

“*God’s Good Earth* is a wonderful resource to celebrate the majesty, mystery, and soul of Earth. The songs, praise, and poetry of creation erupt and stir a spiritual presence both within us as worshippers and an awareness of that presence within the deep domains of Earth. A fantastic resource for celebrating The Season of Creation every Sunday in the year. ‘Where can Wisdom be Found?’ In creation (Job 28:23-27)!”

—Norman Habel, editor of the Earth Bible series in Australia, a sponsor of the Season of Creation, and author of works relating to ecology, worship, and the Scriptures

“What a splendid book this is, packed with beautifully chosen prayers, hymns, and reflections that celebrate the sacredness of God’s skies and seas, larks and eagles, petals and leaves! I hope that *God’s Good Earth* will be widely used, not only as a source of liturgies during Creation Season but also as a wellspring of material for weekly services, for special services throughout the year, and for personal prayer. In this time of climate crisis, species extinction, and collective trauma, when so many of us feel numb or overwhelmed, these liturgies can restore our souls: they give voice to our need to praise and give thanks, to grieve and repent, and to renew our resolve for the long struggle ahead.”

—The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Missioner for Creation Care, Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts & Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ

“Rich, abundant, fertile, and creative—the Rowthorns have drawn from broad and deep seas of wisdom to move hearts and mountains in search of Creation’s healing. Worship frames for a year of weeks explore the wonder of God’s creation, creatures human and not, and the groaning of all. May these prayers and poems, hymns and scriptures, reflections and blessings work their wondrous transformation in all God’s people, for *tikkun olam*, repair of the interconnected world God has made. *Caveat lector*, for you will weep, rejoice, be awed and humbled, and by grace, transformed.”

—The Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Assisting Bishop, San Diego
Formerly XXVI Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church

“In *God’s Good Earth*, Anne and Jeffery Rowthorn have blessed the churches with a beautiful and timely gift. Representing a rich diversity of traditions and voices, these 52 liturgies invite us to worship the God of creation, ponder our deep communion with all living things, repent of our responsibility for environmental destruction and its devastating consequences for marginalized peoples, and reform our actions in agreement with God’s hopeful vision for the renewal of the earth.”

—Dr. Thomas John Hastings, Executive Director, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut

“If you have ever been overwhelmed by a panorama from a mountaintop or filled with awe at the heavenly canvas glittering with stars or overcome with wonder at the power of the sea as it rushes against a shore, this book is for you. If you have become concerned about the rising temperatures of our oceans and shorelines and understand that there is a religious dimension to these issues, this book is for you. If the social injustices that accompany environmental degradation are moral concerns, this book is for you. This collection of texts from 28 books of the Bible, 42 other authors, 37 writers of hymns plus 90 supplementary hymns, arranged in 52 thematic liturgies, provides those seeking a means to express their faith in both formal and informal settings. I warmly recommend this book to all who understand environmental issues in religious terms.”

—Gregory E. Sterling
The Reverend Henry L. Slack Dean
The Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament
Yale Divinity School

“‘In the end we will conserve only what we love,’ affirmed Senegalese conservationist Baba Dioum. ‘We will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.’ The liturgies developed by Anne and Jeffery Rowthorn’s book provide fifty-two ways to understand and love God’s good earth more deeply. Their work leads us from praise and thanks to lament and confession and finally to a renewed commitment to all creation and a new sense of wonder at God’s infinite imagination in fashioning this world. The Rowthorns challenge us to pray, sing, and act for the earth. Most of all, they give us the words and worship we need to love this world as God loves it, for the sake of the earth and for generations yet to come. It should be required text for every seminary course on liturgy and the worship leaders of every congregation.”

—Rev. Talitha Arnold
Senior Minister
The United Church of Santa Fe

God's Good Earth

Praise and Prayer for Creation

Compiled and Edited by
Anne and Jeffery Rowthorn



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For our grandchildren

Anna
Jackson
Nathaniel
Beckett
Juliette
Kieran
Hannah

and all the world's grandchildren.

May they cherish the wondrous works of God
and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation.

