



Waters of Creation

An ecumenical service of worship

These are resources and suggestions for an ecumenical service of worship that can be used in whole or in part; simply choose what you need. Use it in your regular service of worship, in a special ecumenical service, in your meetings or gatherings, or for personal reflection.

This service can also be used as part of your “KAIROS Sunday” work. See our website at www.kairoscanada.org for more information on KAIROS Sunday.

For further liturgical resources on water or other topics see the KAIROS website. See also the 2005 Peace Sunday resources for the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada; the 2006 Lenten study of the United Church of Canada; and the 2006 World Development and Relief materials (including a worship service) of the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches. The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace also has water reflections and liturgies available in French and English, and the 2005-06 KAIROS/CCODP resources include a **faith reflection** on Genesis 29: 1-8 and John 4.

Suggested scripture:

- Genesis 21: 1-21
- Psalms 104
- John 4: 1-15
- Revelation 21: 1-6

Also see page 31 for other possible texts and themes.

Suggested hymns from several denominational hymnals. Feel free to substitute, and note that some titles appear in more than one hymn book.

Book of Praise (Presbyterian)

- 70 Psalm 104 (All things I see)
- 99 By the waters, the waters of Babylon
- 301 Many and great, O God are your works
- 515 Out of deep, unordered water
- 716 Pray for the wilderness
- 717 We cannot own the sunlit sky
- 719 God in great love for us lent us this planet

Common Praise (Anglican)

- 164 What King Would Wade
- 294 By the Waters of Babylon
- 408 Wind Upon the Waters
- 410 Creating God, Your Fingers Trace
- 415/416 All Things Bright and Beautiful
- 424 Sing Praise to God
- 540 Just as the Deer
- 575 Let Streams of Living Justice
- 578 O Healing River

Lutheran Book of Worship

- 362 We Plough the Fields and Scatter

Voices United (United Church)

- 267 Like a Mighty River Flowing
- 287 Wellspring of Wisdom
- 303 For Beauty of Prairies
- 307 Touch the Earth Lightly
- 309 Para Para Pitter Pat
- 388 Spirit Dancing on the Water
- 409 Morning Has Broken
- 449 Crashing Waters at Creation
- 453 Out of Deep Unordered Water
- 577 I've Got Peace Like A River
- 651 Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

- 710 Shall We Gather at the River
- 713 I See a New Heaven
- 858-859 By the Rivers of Babylon

A Worship Book (Mennonite)

- 53 God of the earth, the sky, the sea
- 148 By the waters (of Babylon)
- 372 O healing river
- 495 O let all who thirst
- 515 Jesus, rock of ages



OPENING PRAYERS

Invocation

One: Holy Spirit, Life-Giver,
Who moved over the waters of creation,
who led your people through the
waters of the Red Sea to liberation,
who descended like a dove above the
waters of Jesus' baptism,
draw us together as we gather in your
name, seeking replenishment for your
task of repairing the world.

**All: Creator God,
We thank you for your love
in all creation,
Especially for your gift of water to
sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.
We ask your blessing on this gathering
as we come together as your people,
bringing our many stories and
traditions,
mingling the waters of our experience
and our faith.
May we find strength and refreshment
in those waters.
Amen.**

*(From The Vision and Practice of Jubilee:
Biblical Hopes, New Beginnings, May 2000)*

Invitation to the Thirsty

Call: Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters.
And you who have no money, come,
buy and eat!

**Response: We have spent our money
on what is not bread and
our labour on what does not satisfy.
But we will listen, listen to you.
We will eat what is good.
We will delight in the richest of fare.**

Call: Give ear and come to me.
Hear me that your soul may live.
Seek the Lord while he may be found.
Call on him while he is near.

**Response: We will turn from our
thoughtless ways.
We will interrupt our wayward thoughts.
We will come to the Lord for mercy.
We will call to our God who freely
pardons.**

Call: For my thoughts are not your
thoughts, neither are my ways your
ways, declares the Lord. As the light
from the stars travels countless years
to the dust at your feet, so are my
ways higher than your ways and my
thoughts than your thoughts.

**Response: Speak slowly to us and we
will pay attention.
Be patient with us, and we will try to
understand.**

Call: As the rain and the snow come
down from heaven and do not return
to it without watering the earth and
making it bud and flourish, so that it
yields seed for the sower and bread
for the eater, so is my word that goes
out from my mouth: it will not return
to me empty, but will accomplish
what I desire and achieve the purpose
for which I sent it.

