

GOD'S GOOD OLD EARTH



PCC Earth Day
Intergenerational Worship Resource



The
Presbyterian
Church
in Canada

Prepared by the Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks is a retired Presbyterian minister. She has served in congregational ministry and taught pastoral theology at the Atlantic School of Theology and Vancouver School of Theology. She was Deputy Ward for the Iona Community in Scotland (2001-2004). She currently represents the church on KAIROS' ecological justice circle.

Nancy's other all-age worship resources are available online through Wild Goose Publications.



God calls us to worship

Left side pews: Hey there, sun and moon! Hey there, shining stars!

All: Praise God in highest heaven.

Right side pews: Hey there, wind and water! Hey there, grass and trees!

All: Praise God all over the earth.

Left side pews: Hey there, whoever flies! Hey there, whoever swims!

All: Praise God from the heights and depths.

Right side pews: Hey there, old and young! Hey there, big and small!

All: Praise God, everyone!

*Suggested song: *All things bright and beautiful*, #435

***Our Prayer to Greet God!**

God, you love the earth you made, the sea and the sky, the animals and the trees, the birds and the bees. You even love the ground under our feet. We thank you for making so many bright and beautiful things—including all of us. You made us all for a purpose. Today help us think about why we're here in the middle of this bright and beautiful world. We join our voices with the wind and the waves, the geese and the gophers to praise your holy name. Amen!

We say sorry to God (seated, in unison)

God, we love the earth you made, with trees to climb, water to swim and grass to play on. Yet sometimes we forget to look after the earth. We make lots of garbage to bury. We dump things down the drain without thinking. We push animals out of their homes as if we owned everything. Forgive us when we forget the earth belongs to you.

We hear a kind word about God's love

Dear friends, while it is true we have all made a mess of God's world in some way, it is also true that God forgives us when we own up to what we've done. With Jesus' love we can become new people. So know that we make God glad when we remember to say we're sorry.

What a Wonderful World – A Conversation About the Earth

Children come forward for a chat

Leader:

- ▶ In spring and summer we spend a lot more time outside
- ▶ What do you like to do outside?
- ▶ What interesting things do you see outside?
- ▶ Do you have a favourite animal you watch for? Favourite bug?
Favourite place outside to go and play?

Forever and ever people have found the world an interesting place.

That's why we study the world in school—in science

To learn how things happen, how things grow,

How it changes from winter to spring to summer,

Why the wind blows and why the thunder booms.

We learn a lot about the world in science.

The Bible also tells us about the world—because God loves the world and all its creatures

And because the whole world and everything in it was born out of God's love.

So first, listen to a story about the world being born.

It's an ancient story, written about three thousand years ago.

Listen To A Story From Genesis, The Book Of Beginnings

A reading from Genesis 1:1–5, preferably a child-friendly version of this Bible story

A song about God's creation

Suggestions: ***Many and great, O God, are your works, #301***

Or

Who made the earth and the heaven

(He's got the whole world in his hands), #339

Leader:

Now when we think about God's love for the world,

We can think about how we should treat the world because we believe God loves the world.

Readers' Theater: Fergie Cleans Up

*An original story by Dr. Nancy Cocks © 2003. Used with permission; script copies to be shredded after use.
The story can also be read by a narrator (see page 8).*

Scripted for five voices: Narrator, Fergie, Freddie, Mother Frog, Camper.
Freddie and the Camper have just one line each. The narrator could do these parts.

Narrator: One summer day, some human campers pitched a tent close to the stream that led into the swamp. Fergie the Frog and his brother Freddie watched the campers with interest. The people hung their food in a tree so animals couldn't eat it. They put bottles in the stream to keep cool. After watching for a while, Fergie asked Freddie:

Fergie: Do you suppose humans sleep in the mud like us?

Freddie: No. They probably sleep in the trees, like raccoons. Then the bears won't eat them or their food.

Narrator: The next morning Fergie woke up to find his mud hole covered in white bubbles.

Fergie: Hey? What's this?

Mother Frog: Camper fuzz. Those humans threw their dishwater in the stream. Now this foam is all over the swamp.

Narrator: Fergie made a face.

Fergie: Ick.