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PREFACE

The story of creation presents us with a panoramic view of the world. Scripture reveals that, “in the beginning,” God intended humanity to cooperate in the preservation and protection of the natural environment. At first, as we read in Genesis, “no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground” (2:5). The earth was entrusted to us as a sublime gift and legacy, for which all of us share responsibility until, “in the end,” all things in heaven and on earth will be restored in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10). Our human dignity and welfare are deeply connected to our care for the whole of creation.

However, “in the meantime,” the history of the world presents a very different context. It reveals a morally decaying scenario where our attitude and behavior towards creation obscure our calling as God’s co-operators. Our propensity to interrupt the world’s delicate and balanced ecosystems, our insatiable desire to manipulate and control the planet’s limited resources, and our greed for limitless profit in markets—all these have alienated us from the original purpose of creation. We no longer respect nature as a shared gift; instead, we regard it as a private possession. We no longer associate with nature in order to sustain it; instead, we lord over it to support our own constructs.

The consequences of this alternative worldview are tragic and lasting. The human environment and the natural environment are deteriorating together, and this deterioration of the planet weighs upon the most vulnerable of its people. The impact of climate change affects, first and foremost, those who live in poverty in every corner of the globe. Our obligation to use the earth’s goods responsibly implies the recognition of and respect for all people and all living creatures. . . .

We labor in vain if the Lord is not by our side (cf. Ps 126-127), if prayer is not at the center of our reflection and celebration. Indeed, *an objective of*

our prayer is to change the way we perceive the world in order to change the way we relate to the world.

—Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

SOURCE

Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, “Joint Message on the World Day of Prayer for Creation,” *Holy See Press Office*, last modified September 1, 2017, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2017/09/01/170901a.html>. © Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used by permission. Emphasis added.

FOREWORD

This is a book born out of an immense feeling for our planetary crisis. It is a book that brings forth songs of praise and thanksgiving in an age of mourning and loss. It is an offering of hope for all those seeking a way forward, for it responds to the question of how we may affirm life and create liturgies within the anguish of our times.

We can do this through embracing prayers, poems, hymns, and Scripture that weave us into cosmic time and earth time. Is this not what liturgy has always done? Is this not what is needed now more than ever? Humans long to celebrate life and find themselves as part of a community. They desire to express gratitude for the great powers of the universe that inspire us and the fecund forces of earth that sustain us. They yearn to greet the light of morning and acknowledge the stars at night. In doing so they become part of an earth community and feel their place within a cosmic family. It is through liturgy that we express that unspoken longing of the human heart to belong to something larger. This book provides a way into celebrating the great mystery of life that birthed us and grounds us, that ignites in us wonder, awe, and beauty.

We know that the forces that have given rise to life on this planet arose out of an immense journey of the universe. We are now entering into an understanding of the deep time of its unfolding. How can we imagine the evolution of a universe fourteen billion years old? How might we see this as a story that inspires human creativity and a sense of connection? How does liturgy and prayer help us to do that? By dipping into the wellsprings of nature's capacity for regeneration, these wide-ranging prayers replenish us. By integrating these hymns and Scriptures into the flow of worship, we become inspired for the great work of renewing the face of the earth. These selections will become as essential as water in a desert to assuage our thirst for being alive to life. They will guide us and steady us into an unknown future.

As we feel that steadiness, we can begin to reimagine our lineage as not only our parents and ancestors but also the larger family of life. Words and

song link us to the language of the living world—bird song in the morning as the sun rises, insect song in the evening as the sun sets, whale song in the depths of the ocean, wolf song in the thick forests. How can we not rejoice in being part of this chorus of praise that is larger than humans but inclusive of humans? We belong to a great continuity of being where our interdependence is primary, not our independence or dominance. These prayers weave us into the liturgy of the earth community that surrounds us. They illumine our way into the cosmic kinship of acknowledging the stars as our ancestors.

