Worshiping with Creation
A Checklist for Congregations

In light of the renewed interest in Creator and creation in Bible, theology, and ethics and in light the current ecological state of creation, it is time to renew worship in a new key. In worship, we focus on our relationship with God and our neighbor. Now we must also encompass God's relationship with creation and our relationship with the rest of nature. There is no better place to deepen and expand our faith in these matters than with the gathered community in worship seeking to worship God by giving praise in relationship with creation. The following list of possibilities for renewal is suggestive of actions and resources that might assist you in this endeavor in your congregation. Choose what works best for you, add to the list, and seek to do it all in communion with the love that God has for all creation.

A. Liturgies:
1. ____ Liturgies, e.g. The Greening of the Cross
2. ____ Litanies

B. Liturgical features:
1. ____ Invocation: of God the creator of all things
2. ____ Invitation: for all living things to join in praise of God; the choir of creation
3. ____ Confession and absolution: include sins against creation
4. ____ Hymns: with creation/nature themes
5. ____ Scripture readings, including the Psalms (highlight the presence of nature)
6. ____ Preaching care for creation. Resources are available for the entire 3-year lectionary.
7. ____ Prayers: thanksgiving for and petitions on behalf of creation
8. ____ Offerings: time and money for creation-care
9. ____ Sacraments: Connect to the fruits of the Earth and the sacramental nature of all of life
10. ____ Blessings: for the thriving of creation
11. ____ Closing: “Go in peace, serve the Lord, remember the poor, care for creation.”

C. Relate creator and creation to all seasons of the church year:
1. ____ Advent: await new humanity to care for creation
2. ____ Christmas: incarnation; Christ in, with, and under all things
3. ____ Epiphany: manifestations of God’s light and life in creation
4. ____ Lent: solidarity with suffering Earth, confession, sacrifice for Earth
5. ____ Easter: celebration of new/renewed creation
6. ____ Pentecost: spiritual discipleship and ethical wisdom in caring for creation

D. Occasional services
1. ____ Baptism (new creation) and Confirmation (affirming our Earth-keeping vocation)
2. ____ Weddings (preparation, service, and reception)
3. ____ Funerals (including green burial practices)

E. Season of Creation:
1. ____ Optional four weeks in church year to celebrate Creator/creation. www.seasonofcreation.org

F. Special days in the church year
1. ____ Saint Francis day: Blessing of the Animals
2. ____ Rogation Day: Celebration of harvest
3. ____ Reformation Day: a new reformation encompassing the restoration of creation

G. Special days of celebration
1. ____ Thanksgiving Day
2. ____ Earth Day Sunday

H. Special rituals
1. ____ Blessing of gardens
2. ____ Tree-planting ritual
I. Worship in relationship with nature
1. Worship services outside
2. Name, celebrate, and worship with animals/plants of “earth community” on church property
3. Provide contemplative location/meditation garden/labyrinth

J. Devotional resources
1. Common prayers for meetings and church dinners
2. Devotions/prayers for personal devotions. See Earth Gospel by Sam Hamilton-Poore

K. Sanctuary
1. Life in worship: (air-purifying) plants and trees (as fellow worshippers)
2. Material symbols: water, rock, tree, grain and grapes.
3. Banners: e.g. “Let all creation Praise”
4. Artistic symbols: paraments, seasons, bulletin designs
5. Earth Sounds: rain, river, wind in trees.
6. Pictures of nature projected onto wall or screen
7. Display nature art
8. Life in worship: animals—gerbils, birds, fish (as fellow worshippers)

L. Earth-Friendly Worship Practices
1. Living flowers or plants on the altar to be kept or planted later outside.
2. Beeswax candles rather than (oil-based) paraffin wax candles.
3. Local wine for communion
4. Practice intinction or have re-usable glasses (not plastic) for communion.
5. Wash communion vessels/glasses with eco-safe dish-washing detergent.
6. Provide communion bread of whole grain, organic and locally grown.
7. Purchase fair trade palm fronds for Palm Sunday.
8. Limit or eliminate use of paper for bulletins. Re-use where possible.
10. Place attractive basket near exit from sanctuary for recycling worship materials.
11. Consider the origin of the paraments made for worship—material, fair trade.
12. Use outside light where feasible.
13. Use outside air and fans instead of air conditioner where feasible.
14. Use live Christmas tree and then plant on church property.
15. Green decorations for holidays, e.g. decorative materials, LED lights
16. Safe disposal of batteries from wireless microphones.

M. Study
1. Read and discuss resources on the theology of worship
2. Explanatory comment on worship practices as they are introduced

N. Resources for Worship and Ecology
Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire, editors. The Season of Creation: A Preacher’s Commentary (Fortress, 2011).
www.webofcreation.org Ecumenical website with worship and devotional resources
www.seasonofcreation.com Official site for the optional four-week Season of Creation
www.letallcreationpraise.org Ecumenical site for creation-care worship through the year.
Resources for a Season of Creation. Also a bibliography on theologies of worshiping with creation.