**Response: We'll share our wealth and
our burdens and go out in joy.
We will put down our weapons and
worries, and we will be led forth in
peace.
We will listen to the mountains and
the hills that are singing.
We will move to the rhythm of the
clapping trees.
Where there is a thorn bush, we will
look for a pine tree; we will wait for
the myrtle where briars now grow.
We will come to the water, we who
are thirsty, to meet with the empty
handed there.**

*(Adapted from Isaiah 55 by Rebecca
Spurrier, formerly of Mennonite
Central Committee Ukraine:
www.mcc.org/bc/worshipresource1.html)*

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PRAYERS/LITANIES

Prayer of Water

“Be praised my God for Sister Water
who is useful, humble, precious and
pure.”

As St. Francis prayed in great gratitude
for Sister Water,
we pray in thankfulness for her life
sustaining generosity.
Oh, water, in your mysterious beauty
you cause the desert to bloom.

One tiny drop spread collected with
thousands of drops
waters seeds and future harvests
to feed us and all creatures.
One tiny drop multiplied quenches
our burning thirst.
Our bodies, like the body of earth, are
over seventy-five percent water.
We are a water people.
We are a water planet.
Oh compassionate God,
Creator who breathed over the waters
we seek forgiveness for our mindless
use of water.
We beg for wisdom to know how to
conserve
and cherish water,
We ask healing for the ways that we
disrespect and contaminate our sister.
In times of drought we wait and watch
for the gift of rain upon the earth.
We watch and wait for the rain of
grace into our souls.
Come free us from hatred, greed, fear,
and
our lack of love for your gifts upon earth.
Transform us into living streams of
water
flowing green and moist with life, hope
and love for earth and all peoples.
We pray this prayer in the name of
God who is gracious Creator, Jesus
who is Eternal Word,
and Spirit who is Wellspring of Wisdom.
Amen.

*(Sister Joan Brown, osf, Ecological
Ministry of the Social Justice Office,
Archdiocese of Santa Fe)*

Prayer of Confession

*(Suggestion: Use a sung refrain of *By
the Waters of Babylon* during and
after the prayers of confession.)*

Creator of Heaven and Earth
You who blew over the dark waters of
creation
Have mercy on us who seek profit
from what you offer so freely.

(Sung response)

Forgive us, we pray, for the times we have failed to recognise our relationship with Sister Water, have not used water wisely, have not called others to awareness for the times we have thoughtlessly polluted instead of protected our water sources, and have ignored the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world.

(Sung response)

Have mercy on us, we who forget that your gift of water is for all creation for all peoples,
All nations
All lands
All creatures
All needs.
Forgive us. Forgive us our greed, and forgive us for the fearfulness that keeps us from sharing your generous gifts equally with all.

(Sung response)

Litany of Lamentation: By The Rivers

This litany focuses on the experience of Aboriginal peoples across Canada, who were systematically stripped of their land, languages, and cultural rights. In a sense, this litany is also a confession on the part of Canadian churches, which, through the residential school system, participated actively in denying Aboriginal peoples their rights. The reference to familiar rivers that flow through Aboriginal peoples' territories reminds us that mourning has taken place along rivers in our context and time, not only alongside the "rivers of Babylon" thousands of years ago.

All: By the Assiniboine, the St. Lawrence and the Fraser Rivers we sat down and wept when we remembered.

Leader: On the willows nearby we hung up our drums and song

Forbidden to sing our song to the Creator in our own land
And we remembered our Grandfather's lodge.

All: By the Red, the Grand and the Bow Rivers we sat down and wept when we remembered.

Leader: How can we remember the old ways
When strangers broke and fenced our land and banned our teachings,
when our children were taken from us?

All: By the North Saskatchewan, the Miramichi and the Bloodvein Rivers we sat down and wept when we remembered.

Leader: Creator God, how can we rebuild what was ground down and cast away?
How can we recover the strengths of our ancestors?
How can we restore balance for our children's children?
How can we live in the land made strange?

**All: By the rivers of life we sit down and weep as we remember
By the rivers of life, let healing and justice flow from our tears.**

(Litany adapted from *Toward Justice and Reconciliation: A Beginning*, The United Church of Canada, 2003)

Prayer of Assurance and Thanksgiving

One: The woman at the well wondered why Jesus was asking her for a drink. After all, she was a foreigner to

him, someone to be avoided and looked down upon. His people and her people did not have a peaceful relationship. Yet Jesus said to her:

All: "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

One: Remembering your everlasting generosity towards us, Loving God, may we go forward as a forgiven people, ready to accept our brother Jesus' promise of living water for all, forever. May we be springs of water for our thirsty neighbours and communities; may we be prepared to accept the gift of living water from each other.

