

# Land Sunday

This week we reflect on our relationship with the land. Each of these texts asks us to think of the land as a character who witnesses us in our kindest and most brutal moments. They suggest that the land, which holds all the pain of the world, teaches us how to go on, how to continue growing – how to heal.

## Focus scripture: Psalm 139:7–12

Perhaps two things change when we read Psalm 139:7–12 with our minds on the land. First, when we read of being knit in a mother's womb, we recognize that earth is a kind of womb – and more than that, a full-fledged mother of the world as a whole. Just as the mythical first humans came from the earth, so too are we created by God as earth-beings. Secondly, we might also recognize that the question, “where can I go from your presence?” is also a reflection on our grounding in the land, God's building surface.

**Genesis 3:14–19; 4:8–16** The story of the Bible begins with the story of the land, whom many, including the scholar Brigitte Kah, describe as a character. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve find that their confused actions over the tree of the knowledge of good and evil have transformed their relationship with the very earth they walk. The land no longer brings forth food to Adam easily. One chapter later, Cain, Adam and Eve's son, kills their other son Abel. Here, the land comes forth as a witness, crying to God of Abel's blood in the ground. Just as the first humans have a relationship with God and the other creatures, they also have a relationship with the earth, their mother. Adam's very name means “earth-creature” in Hebrew. The first humans learn something we know well today, in the era of climate change – the land is affected by what we do. It responds to what we do.

Paul's lengthy and confusing speech on grace in **Romans 5:12–17** reminds us of the

land's central role in delivering mercy, love, and healing, despite the pain we heap upon it. Thinking back to the bloody ground that the earth testifies to in the story of Cain and Abel, it is a wonderful surprise to read of the abundant grace of God. While Paul's writing is centred in Christ, it is also implicitly centred in the land that Jesus took into his human being.

**Matthew 12:38–40** reinforces this same lesson of Earth as God's home, speaking of Jesus himself being housed for three days and nights in the earth before being resurrected. In this, the land holds both the memory of our transgressions and the grace of forgiveness. In this double role – as witness and as merciful mother – the earth teaches us that healing does not always remove scars, but is a process of growing in love and comfort.

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What does all this talk of land as a character, as a mother and a witness, mean for us today, in the era of species extinctions and climate crisis? The land surely feels and witnesses what we do, in waste dumps and on fields of war, in the rainforests that we cut down and the wetlands that we drain. The land surely knows that some bear much more suffering than others. What does the mercy of the land look like today? What would a truly just and repaired relationship look like with the land? What does the healing and mercy of the land mean for us today, and teach us as we learn the gift of healing the world?

## Season of Creation (Year A)

### Focus scripture Psalm 139:7–12

**Additional scriptures**  
**Genesis 3:14–19;**  
**4:8–16**  
**Romans 5:12–17**  
**Matthew 12:38–40**



Resources based on the  
semi-continuous

readings of the *Revised Common  
Lectionary* can be found online at  
[www.seasonsonline.ca/RCLresources](http://www.seasonsonline.ca/RCLresources).

**Creator God, we  
come before you  
today as creatures  
of the land you  
created. Earth, our  
home, cares for  
us and witnesses  
our actions, as  
you do. We pray  
to be grounded  
and guided as  
people who are  
earthly and joyful,  
practicing our  
oneness with the  
earth. Amen.**

### Lection Connection

links current events  
with this week's  
scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) and  
click on the link.

## The Focus for Ages 3–5

**M**ore and more young children are being exposed to the language of Earth care. At childcare facilities and play centres, and especially in their own homes, they may be introduced to concepts such as recycling (placing used drink containers in appropriate containers), repurposing (using household items as craft materials), reducing waste (using both sides of the paper to draw on), and composting.

During the Season of Creation we will also be using some of these words and trying

to put into practice some of the ideas of Earth care. We can help build the children's vocabularies and awareness and indeed foster this sense of responsibility.

