



# GOD'S SHALOM *for* OUR COMMON HOME

Welcome to the 2026 Season of Creation worship resources. The deep relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of God's creation is evident throughout the biblical story. We read in Genesis 1 and 2 that God created a common home for all life. God made an intricately connected world filled with life and abundance and then pronounced it very good.

Humans are created in God's image, placed in a garden, and given the task of caring for all that God has made. In Jesus we see the "firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15 NRSVue), the Word through whom everything was created and who shows what it means to truly live into the shalom for all things that God intends.

From the garden of Eden to the healing leaves of the tree of life in Revelation, scripture after scripture testify to a universe "called into being as an expression of God's love" (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 5). As followers of Jesus, we are called to live in shalom with God, with each other, and with all creation in our common home.

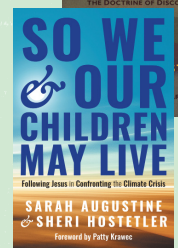
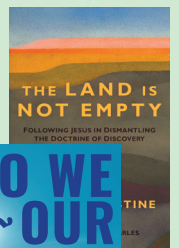
The Season of Creation invites and encourages all Christians to renew their relationship with our Creator and with all creation, through prayer, celebration, conversion, commitment, and action. While our current social and political contexts demand that we pick a side, aligning ourselves with one faction or another on issues of climate, science, or economics, the Christian vocation demands that we align ourselves with God's perspective and that we dedicate our efforts to right relationships. Worship is how we begin and sustain this reorientation.

**The Season of Creation** is celebrated by Christians around the world, in many denominations. The season starts with a day of prayer for creation on September 1, the first day of the Orthodox church calendar, a day to commemorate God's creation of the world. It is observed over the following five Sundays, ending on October 4, the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

Saint Francis is held in high regard by many Christians, including Mennonites, who find common ground in his commitment to simplicity and a life of peacemaking. Throughout his ministry, his devotion to the natural world came from a place of humility and solidarity with all God's creatures. The text of his famous hymn, "Canticle of the Sun," inspired the modern hymn, "All Creatures of Our God and King."

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Augustine, Sarah. ***The Land Is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery***. Herald Press, 2021.
- Augustine, Sarah and Sheri Hostetler. ***So We and Our Children May Live: Following Jesus in Confronting the Climate Crisis***. Herald Press, 2023.



## THE WORSHIP RESOURCES

These worship resources are structured around a meditation on Isaiah 55, together with words from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). The book of Isaiah addresses the exile of the ancient Israelites to Babylon and their eventual return. It stands out among Old Testament prophets in that it not only calls people to repentance but shows them a way out of their current predicament. It offers them a way back to God—a way back home. Although written over two millennia ago, Isaiah's message of hope is a relevant and powerful one for us today.

Taken together, the scriptures chosen for this series invite us to focus on our relationships with God, God's good creation, and each other through gratitude (week 1), mutuality (week 2), lament (week 3), wonder (week 4), and celebration (week 5). First, though, they invite us to turn away from the anxiety, anger, fear, and tension that so often permeate our social discourse on the environment. They invite us to turn in trust toward a loving God, in joyful anticipation of liberation, both for ourselves and for creation. God's shalom is not only revealed in the creation around us but also in the life arising within and through us, as Paul so evocatively writes in his letter to the Romans (8:18–23).

### OVERVIEW

In this summary of the five-week worship series, note that Sunday represents the *end* of the week in these resources rather than the beginning. For example, resources for Week 1, including the weekly activity, culminate on September 6.

- **Week 1 (September 6): Isaiah 55:1–2** In God's shalom, we are called to turn to God's abundant provision to quench our thirst.
- **Week 2 (September 13): Isaiah 55:3–5** In God's shalom, we are called to honor our covenantal relationship with our creator and with the whole community of creation.
- **Week 3 (September 20): Isaiah 55:6–9** In God's shalom, we are called to lament, repent, and return to God to find healing for our broken relationship with creation.
- **Week 4 (September 27): Isaiah 55:10–11** In God's shalom, we are called to step forward in wonder and in trust, finding that the world God created is marvelously sustainable.
- **Week 5 (October 4): Isaiah 55:12–13** In God's shalom, we are called to praise and worship as we celebrate with all creation, in our common home.