All: AMEN.

Prayers of the Community

(Use what you need and feel free to adapt. Choose a short verse or chorus from one of the hymns suggested above and use it as a sung response.)

One: Creator God, we thank you that there are different paths to wholeness. We see the wonder of your creation all around us, in the singing birds and the flowing water.

We give thanks for the opportunity to share, and for everything you have given us. We give thanks for connectedness to one another, for interconnectedness with the whole created world and the entire cosmos. We give thanks that you have made us part of a creation so rich and complex that our every need can be met if we live in right relationship.

(Sung response)

One: We give thanks for laughter, for humour, for the many different ways

we are able to be together and in community in this sacred place and in our day to day lives. We thank you for the global community of which we are a part, and for the amazing diversity of languages and cultures which surround us. Help us to find a new appreciation for difference, knowing that you created difference and diversity out of chaos. Help us find respect for the different paths that people take. Remind us that we are in communion with you and in community with all creation.

(Sung response)

One: Give us a thirst for justice, Holy One, for we need it. Inspire us to follow Jesus' path, and to remember the compassionate anger he showed when he saw the suffering of others. Despite the riches you have given us, many go hungry and thirsty in the midst of plenty. We do not believe this is your vision for any of us. Forgive our human failings, and prod us to find new ways of being in right relationship with all creation.

One: We remember all in the human family who suffer violence, fear and want. We bring to mind the many women and children who walk miles seeking clean water.

We remember the women who face violence because they have been away from the house too long fetching water; and anyone who faces violence in the home or the community. We mourn with all parents who have lost a child to preventable disease, or who cannot afford an education for their children.

We think of the men, women and youth everywhere who cannot find work enough to put good food and drink on the table.

We pray for all who live with HIV/AIDS, who above all need clean water, medicines, and loving support.

We pray for farmers facing bankruptcy or drought.

Forgive us when we forget the needs of others, and forget that need is caused by greed.

We remember now all in need of healing and justice, and we name those places and people now, silently or aloud.

(Sung response)

One: We remember all the parts of your creation suffering because of devastated habitat, climate change, and polluted water. Forgive us for failing to respect your creation.



One: We pray that you will help us accept responsibility for these injustices, for they are not your will. We thank you for accompanying us on the path to justice, and for giving to us prophets of all ages and traditions who show us the way to right relationship with you, each other, and your creation. We thank you for our children and elders, and the clear vision they offer.

We thank you for the leadership and energy of our youth, and their ability to show us injustice.

We thank you for everyone who works to build community.

We thank you for all who love your creation and struggle to restore it.

We thank you for all leaders everywhere who show us your face, and we name them now, silently or aloud.

(Sung response)

One: We give thanks that Jesus Christ has been in our past, is in our present, and will be with us in our future. Help us to be open to new life and to

vision; to bring new life to our homes; and to be healers in our families, in our communities and in our church. May we be as living water flowing to a world thirsty for love and justice.

ALL: AMEN.

— KAIROS, with material from *Dancing Sun Vol. IV*, a children and adult's resource on Aboriginal rights from the Anglican and United Churches.

Offering Prayer:

Creator God, whose Spirit moved over the face of the waters, who gathers the seas into their places and directs the courses of the rivers, who sends rain upon the earth that it should bring forth life: we praise you for the gift of water. Create in us such a sense of wonder and delight in this and all your gifts, that we might receive them with gratitude, care for them with love, and generously share them with all your creatures, to the honour and glory of your holy name. Amen

(Franciscans International)



BLESSING/BENEDICTIONS/CLOSINGS

God our Creator,
Living Water,
Source of Life,
Who quenches our thirst and refreshes our weariness:
Be for us always a fountain of life,
and for the world a river of hope springing up in the midst of the deserts of despair.
Honour and blessing, glory and praise to you forever! Amen.

(Adapted from Miriam Therese Winter, *Woman Prayer, Woman Song* by Rosanne Athaide, CCODP)

A Drink Blessing

God bless to us this drink
Give water to all who are thirsty
And a thirst for justice to all who are
quenched
God bless to us this drink

(Simeon Mitchell/Christian Aid. Based on a table blessing from Argentina, set to music in the 'Love and Anger' songbook (Wild Goose Publications, 1997)

Closing prayer

Now, O Creator of Living Water,
send us out with a daring love
for all creation.
Lead us as you led the people of Israel
across the Red Sea.
Guide us to life-giving water,
as you did for Hagar.
Challenge us to offer the water of life
freely, as you did through Isaiah.
Remind us that your table is open for
all and that you feed all, as you
showed us on a hillside with thou-
sands and with your followers in an
upper room.
Immerse us in the water of new life, as
you did for Jesus; and send to us the
Holy Spirit of peace, justice and love.
AMEN.