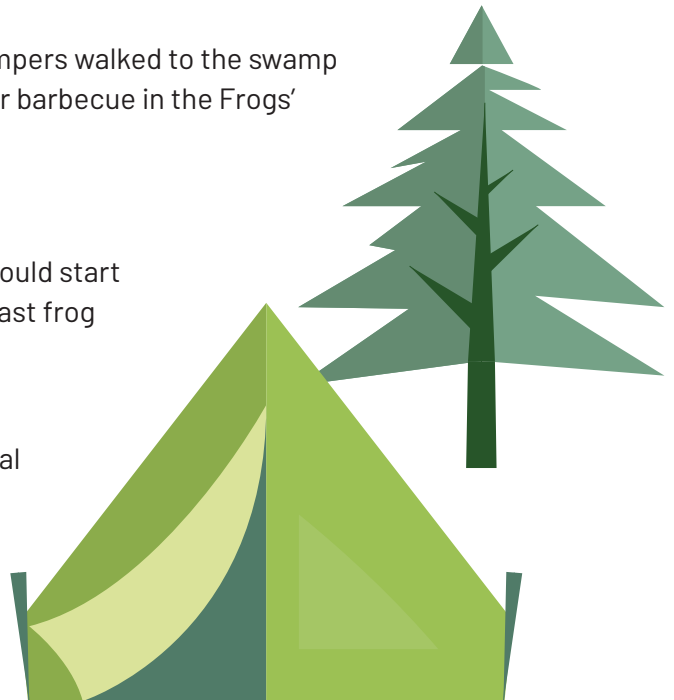
Narrator: At supper, it got worse. The campers walked to the swamp and dumped charcoal from their barbecue in the Frogs' living room.

Camper: It won't start a fire here.

Fergie: *(yelling)* What do you mean? It could start a fire in my bed! Do you want roast frog for breakfast?

Narrator: He was hopping mad, so mad he hopped on a piece of charcoal and sizzled his foot.

Fergie: Ouch!



Camper: Ah, listen to the frogs croaking, Jane. Isn't it great to be away from the city noise?

Narrator: The Frog family decided they would move until their house cooled off. They went in different directions to look for safe places to hide. Fergie was in some tall reeds not very far from the stream when it happened. The campers dumped their garbage. They dumped their garbage into the tall reeds—right on top of Fergie!

Fergie: Hey, watch that!

Narrator: Then CLUNK! A big glass bottle fell right on top of Fergie. *(pause)* It was two hours later before a search party found Fergie.

Fergie: *(groaning)* Ohhhh! I can't move.

Narrator: That glass bottle was pinning his legs to the ground.

Mother Frog: Fergie! Are you all right?

Fergie: *(moaning)* I can't move my legs. I think they're broken.

Narrator: The whole Frog family pushed on the glass bottle until it rolled away. Then they carried Fergie to a safer place between the roots of a tree. As his mother bandaged his legs, Fergie asked,

Fergie: Were those campers trying to hurt me on purpose?

Mother Frog: No, Fergie, I don't think so. They didn't really think about you.

Narrator: She shook her head sadly.

Mother Frog: They just didn't think.



Reflecting on the story together:

Leader: We don't always think about looking after animals and streams and trees. Sometimes we dump garbage wherever we like, not stopping to think. But we know that human beings can hurt the earth and God's other creatures unless we are careful about the things we do.

God asks us to look after the earth and take care of all the beautiful plants and animals that God made. So stop and think every day. Make sure what you do doesn't hurt another one of God's creatures.

A Focus for Earth Day: Thinking about dirt

- ▶ Our story from the Bible made me think about dirt today.
- ▶ We don't think about dirt very often—unless we track it inside on the carpet or get the knees of our jeans dirty!
- ▶ But God made land, another word for dirt, to give everything else a place to live.
- ▶ Without dirt we'd all just be floating!
- ▶ What kinds of creatures need dirt to live?
 - *Gather some ideas from the children*
- ▶ Today I want you to remember that God loves the dirt and dirt is very, very important to grow our food and to provide homes for all those creatures we've named and more!
- ▶ So we have to look after the dirt God made so the dirt can do its work well.
- ▶ We have a chart to look at today to remind us that what we put in the dirt can take a long, long time to turn itself into dirt.
- ▶ Talk about what we notice on the chart: *(Everyone needs a copy of this chart in their worship leaflet, available at presbyterian.ca/earthday. Have some to hand out to the kids.)* The chart tells us how long different things take to become dirt so good things can grow in that dirt.

Leader: At home, we can help look after the dirt in God's world by recycling things so they don't get put in the garbage and buried in the dirt:

- ▶ We can choose not to use things that we can't really get rid of—like plastic and Styrofoam.
- ▶ When we're outside—camping or playing in the park—be sure we take home what needs to be recycled and put garbage in the garbage bin—don't just leave it lying around.

How long does it take materials to decompose? <i>Read some of the items aloud.</i>	
Vegetables	5 days –1 month
Paper	2–5 months
Cotton T-shirt	6 months
Orange peels	6 months
Tree leaves	1 year
Wool socks	1–5 years
Plastic-coated paper milk cartons	5 years
Leather shoes	25–40 years
Nylon fabric	30–40 years
Tin cans	50–100 years
Aluminum cans	80–100 years
Glass bottles	1 million years
Styrofoam cup	500 years to forever
Plastic bags	500 years to forever

Source: US Forest Service

Something to take home – a dirt bag!

Worship teams may consider making up paper bags with potting soil (no plastic bags, please!) and a short seed tape for everyone to take home and plant. If your congregation is very large, make sure there are enough for each child.