### PLANNED FLEXIBILITY

Along with the guiding statement describing the theme for each week, this collection of worship resources includes suggested scriptures, music, prayers, litanies, visuals, sermon

starters, and children's stories. However, we encourage worship planners to engage with this material creatively. The Season of Creation is a perfect opportunity for congregations to step out of their regular patterns of worship and explore other styles of worshipful engagement.

As a culmination of the Season of Creation, we encourage you to plan a celebratory service on the final Sunday of this series, which falls on the feast day of St. Francis. Consider bringing together other congregations in your area, worshiping outdoors, including lots of singing and prayer, and celebrating communion together. If possible, use communion elements reflective of your local context, made from local produce, or even sourced from grains and fruits grown in farms, gardens, or orchards of your congregants. We encourage you to start thinking about this final service and what it will entail—at the beginning of your planning.

### TENDING TO CREATION: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

This series encourages us to engage with creation and tend to our relationship with it. Much of modern life is mediated through technology to the point where it is possible to spend little to no time outdoors daily! Much like the celebration of communion invites us to tend to our relationships with one another and with God, this Season of Creation invites us to tend to our relationships with creation in preparation for worship.

Each week includes an activity and a reflection for individuals or groups throughout the week leading up to each Sunday. You can find these activities at [www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources](http://www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources). Alternatively, you can incorporate the activities into the worship time by organizing small groups to do an activity together, then following it with a shorter service of readings, music, and prayer.

Note that each activity suggests something for congregants to bring with them to the worship service—a symbolic item to be added to the visual display or something to be otherwise shared. The goal is to bring our experiences of creation into worship.

Worship planners are encouraged to explore each week's material well ahead of time, adapting and preparing it as appropriate for your congregation. Decide how to incorporate the activities into worship in your context. Then consider how to communicate the activities to your congregation each week (i.e., including instructions for the week's activity in the bulletin and/or sending it via email or text).

### VISUAL DISPLAY

During this Season of Creation, churches are encouraged to spend time appreciatively outdoors in creation, attentively honoring the sanctity of God's creation. When worshipping indoors, churches are encouraged to experiment with bringing elements of creation into the worship space.

This could most simply be displaying a mound of soil in the front (with protective plastic or a tarp underneath it). Alternatively, you could display pots, planters, or any container (preferably recycled) filled with soil. See the example of combining the two (i.e., soil both loose and contained in pots).



A possible display for the worship space.  
Photo by Tim Wiebe-Neufeld.

The presentation is meant to be more earthy than ornate. Let the display be simple and evocative of the beauty of good, life-giving soil. Avoid trying to contain, domesticate, or manicure the earth in your display. (For instance, notice in the photo how twigs and humus are still visible; this soil was gathered “as is” from the churchyard.) Embrace the opportunity to get your hands dirty in worship and welcome the “wild” into your worship space.

Think about what is unique about your church’s specific ecological context and how to represent this in your visual display. You might want to seek the help of a gardener or farmer in the congregation.

You might want to add plants to the display on the first Sunday. Alternatively, you could add plants progressively or according to the suggestions in the children’s stories. At the end of the worship series, Canadian congregations could keep this display for the following Thanksgiving Sunday, adding produce, grains, flowers, or any gifts of the harvest, suggesting an abundant harvest bursting from the earth.

The children’s times are designed to be integrated into the Season of Creation display, making the visual display a collective and intergenerational effort.

### CHILDREN’S TIME

Invite the children to gather around the display in the worship area. Encourage them to interact with the display—watering, caring for, and learning about earth, plants and animals, and creation care. Most congregations include gardeners, farmers, or other enthusiasts who could share their

knowledge with the children. What a terrific opportunity to share these creation-honoring gifts in the worship setting!

The display in the worship area simply consists of soil and some plants (see photo). Each children’s time includes a simple activity or lesson (available at [MennoMedia.org/leader-resources](http://MennoMedia.org/leader-resources)). Sometimes it involves simply checking on the plants to see how they are doing. Please feel free to elaborate on the directions and to add your own stories, experiences, and wisdom.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE/ CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

The worship resources include many prayers and liturgies, for use according to each week’s theme. We also suggest communal prayers from *Voices Together* that can be used for any service, either as stand-alone prayers or to be incorporated into other prayers that may already be customary for your congregation.

- Shorter prayers: 855, 861, 881, 1002, 1009
- Lengthier petitions/intercessions: 864, 996, 997
- Affirmation of faith: 922

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

“God saw how good it was” (Genesis 1:10). Just as God takes time to name and appreciate each created being, you are invited to ground your worship each week in gratitude for the whole web of life. At the beginning of each service, take time to acknowledge the ways in which we are all interconnected and interdependent. This is a practice Indigenous peoples have traditionally done at the start of their gatherings since time immemorial. (For example, see the “Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address,” available online.)