The elements of carbon-based life arose out of the great explosion of stars and thus we are part of a lineage that is as vast and mysterious as our sun star. The way to fully acknowledge this lineage of life is not just by science but by story. All cultures have yearned to tell the story of their origin, their place, their role. In doing so, they create the grounds for meaning and purpose. Such a story is expressed in the cycle of the seasons and in the passage of the day. This book offers a way to find a path amid these changes, just as monastic communities have done throughout history. We can learn once again to abide in reverence, to rejoice in beauty, and to bear the pain of suffering.

This is crucial as the anguish of our moment is vast and complex, ranging from human loss to ecosystem loss. The suffering instigated by our global environmental crisis in its many forms is reaching unsustainable proportions. Climate change is producing rising oceans from Miami to Mumbai and fierce hurricanes from the Philippines to Puerto Rico. Forests and fisheries are being decimated at a rapid rate. In traveling to many parts of the world, especially Asia, I see the levels of pollution of air, water, and soil reaching unbearable levels. And we don't have to travel overseas to see the toxicity in our water causing major problems in places like Flint, Michigan, or post-hurricane Houston.

In North America and abroad we have saturated our environment and our food with chemicals, we have allowed oil pipelines to destroy land and pollute rivers, we have created epidemics of asthma with our dirty air. All of this is causing massive health problems of mind and body. As Thomas Berry often said, "We can't have healthy people on a sick planet." And clearly those most vulnerable are the poor, victims of environmental injustice. In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has called for an integral ecology where we listen to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

How can we not respond to the call of the earth for the continuity of all life and ecosystems? If these great planetary processes have birthed us, should we not care for them for future generations? A sense of urgency has motivated this book; its timeliness is evident. A thematic cycle of prayers

and hymns that celebrates creation in all its aspects can reignite mutually enhancing human-earth relations. This is an invitation to one and all to embrace renewing life in all its fullness—within and without. Communities of faith and environmental communities alike can join in healing the earth. This book will light the way into how we can participate together in our singing sentient world.

—Mary Evelyn Tucker
Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

INTRODUCTION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (*Genesis 1:1*)

“God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed it was very good.”
(*Genesis 1:31*)

“Yahweh God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” (*Genesis 2:7*)

“Yahweh God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” (*Genesis 2:15*)

At the very beginning of the biblical story, one thing is made clear: there is an inseparable connection between humans made by God in God's image and the good earth which God has created. Humans are charged with tilling and keeping the ground from which they were all made and to which at the end of life they all return. Because all humans come into being in the same way, there is also an inseparable connection between each one of us. We may speak different languages, belong to different races and nations, and live lives shaped by different cultures, traditions, and beliefs. Nonetheless, we are bound inextricably to each other, just as we are bound inextricably to God's good earth which is our common home.

Pope Francis has written of these two inseparable connections:

A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus

needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.

Everything is connected. The profound truth expressed in those three words is not self-evident. Over the centuries humankind has again and again taken two steps forward and then one step back on the long journey to understanding that everything is inseparably connected. The twentieth century has been described as the bloodiest in world history, torn by wars and ravaged by epidemics. Yet in the course of the century the United Nations came into being, with a current membership of more than 190 countries. The World Council of Churches has brought together parts of the Christian family long indifferent or actively hostile to one another. Deeply divisive issues of race and gender are being painfully, and in places reluctantly, addressed. Everything is connected.

On September 1, 1989, another step forward of immense significance was taken by Dimitrios I, the Ecumenical Patriarch. Writing to the millions of Eastern Orthodox Christians around the world, he spoke of his great anxiety as he followed “the merciless trampling down and destruction of the natural environment which is caused by man with extremely dangerous consequences for the very survival of the natural world created by God.”

He invited the entire Christian world to annual observation of September 1—the first day of the Orthodox church year—“in thanksgiving for the great gift of Creation and in petition for its protection and salvation.” Since then the Day of Prayer has blossomed into a Season of Creation, extending from September 1 to October 4—the feast of Francis of Assisi—and observed by increasing numbers of Christians of many traditions.

Meanwhile the world's scientists are each day providing further evidence to support the urgent call for ecological conversion. Many of them have called our era the Anthropocene Era, meaning that human beings are, for the first time in history, altering the shape and destiny of our earth. Our planet is moving toward a time when the future of human life on Earth is called into question.