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ADDITIONAL PIECES FOR READINGS AND REFLECTION:

Give Us This Water: A group reflection

Reader 1:
... the rain and the snow come down
from heaven, and return not thither but

water the earth, making it bring forth
and sprout, giving seed to the sower
and bread to the eater... (Isaiah 55:10)

Reader 2:
The Spirit of Yahweh hovered over the
water. It is the gift of water we cele-
brate today.

(A person picks up the container of
water, circles the group during the
reading and replaces it on the table.)

No element is mentioned more often
in scripture: water for cleansing, water
for baptism, for refreshment and life,
water for transition from one stage of
life to another, water for blessing.

**All: Give me this water, that I may
not thirst.**

Reader 3: We claim the water of life,
whose rush announces the birth of a
baby, water of life that nourishes
seeds and plants roots deep in the
earth. We celebrate water without
which all that lives would shrivel and
wither away, water of our life.

**All: Give me this water, that I may
not thirst.**

"Come to me and I will give you living
water, and you will never be thirsty
again." Today, we pray that our thirst
be kept alive, until the justice that we
thirst for is realized.

**All: Give me this water, that I may
not thirst.**

Reader 4: Show us Lord, how to be
frugal till all are fed; how to weep till
all can laugh, how to be meek till all
can stand in pride; how to mourn till
all are comforted; how to be restless

till all live in peace; how to claim less
till all find justice.

Amen!

(Adapted from More than Words, Schaffran
and Kozak, by the Ontario Council of
DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE.)

fifty-eight percent*

our bodies
mostly water

elegance of
healing cells
flowing blood
mostly water

beauty of
babe's chubby cheeks
elder's wise eyes
mostly water

wonder of
tree ripened apples
earth formed potatoes
mostly water

persistent drops of memory
patiently recall
meandering rhythms
graceful limits of
streams and seasons

deregulation and privatization
over our
dead bodies
mostly water

(*babies are 75% water, men 64% and
women 58% water)

(Eileen Klassen Hamm, Peace and Justice
Programming: Mennonite Central
Committee, Saskatchewan)

For a bulletin insert to use in an ecumenical service, check out the KAIROS website at
www.kairoscanada.org or call 1-877-403-833 x221.

Some Biblical Water Themes

Water is a sacred symbol in all religions, appearing frequently in prayers, teachings, rituals and sacred texts. In the Hebrew scriptures (shared by Christians and Jews) and in the New Testament, there are many references to water. Here are some of the many biblical water themes and examples of texts where these themes can be found:

Water as source of life... Described as one of the original elements of the world in Genesis 1:2; In 2 Peter 3:5, water is the substance from which things are made. Jeremiah describes God as “the fountain of living waters” Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13

Water as hospitality... Abraham offers water to wash the feet of the three angels who meet him in Genesis 18:4; Offering water is the test of hospitality met by Rebekah in Genesis 24; In Matthew 10:42, Jesus speaks of sharing a cup of water with the thirsty ones as an essential act of a generous faith.

Water as cleansing... In the Old Testament washing with water held an important place in the temple ceremony such as in Leviticus 11:32 or 16:4; or Exodus 30: 17-21 and was associated with spiritual cleansing as in Ezekiel 36:25.

Living water as the gift of eternal life... In the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:14 and in the vision in Rev 21: 6 the living water of Christ means new life. This is linked with the frequent focus on the role of water in the transformation of baptism.

Water as the “stuff” of miracles... God helps Moses to make the bitter water sweet in Exodus 15: 22-27 and brings water from a rock in Exodus 17: 1-7. Other stories include turning water into wine as in John 2: 1-11 and walking on water as in Matthew 14:22.

As well as these many positive meanings for water, water is also danger and death as in the story of the Great Flood and the drowning of Egyptians in the Red Sea.

There are frequent references to bountiful water (within a desert context) as symbolic of God's blessing such as in the vision of Ezekiel 47: 1-12 and Isaiah 41: 17-18 and 35: 6-7. These are contrast with understandings of drought as the punishment of God as in 1 Kings 17:1, Jeremiah 14: 1-6 and Haggai 1: 10-11.

With assistance from the New Bible Dictionary Third Edition, Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1996.

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground.”

Isaiah 44:3