Land acknowledgments are an important step toward reconciliation and recommitment to God’s vision of shalom. When we consider “our common home,” it is vital to understand the history of the land where our meeting places are located. We can honor the Indigenous peoples connected with that place and recognize the reciprocal responsibilities we share with the land and our neighbors, guided by treaty relationships or other agreements. (To see the name of the original peoples in your area, search for your address at [native-land.ca/maps/native-land](http://native-land.ca/maps/native-land).)

We acknowledge that non-Indigenous peoples have often failed to share the land and the gifts of creation equitably, taking more than they need from the “common dish” while denying others, including future generations, what they need to live and flourish.

You can refer to *Voices Together* 878 as a starting point for crafting a land acknowledgment and seek further resources to connect it to your context. We wrote this land acknowledgment for use throughout this worship series.

In our desire for God's shalom,  
we choose to embrace all who inhabit our  
common home.

At the same time,  
we are confronted with hard truths rooted in  
broken histories.

We acknowledge that  
"we are related to the earth and all its many creatures  
with inseparable lines of connection,"  
but those relationships are fragile.

We acknowledge that "we are gathering today  
on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples."  
For settlers and newcomers,  
worshiping here comes with "specific responsibilities  
in the journey of reconciliation with the Indigenous  
hosts on this land."<sup>1</sup>  
Shalom is no small task.

*(Continue, using the second paragraph of Voices Together  
878 or text from a related resource.)*

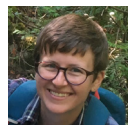
We recommit ourselves to God's vision of shalom  
for our common home and for all who inhabit it.

1. Quotations taken from *Voices Together* 878. Mennonite Worship and Song Committee, 2019. Used by permission.

## SEASON OF CREATION WORSHIP RESOURCE TEAM



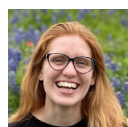
**Ian Funk**, Langley Mennonite Fellowship, Surrey, British Columbia. *Photo by Peter Ringenberg*



**Laura Enns**, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario. *Photo by Joshua Enns*



**Marie J. Moyer**, Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Lethbridge, Alberta. *Photo by Jacquie Harms*



**Mykayla Turner**, Ottawa Mennonite Church, Ottawa, Ontario. *Photo by Michaela Calahan*



**Tim Wiebe-Neufeld**, First Mennonite Church, Edmonton Alberta. *Photo by Ruth Bergen-Braun*

### PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY

Subscribers to *Leader* are welcome to photocopy, adapt, and project worship materials in this section.

### DOWNLOAD

Subscribers may download the worship resources at [www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-Resources](http://www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-Resources).  
Password: **5583hxs**

### STREAMING LICENSE INFORMATION FOR VOICES TOGETHER

Streaming copyrighted songs on electronic platforms such as Zoom usually requires a license. The Anabaptist Worship Network has compiled a comprehensive chart that shows what kind of license is needed to stream any of the songs in *Voices Together*. Consult [www.VoicesTogetherHymnal.org/Resources](http://www.VoicesTogetherHymnal.org/Resources).

The **Anabaptist Worship Network** on Facebook is a great way to communicate with pastors and other worship leaders and share ideas for this worship series.

**Together in Worship (TogetherInWorship.net)** is a curated collection of free online resources from Anabaptist sources that support communal Christian worship.

**NOTE:** All songs in each Sunday's order of worship are found in *Voices Together* unless otherwise indicated. Other sources may include *Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB)*, *Sing the Journey (STJ)*, and *Sing the Story (STS)*.

# Coming to the water

## Focus statement

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The earth is our common home, with an abundance that can support all life. Are we ready to embrace this abundant vision of God's shalom and all that it might ask of us?

## Activity tending to creation

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Share the Activity for tending to creation for week 1 during the week *before* this worship service (see Activities for tending to creation at [www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources](http://www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources). Password: **5583hxs**)

## Tending to creation in worship

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Create space in the visual display for people to bring water they have collected. Choose a time in the service for them to do so. You might want to find a vessel in which to collect the water or invite people to water the plants during children's time.