The deteriorating condition of our earth poses three challenges to Christians.

Challenge number one: The need to recall the ecological basis of our faith tradition.

Human beings are made in the image of God. They reflect the Creator. Hills and streams, mountains, the animals of the deep forest and fish of the sea also reflect the beauty and majesty of the Creator. “Ask the animals, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask

the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done all this? In God's hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being" (Job 12:7-10). John of Damascus (675-749) expressed this succinctly when he said, "The whole earth is an icon of the face of God." Centuries later Martin Luther said, "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees and in the flowers and clouds and stars."

Challenge number two: The need to redefine humanity's relationship with the rest of creation.

We especially need to gain a fresh appreciation of the reality that the physical, animal, and human aspects of creation are all interconnected and interdependent. Rain waters the earth and nourishes the crops which feed the human community. Drought dries the land; the dry land will not grow grain, leading to desertification. Forests support many varieties of animal and plant life, from lichens that live on tree trunks to insects and animals small and large that find their homes in the forest. But when forests are clear-cut, all the plants and animals that depended upon the trees and the forest floor die with the trees. Rising atmospheric temperatures lead to rising sea levels, which force evacuation of people who live on low-lying coastlines and coral atolls. If we disturb one aspect of the natural world, other aspects will suffer; if we allow one species to become extinct, the lives that depended upon it will also be lost.

Challenge number three: The need to employ the liturgical resources of our faith to help Christians address the problems of our earthly home.

We have long regarded the natural world as something apart from ourselves, to be exploited for our own ends. Now we are being called to a conversion of attitude and action, understanding at long last that everything is connected. Yet there are powerful political and economic forces that deny the reality of global warming and climate change and of human responsibility for the degradation of the environment. There is also indifference or confusion on the part of many who regularly attend worship.

To underline our need to repent of our indifference and unwillingness to act, the present Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I has written:

Responding to the environmental crisis is a matter of truthfulness to God, humanity, and the created order. It is not too far-fetched to speak of environmental damage as being a contemporary heresy or natural terrorism. We have repeatedly condemned this behavior as nothing less than sinful. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for humans to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its

natural forests, or by destroying its wetlands; for humans to injure other humans with disease by contaminating the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life with poisonous substances—all these are sins before God, humanity and the world. We have tended to restrict the notion of sin to the individual sense of guilt or the social sense of wrongdoing. Yet sin also contains a cosmic dimension, and repentance from environmental sin demands a radical transformation of the way we perceive the natural world and a tangible change in the way we choose to live.

How may the churches effectively touch the hearts and minds of Christians so that we accept our God-given responsibility to care for creation in the face of this unprecedented ecological crisis? The United Church of Canada responds to that question in this way:

Rites of Christian worship have the potential to evoke within the worshipping community a powerful, new appreciation of the created order of which they are an intricately interwoven part, but within which they have unique responsibilities. Prayer and ritual action can help transform how communities and individuals view themselves and instill a hallowing of their relationship with all creation.

All who lead Christian worship have unique opportunities, not only on Environmental Sabbath, but every week, to integrate prayers and services for creation as part of regular worship. Through such integration, all humanity might discover a deeper reverence for God, a more profound awareness of the fragility and oneness of creation, and a greater resolve to mend creation.

God's Good Earth is offered to worship leaders and congregations as a resource shaped by the challenges outlined above and by our conviction that worship is the most powerful means the Holy Spirit uses to transform and equip Christians as they seek to live faithful lives, serving God and caring for God's creation.

We believe that such a transformation is not only possible, but absolutely essential if Planet Earth is to survive healthy and whole as far into the future as we can imagine and beyond. As a contribution to this journey of transformation, we have prepared fifty-two liturgies, each consisting of prayers, Scripture, song, contemporary reflections, and silent contemplation. May those who enter into this journey of praise and prayer have their faith in God the Creator strengthened, their gratitude for the wonders of God's creation deepened, and their commitment to act on behalf of God's good earth enhanced.

