

What a Wildly Wonderful World! An All-Age Service Outline

Setting: Ideally begin outdoors, but within a short walk of the church building (local park or vicarage / minister's garden may be suitable if there isn't a churchyard).

Preparation for the interactive creation story: All around the church place the following items (at the ends of rows / pews, under some seats, against the walls at the side, on a couple of strategically-placed tables):

- at least 20 small paper bags containing a lump of play-dough / modelling clay (there are simple recipes for this online if you wish to make your own)
- Several sturdy vases containing local flowers (home grown are best, definitely not air-freighted!)
- a couple of largish branches, with leaves or blossom on them
- a large candle
- 10-20 small candles
- a bucket of loose soil / earth
- a jug of water (coloured blue using food-colouring if you wish)
- Packets / envelopes containing seeds (ideally a mix of bought & collected seeds). Include large acorns, conkers as well as tiny e.g. mustard seeds.
- pieces of fruit

At the front of the church / room prepare a large table, or several tables together – all covered in a large green cloth which hangs down to the ground (if you can't find a suitable cloth then green paper or strips of lining paper painted green will do).

Make sure you have concealed under the table:

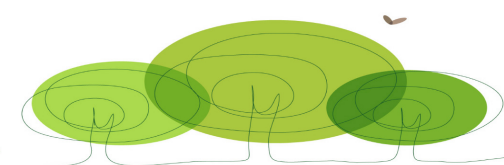
- matches / taper for lighting the candles
- a shallow tray with sand in it for standing candles in
- a bowl for pouring water into (ideally transparent so everybody can see it)

The leader needs to be lively and keep the activity moving, as well as encouraging people of all ages from toddlers to the oldest present to bring things forward. It may be most suitable for somebody who works with children and young people to lead this part of the service.

When people come into church, mention the bags of play-dough and encourage people of all ages to take a piece and create a living creature of some kind – animal, bird, fish, insect, human. They will need these later on!

Many thanks to Derby Diocese's "Spirit & Creation" Day 2010 which provided the inspiration for the interactive creation story at the heart of this service.

Preparation for the Prayers: Cut out leaf shapes for everybody to use during the prayers & ensure there are enough pencils / pens for everyone, and blu-tack or similar to attach them.



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GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

The people gather in the open air. As everybody is beginning to gather, the children and anybody else who would like to, gather some natural items such as feathers, leaves, grasses, egg-shells. These will come in useful later!

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the world that the Lord has made.

Let us receive it with thanks, and respect it with care.

Lord God, you lovingly spoke all creation into existence

And shaped each one of us within our mother's womb;

As we gather to worship you today,

Fill our hearts with wonder and our mouths with praise

At the wildly wonderful world you have made.

In the name of Jesus, by whom and for whom all things were created.

Amen.

Songs of Worship:

This is the day that the Lord has made

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

Entering God's House:

All creation is the dwelling of God's Spirit,

As we worship our Creator, the creation worships too.

As we enter this building let us take with us

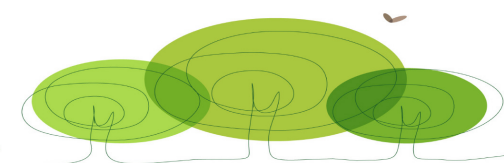
the sights and sounds, the scents and taste and feel of God's world.

Let us worship the Lord with all our senses,

Let us worship the Lord with the company of creation.

CELEBRATING GOD'S CREATION

The leader introduces an interactive retelling of the creation story, and encourages the congregation to find the play-dough on their seats and begin making living creatures of every kind. These will come in useful soon!



In the beginning God created.
God created the heavens and the earth
(Everyone looks for a bucket containing soil – the one who finds it brings it forward. If suitable the bucket of soil should be poured into a heap on the table at the front)

Light from darkness, day from night
(The large candle is found, brought forward to the table, and lit)

Waters below from waters above,
Earth from seas;
(The jug of water is brought forward and poured into a bowl)

Lights in the sky,
Sun and moon and stars;
And God saw that it was good.
(The small candles are brought forward and lit)

Then God spoke and the earth brought forward plants of every kind
– Grasses, flowers, bushes and trees.
(Branches, grasses, leaves and flowers are brought forward)

Plants yielding seeds of every kind,
Trees bearing fruit with the seed in it.
And God saw that it was good.
(Seeds and fruit are brought forward)

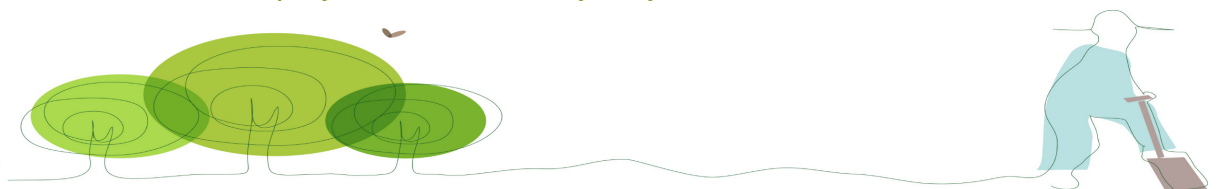
And God spoke again,
And the waters filled with living creatures:
Birds flew in the sky above the earth,
The land teemed with living creatures of every kind.
And God saw that it was good.
(Everyone who has made a play-dough creature brings it forward)

Then God spoke humankind into being – both male and female –
Created in the image of God to look after the whole of creation,
Filled with the breath of God's creative Spirit.
(Pause to listen to your own breathing)

God saw everything that he had made.
And indeed, it was very good.

