; John 8:31-36

Saving God, you know we fear when the natural systems of earth seem to rage beyond our control. Help us, God of all creation, to understand that the earth and its fullness is yours, and to recognize our responsibilities for sustaining its gifts. Guide us in our stewardship.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost: Isaiah 1:1-10; Psalm 32:1-7; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-14; Luke 19:1-10

Saving God, hope of those whose land lies desolate, we stand before you knowing our hands are not clean. The evidence of our failure to care for creation cries out from the streets of our cities; groans sound from wasted lands. Enlighten us, we pray, as to how we may pursue justice, that our good intentions toward your creation may yet be fulfilled.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost: Job 19:23-27a; Psalm 17:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17; Luke 20:27-38

Living God, we are beset on many sides by distractions and detractors: those who would have us place our hope in appearances, in wealth and power. Help us to keep you in the center of our sight, that we may hold fast to what is life giving, and live in your grace.

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost: Malachi 4:1-2a; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Loving God, you sustain us when we are tired, long before the work you would have us do is done. Help us to hear the music of your universe: the rush and chatter of clean rivers, birdsong rising again in restored forests, the surge and hush of unpolluted seas. For these celebrate the righteousness of your judgments.

The Reign of Christ Sunday: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 46; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43

Sovereign over all things, we acknowledge this universe was made for good, yet we tremble when vast systems shift and crumble despite our efforts to control them. Forgive our vain attempts to turn your gracious order to our profit and victory. Guide us in the ways of peace and reconciliation that we may enter into your unending and joyful reign.