SOURCES

Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 2:15 from *The Jerusalem Bible*, ed. Alexander Jones (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966). © 1996 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd. and Doubleday, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Reprinted by permission.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, accessed December 1, 2017, Vatican.va, 91. © Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used by permission.

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"To Live with Respect in Creation" in United Church of Canada, *Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services for the United Church of Canada*, ed. Karen J. Verveda (Etobicoke, Ontario: United Church Publishing House, 2000), 613. Used with permission.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each of the fifty-two liturgies in *God's Good Earth* is a complete service of worship centered around a specific theme.

The book is intended as a resource to be used in several possible ways: for supplementing regular public worship every Sunday of the year; for regular use by small groups committed to environmental study and action; for enhancing daily devotion and reflection by individuals; as an anthology of environmental prayers; and for inspiring the design of additional environmental liturgies, especially on topics not addressed in this book.

All the topics addressed by the liturgies are connected. As listed in the contents, they fall into six general categories: God the Creator and God's Glorious Creation (7); God's Physical Universe (7); The Diversity of God's Creatures (6); The Human Community and Its Needs (11); The Whole Creation Groaning in Travail (14); and Hope and the Future (7).

Three topics are deemed so essential that two liturgies are devoted to each of them: *climate* (Climate Change, Global Warming); *food* (Agriculture with a Human Face, Farms); and *water* (Living Waters, Water).

Each liturgy is preceded by a brief epigraph that introduces the theme. It encourages meditation on the material that follows.

The fifty-two liturgies constitute a whole year but are not linked with the seasons of the church year. Begin whenever it makes sense for you and your congregation or group. Small groups and individuals intending to work their way through the book are encouraged to begin with Liturgy 1 (God the Creator).

Specifically, we suggest the following:

Each service may begin with a silent reflection on the theme. Silence may follow the Scripture Reading and the Reflection; it may also precede the times of prayer.

In the case of a small group, a shared response to the Reflection may be invited.

The Psalm or Canticle and the Litany may be recited in a variety of ways: divided between the leader and the community, between two sides of the worship space, or between men and women. Regular type denotes the role of the leader(s); bold type the response by the community.

The Hymn at the close of each liturgy may be sung to the tune suggested or to some other tune of the same meter. Most of the tunes can be found in one or more of the major denominational hymnals currently in use.

The liturgies are enhanced by supplementary material to be found at the end of the book: indexes of hymns and Scripture readings; a list of authors of the contemporary reflections; and a wide range of additional hymns for use when an opening hymn is desired.

Any of these liturgies may include a celebration of the Eucharist: if needed, a passage from one of the Gospels is read. Then, following the Prayers of Confession and Intercession, bread and wine are offered at the altar, prayed over and shared according to the normal practice of the particular congregation. The service then ends with the Hymn and Benediction.

Settings, signs, and symbols: This book provides Scripture, prayers, hymns, and reflections on different aspects of creation. We encourage you to use them as starting points for your own creativity and imagination. In order for congregations to experience the fullest possible impact, we suggest that you see each liturgy in the context of its larger setting, whether it be a church, community building, city park, or empty lot. Worshipping outside in nature's cathedral would be ideal, but recognizing that this is often not possible, efforts can be made to bring the outside indoors. For Trees and Forests, Liturgy 12, for example, the sanctuary can be filled with small trees, ferns of the forest, moss, stones, and dripping water. For Oceans, Liturgy 8, sand, driftwood, dried seaweed, shells, and wave-tossed stones can be brought in. For Deserts, 13, sand and desert plants can be introduced. For Sky, 9, and Universe, 14, images of planets and stars can be projected on the ceiling and walls of darkened sanctuaries.

Incorporating actual artifacts from the environment may not always be possible, but photographs of nature in all its glory, projected throughout the church, would provide a magnificent backdrop for the liturgies in the sections God the Creator and God's Glorious Creation, 1–7, and God's Physical Universe, 8–14. Images of pain, suffering, and violence could poignantly illustrate Liturgies 32–45 in the section The Whole Creation Groaning in Travail. Just one image of a long stream of thousands of migrants struggling along as they carry babies and belongings to a checkpoint would effectively elucidate the substance of Liturgy 40, Migrants. This would enhance the

litany whose words include, “O God of all nations and peoples, you watch over a world in turmoil. Walk with us as we wait on your promise. Come, O come, Emmanuel.”

