*Consider bringing natural elements into your prayer space or gathering outside or in a room with exposure to sunlight, trees, a garden or park, etc.*

**Opening Prayer**

Let us be still in the presence of God and one another.

[*Pause*]

God of Creation, we are grateful for the gift of the Earth.
The creatures of the Earth witness to your play and creativity.
The abundance of the Earth witnesses to your ongoing care and provision.
The delicate systems of the Earth witness to your connection and harmony.
The plight of the Earth witnesses to your ongoing call to action and participation.

Loving God, we are grateful for the gift of the Earth. As we celebrate today, let us learn the lessons the Earth has to teach us and recommit to our call to care for creation as loving stewards.

**Reading One**

A reading from the Book of Job,
Job 12:7-10 (NRSVCE)

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
    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 these does not know
    that the hand of God has done this?
In God’s hand is the life of every living thing
    and the breath of every human being.

**Reading Two**

A passage from *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton

A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be it is obeying Him. It “consents,” so to speak, to God’s creative love. It is expressing an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore the tree imitates God by being a tree.

The more a tree is like itself the more it is like God. If it tried to be something else which it was never intended to be, it would be less like God and therefore would give God less glory. …

This particular tree will give glory to God be spreading out its roots into the earth and raising its branches into the light in a way that no other tree before or after it ever did or will do. …

Each particular being, in its individuality, its concrete nature, with all its own characteristics and its private qualities and its own inviolable identity, gives glory to God by being precisely what God wants it to be here and now, in the circumstances ordained for it by God’s love and God’s infinite Art. …

But what about you? What about me? …

**Reflection**

The prophet Job and Christian monk Thomas Merton call us to learn the lessons nature has to teach. From Job, it is the truth that God is the source of all life and creation belongs to the One who made it. From Merton, we find that in being what one has been created to be—all natural elements, living things, creatures and each human person—we give glory to God. In our lives, here and now, due only to the fact we are good creations of a loving God, we *are* enough.

The deep integration of these two lessons, our creation and belonging to God, coupled with the fact that we are enough as we are, could initiate a revolution for the current ecological crisis.

Recognizing our common source calls us to recognize our common dignity. We are stewards, not owners, caretakers, not lords. In neglecting to actively care for the environment, we are isolating ourselves. With so much of global climate change driven by insatiable consumption, the revelation that we *are* enough as God has created us begins to loosen the stranglehold of consumerism and the promise that our worth is proportional to our possessions.

In his 2018 Message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis speaks to these lessons and their meaning for the earth,

*It must be acknowledged that we have not succeeded in responsibly protecting creation. The environmental situation, both on the global level and in many specific places, cannot be considered satisfactory. Rightly, there is a growing sense of the need for a renewed and sound relationship between humanity and creation, and the conviction that only an authentic and integral vision of humanity will permit us to take better care of our planet for the benefit of present and future generations. For “there is no ecology without an adequate anthropology.”*

**Intercessions**

We pray in gratitude for the beauty of the Earth, the diversity of God’s creatures, and the well-being of all God’s people.

**God of Creation, hear us.**

We pray for all those working to preserve natural environments: conservationists, foresters, gardeners and all activists and advocates who work with policy makers for change.

**God of Creation, hear us.**

We pray that God opens our eyes to our connectedness with creation, that we may seek ways to protect and promote the connection of all God’s created order.

**God of Creation, hear us.**

**Closing Prayer**

God of All Creatures, renew in us a spirit of connection and love for creation as it is threatened by our greed, apathy and mindless consumption. Move us to act in such a way that we may be agents in the Earth’s renewal. Make us ever mindful that we, too, are your creatures, and in you we find life, breath and being. Amen.