## Scriptures

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Isaiah 55:1–2; Matthew 7:7–12

## Song suggestions

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### *Voices Together*

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|--|--|
| <p><b>9</b> Come Away from Rush and Hurry (One License #206210 and #VT009W)</p> <p><b>35</b> Come to the Water (One License #VT035)</p> <p><b>309</b> Fill Us with Your Feast (One License #VT309)</p> <p><b>441</b> Crashing Waters at Creation (One License #03954)</p> <p><b>514</b> I Saw a Tree by the Riverside (One License #87701)</p> <p><b>543</b> De noche iremos (By Night, We Hasten; One License #03450)</p> | <p><b>642</b> Healing River of the Spirit (One License #96835 and #04874)</p> <p><b>703</b> Rain Down (also <i>STJ</i> 49; One License #80623)</p> <p><b>799</b> The Kingdom of God (One License #98494)</p> <p><b>801</b> I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table (public domain)</p> <p><b>806</b> Called by Earth and Sky (One License #119776)</p> <p><b>838</b> La paz de la tierra (The Peace of the Earth Be with You; One License #57518)</p> |
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### *Hymnal: A Worship Book*

- 495** O Let All Who Thirst (One License #89703)

### *Taizé*

Let All Who Are Thirsty, Come (available online)

## Call to worship

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Listen. Let all who are thirsty, come.

Listen carefully. Let *all* who are thirsty, come.

We are thirsty, all of us—  
 the young, the old, the trees, the soil,  
 the creatures that fly, crawl, and swim—  
 all of us,  
 sharing a common home and seeking abundant life.

Together, let us seek and find ourselves,  
 in God's story of shalom.

## Confession and assurance

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### Confession (based on Psalm 36:3–9)

Leader: Source of nourishment and life:

**All:** *We come to you in a spirit of humility,  
aware of the many ways  
in which we have failed to act wisely or do good.*

Leader: Our world seems committed to a path  
of destruction:  
perpetual economic growth  
that depends on resource use and extraction  
without respect for the limits of our shared planet,  
or the inherent value of your creation.

**All:** *We have bought into a myth of scarcity,  
taken more than our fair share,  
competed over your gifts,  
and accepted a global reality  
where many of your children are hungry  
and thirsty.*

Leader: We know in our hearts that this is not your way,  
and yet we struggle to find a better path.

### Assurance

Leader: God of abundance, your love is limitless.

**All:** *Your mercy reaches out to the universe,  
your faithfulness to the skies.  
Your righteousness is like the highest mountains;  
your justice is like the deepest oceans.*

Leader: Yet in your greatness, you still care for the “least  
of these:”  
the most vulnerable among us, the tiniest  
of creatures,  
the living systems that our economy  
would count as insignificant.

**All:** *You provide enough for all of us to flourish.*

Leader: We cannot manufacture this kind of love.  
We cannot buy this kind of satisfaction.

**All:** *Let us invest in your dream for the earth,  
labor for your kin-dom.  
We hunger and thirst for your justice  
as we come to your table—  
a communion feast for all creatures.*

## Children's time

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See online resource at [www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources](http://www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources). Password: **5583hxs**

## Sermon starter

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We are thirsty.

What a strange statement for people who live in a world that is full of abundant life! Yet, it remains true. So many of us are thirsty. So many of the resources that we need to flourish are not available to all. We all live here as part of the community of creation, but our economic and other human systems do not reflect God's shalom.

As we read Isaiah 55:1–2, a twofold invitation is extended to us. First, we are invited to *know our thirst*. God is the wellspring of life, the source of shalom, but we cannot experience this abundance unless we recognize that we are thirsty for God's shalom. Second, we are invited to *come to the water* and be satisfied. As we turn away from distractions, from “what isn't food” and “what doesn't satisfy,” we turn toward the wellspring of life with anticipation.

If we carefully discern God's voice and look for God's presence in creation, our desert-like circumstances can give way to an abundant feast. This work of shifting our perspective and lifestyle is reflected in Matthew 7:7 when Jesus calls us to “ask” and “seek” so that resources may abound and relationships may be restored.

## Benediction

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Leader: Abundant life is all around and within us.

As we go,  
may God, the wellspring of that life,  
nourish and sustain all of us  
who inhabit this common home.

**All:** *May we embrace God's shalom in all its fullness  
for the sake of this earth, our common home. Amen.*

## Activity tending to creation

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Share the Activity for tending to creation for week 2 (see [www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources](http://www.MennoMedia.org/Leader-resources); password: **5583hxs**)