Symbolic gestures and offerings, the incorporation into each liturgy of the cultural diversity of the congregation, and especially the participation of children, all deserve careful attention. How best to do this is beyond the space limitations of this book, but it is our hope that you will enliven each liturgy with your own free-flowing ideas, passion, and creativity.

**GOD THE CREATOR AND
GOD'S GLORIOUS CREATION**

1. GOD THE CREATOR

The ancient Apostles' and Nicene Creeds both begin by affirming belief in God, "the maker of heaven and earth." Sixteen centuries later, Earth is crying out for this belief to be actualized and all of creation cherished and restored to wholeness and health.

Seek the One who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns the dusk to dawn, the day to the darkest night, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them over the land. (*Amos 5:8*)

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

How glorious you are in the triumph of the seasons. Every creature awakes to new life and joyfully sings your praises with a thousand tongues: you are the source of life, the conqueror of death. By the light of the moon nightingales sing; the plains and the woods put on their wedding garments, white as snow. Glory to you for bringing from the darkness of the earth an endless variety of colors, tastes, and scents. Glory to you for the warmth and tenderness of the world of nature. Glory to you for surrounding us with tens of thousands of your works. Glory to you for the depth of your wisdom: the whole world is a living sign of it. Glory to you; on our knees we kiss the traces of your unseen hand.

Glory to you for setting before us the dazzling light of your eternal beauty. Glory to you for the hope of the imperishable splendor of immortality. Glory to you, O Holy God, from age to age. **Amen.** (*Metropolitan Tryphon*)

CANTICLE JUDITH 16:13-16

I will sing to my God a new song:

O Lord, you are great and glorious,
wonderful in strength, invincible.

**Let all your creatures serve you,
for you spoke, and they were made.**

You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them;
there is none that can resist your voice.

**For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations with the waters;
before your glance the rocks shall melt like wax.**

But to those who fear you,
you show mercy.

**For every sacrifice as a fragrant offering is a small thing, . . .
but whoever fears the Lord is great forever.**

PSALM 147:12-18

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

**For he strengthens the bars of your gates;
he blesses your children within you.**

He grants peace within your borders;
he fills you with the finest of wheat.

**He sends out his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.**

He gives snow like wool;
he scatters frost like ashes.

**He hurls down hail like crumbs—
who can stand before his cold?**

He sends out his word, and melts them;
he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.

SCRIPTURE ISAIAH 42:5-8A, 10-12

I am the Lord God. I created the heavens like an open tent above. I made the earth and everything that grows on it. I am the source of life for all who live on this earth, so listen to what I say. I chose you to bring justice, and I am here at your side. I selected you and sent you to bring light and my promise

of hope to the nations. You will give sight to the blind; you will set prisoners free from dark dungeons. My name is the Lord! Tell the whole world to sing a new song to the Lord! Tell those who sail the ocean and those who live far away to join in the praise. Tell the tribes of the desert and everyone in the mountains to celebrate and sing. Let them announce his praises everywhere.

LITANY

O most high, omnipotent, good Lord God, to you belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing. For our brother the sun, who is our day and who brings us the light, who is fair and radiant with a very great splendor:

Praise and bless the Lord.

For our sister the moon, and for all the stars, which you have set clear and lovely in the heavens; for our brother the wind, and for air and clouds, doldrums and all weather:

Praise and bless the Lord.

For our sister water, who serves us and is humble and precious and chaste; for our brother fire, by whom you light up the night, and who is fair and merry, and very mighty and strong:

Praise and bless the Lord.

For our mother the earth, who sustains and keeps us, and brings forth various fruits, and flowers of many colors, and grass; for all who pardon one another for your love's sake, and who bear weakness and tribulation:

Praise and bless the Lord.