God sees us, gathered as the body of Christ to celebrate his creation.
Let us worship our Creator!

If possible, invite the whole congregation to come forward, row by row, to see and admire the creation tableau at the front of church. Where there is a very large congregation it may be more suitable to just invite children forward, and have a video camera linked to a data projector so that everybody else can see.



Songs:

Our God is a great big God

Lord of all creation (God of wonders)

Reading: Psalm 104:1-31 (The Message)

If possible, use the PowerPoint presentation in this pack to accompany the reading of this passage. The reading will be most effective if split between two readers (perhaps young people from within the church) and practised with feeling and pace.

Talk & Sketch:

Use the “Food Chain” sketch in the pack. This needs to be led by somebody who has confidence and experience with young children! The leader does not have to be the same person as the preacher / speaker!

The talk itself should be very brief, with the children still present at the front if there is space for them to sit down. It will be most effective if it is based on a simple question and answer format.

If possible put up the PowerPoint slide illustrating Psalm 104:24, showing a variety of British wildlife.

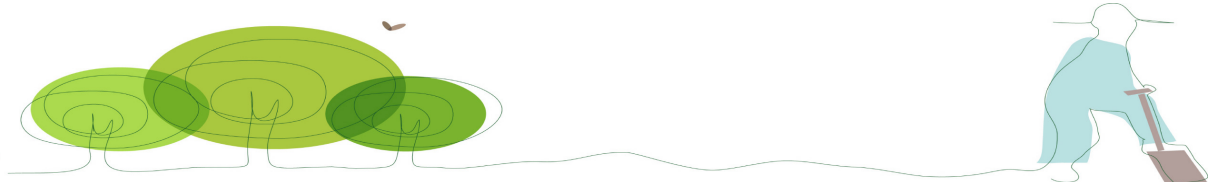
First Question: What are some of your favourite creatures? Let a good number of children and adults suggest their favourite wildlife / pets.

We live in an amazing world – the Psalm calls it a ‘wildly wonderful world’ – full of the most extraordinary and weird creatures ... and all the time we’re finding new ones that we didn’t know existed! But God knew all along – he knows every single species on this earth, and he made each of them different and special.

Second Question: What did you learn from that little play we just did? Let a few people answer. Try and tease out the two key themes of nature’s interdependence and nature’s fragility.

We live in a world where all the creatures depend on each other and if one is destroyed it can badly affect all of them. Imagine a spider’s web with all the silky strands connected to each other. If only one is broken it can affect the whole web – and it’s like that with God’s creation.

Also, nature, despite its beauty and variety is very fragile, very delicate – one small change can make a big difference. We human beings are only one amongst the many creatures on earth but the changes we are making are sometimes damaging God’s wildly wonderful world.



Third Question: What changes can you think of that human beings are making to God's world that are harming biodiversity – God's wonderfully wild world?

Allow the children to answer first, and then open it up more widely if possible. Ideas might include: intensive farming techniques (as in the sketch), rubbish / waste / pollution, deforestation, fragmentation of habitats (roads, towns, farmland sprawling across wildlife habitat), Climate Change, population increase.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. It's a time to celebrate the wildly wonderful world that God has made – perhaps all of us could try and learn some of the wildlife that lives in our local area – to identify the butterflies or ladybirds in our gardens, or the birds in the local park, or the trees down our streets. By learning more about wildlife we learn to love it more. But it's also a time for us to think quite hard about how we live and how it breaks God's heart when we allow his creation to become damaged and destroyed. Our reading ended with the words: "The glory of God - let it last forever! Let God enjoy his creation!"

Fourth Question: What do you think we could do as a church to care more for biodiversity so that God can enjoy his creation?

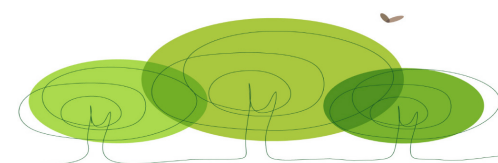
Take every answer seriously, trying to encourage and affirm even any that are slightly off-the-wall. Again, ask children first but open it out to adults too. If you're a church where people are hesitant about speaking out, you may wish to prime a few people to be ready to give answers. If people are really stuck, you might want to make one or two suggestions to get things going ...

- Have some wildlife walks as a church, or have a group volunteer once a month at a local nature reserve
- Turn some of the church grounds into a wildlife area
- Work with a church school / local school
- Pray for God's creation each Sunday in church
- Have some bible studies to look at the subject further
- As a church, support a project that cares for creation (www.arocha.org.uk)
- Become an A Rocha Partner Church (www.arocha.org/churches)
- Write to our local MP about Climate Change

Prayers:

Hand out the leaf-shaped pieces of paper to everybody with pens / pencils. You could get the children to help do this. During the next song invite people to prayerfully write one-word or one-sentence prayers for creation (they could be 'thank you', 'sorry' or 'please' type prayers) on their leaves and bring them up to stick on the front of the creation tableau using blu-tack.

Song: 'I the Lord of sea and sky' or 'O Lord the clouds are gathering' (with new words – see songs document). Stay seated to sing prayerfully, write short prayers & then



come to stick these on the front of the creation tableau.

Blessing:

The power of God, displayed in creation,
Fill you with grace to serve God in his world;
The peace of God, breathing in every living thing,
Enable you to spread God's peace wherever you go;
The love of God, which fills the universe,
Flow through you that you might reflect his image,
And the blessing of God almighty,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go into God's world in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Final Song: You shall go out with joy
With new verses – see songs document