Leader: Today, you can take home a precious bag of dirt and some mystery seeds—to see what grows in God's beloved dirt! Remember that Jesus told stories about how things grow from seeds.

A story from Jesus: Mark 4:26-29

On Earth Day, we give thanks that God gives growth from the earth and growth in God's Spirit to help us follow Jesus in everything we do.

(If you are using the whole service, the Offering goes here)



Prayers for all God's People — read by several voices

God bless the earth and the ground we walk on
Wherever we run and jump, walk and hike
Make us grateful for the ground under our feet

God bless the earth and the dirt we dig in.
Bless the seeds we sow and make them grow
Bless the plants and flowers with rain and sun.
Bless the worms that wiggle and the bees that visit.
Whenever we taste something from our gardens
Make us grateful for the dirt we dig in.

God bless the earth and the wind the blows.
Bless us with the summer breeze to cool us down.
Wherever the wind has turned into storms
Give people strength and courage
to pick up the pieces of their lives,
And rebuild their homes.
God keep us safe from storms this year.

God bless the earth and the rain that falls.
Bless the water that refreshes the earth
And allows us to drink, bathe and play in it.
Wherever the water has turned into floods
Give people strength and courage to clean up the mess
And rebuild their communities.
God keep us safe from floods this year.

God bless the earth and the sky above us.
Bless the air we breathe and the sun that rises.
Bless the stars that twinkle
and the dancing Northern Lights.
Help us live wisely under the sky.
Caring for the air we breathe, the water that flows,
The wind that blows and everything that grows.
Help us remember the earth and everything in it
belongs to you
Let us treat everything as your gift.

The 'Jesus Prayer' *(together, according to local custom)*

Song: Bless the Lord — words adapted from the original in Praise Ways

(Alternative hymn: God, you touch the earth with beauty, #667)

Chorus to start:

Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord.
Praise God! O praise God forever.

Mountains and rushing streams, Bless the Lord.
Seagulls with salty screams, Bless the Lord.
Snowshoe hare, polar bear, Bless the Lord.
Praise God, O praise God forever.

Sunrise every morning, Bless the Lord.
Worms in the garden, Bless the Lord.
Fast talkers, slow walkers, Bless the Lord.
Praise God, O praise God forever.

Frogs, turtles, snails, Bless the Lord.
Robins, wrens and quails, Bless the Lord.
Cat people, dog people, Bless the Lord.
Praise God, O praise God forever.

Soil for the front yard, Bless the Lord.
Deer in the back yard, Bless the Lord.
Everybody here sing Bless the Lord.
Praise God, O praise God forever.

Chorus to finish:

Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord.
Praise God, O praise God forever.

***Take God's Blessing with you!**

Fergie Cleans Up

An original story by Nancy Cocks © 2003 an illustrated version by Novalis Press, Ottawa.

The illustrated version is now out of print so permission to copy or reprint comes directly from Nancy.

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"Do you suppose they sleep in the mud?" asked Fergie.

"No," said Freddie. "They probably sleep in the trees, like raccoons. Then the bears won't eat them or their food."

The next morning Fergie woke up to find his mud hole covered in white bubbles. "Hey? What's this?" he asked.

"Camper fuzz," said his mother. "Those humans threw their dishwater in the stream. Now this foam is all over the swamp."

Fergie made a face. "Ick."

At supper, it got worse. The campers walked to the swamp and dumped charcoal from their barbecue in the Frogs' living room.

"It won't start a fire here," one of the campers said.

"What do you mean?" yelled Fergie. "It could start a fire in my bed! Do you want roast frog for breakfast?"

He was hopping mad, so mad he hopped on a piece of charcoal and sizzled his foot. "Ouch!" he croaked.

"Listen to the frogs croaking, Jane," said another camper. "Isn't it great to be away from the city noise?"

The Frogs decided they would move until their house cooled off. They went in different directions to look for safe places to hide. Fergie was in some tall reeds not very far from the stream when it happened.

The campers dumped their garbage. They dumped their garbage into the tall reeds—right on top of Fergie!

"Hey, watch that!" he croaked.

Then CLUNK! A big pop bottle fell right on top of Fergie.

Two hours later the search party found Fergie.

"Ohhhh!" he groaned. Fergie couldn't move because the bottle pinned his legs to the ground.

"Fergie! Are you all right?" cried Mother Frog.

He moaned again. "I can't move my legs. I think they're broken."

The whole Frog family pushed on the pop bottle until it rolled away. Then they carried Fergie to a safer place between the roots of a tree.

As his mother bandaged his legs, Fergie asked, "Were those campers trying to hurt me on purpose?"

"No, Fergie, I don't think so," said Mother Frog. "They didn't think about you." She shook her head sadly. "They just didn't think."

Reflecting on the story:

We don't always think about looking after animals and streams and trees. Sometimes we dump garbage wherever we like, not stopping to think. But we know that human beings can hurt the earth and God's other creatures unless we are careful about the things we do.



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