Blessed are they who peaceably endure, walking by your most holy will, for you, O Most High, shall give them a crown.

Praise and bless the Lord, and give thanks to God, and serve God with great humility. Amen. (*Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi*)

REFLECTION FRANCIS S. COLLINS

Scientists like me seek to understand nature using the tools of science. We ask “how” questions. But it is also clear that there are some really important “why” questions that science cannot answer, such as: Why is there something instead of nothing? Why are we here? In those domains I have found that faith provides a far better path.

But it's also true that science can point to God. A close consideration of the universe leads one to marvel at its beauty, and wonder about the source of such awesome elegance. The universe has exquisite order, physical laws that follow precise mathematical formulas, and a breathtaking fine-tuning of physical constants that allows the possibility of complexity. Contemplating this, an open-minded observer is almost forced to conclude that there must be a "mind" behind all this. And that intelligence must be outside of space and time or the Big Bang singularity makes no sense. The evidence from nature thus points to a Creator. Faced with that evidence, the purely naturalistic view I embraced in my early twenties looms like the most irrational of all choices; as Chesterton said, "Atheism is the most daring of all dogmas, since it is the assertion of a universal negative."

I have never encountered an irreconcilable conflict between the truths of science and the truths of faith. They just provide answers to different questions. God can be found in the laboratory or the cathedral. And for a believer, science can be a form of worship.

Francis S. Collins is a physician-geneticist who led the Human Genome Project. He is also the author of the best-seller The Language of God, and the founder of the BioLogos Foundation, a group that fosters discussions about the intersection of Christianity and science. He currently serves as the director of the National Institutes of Health.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND INTERCESSION

Omnipotent God, Creator and Sustainer of sacred seas, lands and skies—your loving hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature, yet we have turned against you and against your creation. We have failed to love your creation and all your creatures. We confess that we have polluted your waters and lands and soiled your heavens; we have ignored the weak and vulnerable and those who lack justice. Our thoughtlessness, passivity and greed have put all creation at the brink of extinction. We repent of our sins against you and your creation, and remembering the account that we must one day give, we vow to work to restore all that is broken, polluted and harmed with the help of Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.** (Anne Rowthorn)

Ever fashioning, ever renewing God, may we never lose our sense of awe, wonder and amazement at this universe of which we are so insignificant a part. Yet may we never be so overawed that we forget that, great as you are, and vast and intricate as are your works, you know and love each one of us, and we are ever in your care. *Amen.* (*Edmund Banyard*)

HYMN THOMAS H. TROEGER

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Night and day this planet sings:
peepers peeping in the dark,
roaring rivers, bubbling springs,
trills and fanfares from the lark.
To the richness of earth's song
add the song our voices raise,
giving witness we belong
to the God we love and praise:</p> <p>2. song whose beauty deepens prayer
with the Spirit's groans and sighs,
song that fills the very air
with joys, laments and cries,
song that echoes through our hymns,
music heard in heaven's height,
song whose gladness over-brims
with the gospel's truth and light,</p> | <p>3. song that wakens hopes and dreams,
sacred visions that inspire
the prophetic word that streams
from God's holy wind and fire,
song that strengthens those who yearn
to embody what is just,
song that helps us to discern
how to live by faith and trust,</p> <p>4. song that honors Christ who lives,
risen, risen! from the grave,
song that tells how Christ forgives
all the world he came to save,
song the morning stars first sang
when God made creation new
and the heavens rang and sang:
Praise, O Lord, O praise to you!</p> |
|---|--|

Tune: SALZBURG, 7.7.7.7.D.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.
Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy (*Psalm 98:7-8*)

SOURCES

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Anne Rowthorn, "We Repent of Our Sins against You and Your Creation," inspired by prayers for Rogation Days for Stewardship of Creation in Episcopal Church, *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), 259.

Edmund Banyard, "Ever fashioning, ever renewing . . .," in *Dare to Dream: A Prayer and Worship Anthology from around the World*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (London: Harper-Collins, 1995), 27. © Edmund Banyard. Used by permission.

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