The story this week is told from the perspective of the land. The refrain echoes the theme of the focus psalm, that God is everywhere. The children are challenged to think about how they could help care for gardens and the land. Pray that the children will sense the sacredness of land and feel a sense of God's presence as they care for Earth.

## Prepare

### Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Psalm 139:7–12, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 9).
- ❑ Set a worship space with aqua cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 9), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 9), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).

### Gather

- ❑ Add to the "Creation corner" (see ideas on resource sheet "[Ideas for the Season of Creation](#)," p. 77).
- ❑ Bring "Welcome song" (on resource sheet "[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 76) or "I Feel God around Me" (p. 18 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #20, *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).
- ❑ Bring wilted plant; option: bring a puppet (see information p. 2).

### Engage

- ❑ Bring length of brown fabric and resource sheet "[Land's Story](#)."

- ❑ Option: set a space using ideas on resource sheet "[Ideas for the Season of Creation](#)" (p. 77).
- ❑ Bring sheet of poster board, last week's green construction paper with picture for Forest Sunday, brown construction paper, and picture for Land Sunday from poster [Storytelling Resources #1](#).
- ❑ Bring an Earth ball, or a large beach or playground ball.

### Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Litter bag:** small used paper bags, string or yarn
- ❑ **Snack:** fruit and/or vegetables, sunflower seeds, berries
- ❑ **Mud play:** resource sheet "[Mud Play](#)," waterproof smocks, clean-up supplies; choose one or more activities and bring items needed.

### Bless

- ❑ Bring "Parting poem" (on resource sheet "[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 76) or song, "We Thank You, God" (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #22 *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).
- ❑ Bring copies of "[Letter to Families](#)" (p. 75).

For groups consisting mostly of three-year-olds, supplemental resources can be downloaded from the Library at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).  
user name: spirit  
password: child



## Scripture

Psalm 139:7–12

# Land Sunday

**FOCUS** To affirm God's presence everywhere in creation

## Gather

**Welcome** each child, saying "Hello, *(child's name)*, we're happy you're here." Encourage children to explore the items in the "Creation corner," adding any items they have brought. Invite them to each choose an item to bring to the worship space.

### Opening ritual

**Gather** around the worship space. Say,

**There are many wonderful things in the world!**

*(Invite children to place their items on the table one at a time.)*

**God sees so many special things** *(touch each item).*

**We are all special to God** *(name all children and self).*

**This colour reminds us of the blue-green colour of planet Earth** *(point to the aqua cloth).*  
**The Bible is a book of stories about God and of people who loved God** *(point to Bible).*  
**This candle reminds us that God is with us** *(light the candle).*

**Sing** "Welcome song" (p. 76) or, if possible, "I Feel God around Me" (p. 18 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #20, *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

**Pray** Thank you, God,  
 for your wonderful world.  
 Thank you that we can be  
 with our friends here today. Amen.

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

### Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

#### ☐ Puppet conversation

**Priscilla:** Good morning, everybody. Yesterday I noticed that the plants in our garden were looking droopy.

**Leader:** It sounds like the plants were thirsty, Priscilla. What did you do?

**Priscilla:** My father turned on the water and I got to hold the hose to spray on the garden. Children, what else can people do to look after a garden? *(Encourage responses.)*

**Leader:** Those are good ideas. I wonder what a garden would say to us if it could talk. *(Encourage responses.)* Today we have a story about some land. *(Say goodbye to Priscilla.)*

☐ **Caring for plants** Invite children to look at the wilted plant and imagine it could talk to them. What would it say? *(Encourage responses.)*

## Engage

### Before the story

Invite children to help you unfurl a large brown cloth (or move to the land setting that you have created). As the children gather on the cloth say, "Welcome to an imaginary piece of land." Invite

them to imagine a big outside area, with rocks and plants growing nearby, insects crawling on the ground, and a big hill in the distance. Say, "Let's listen *(cup ears)*. I think the Land is talking to us."

## The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[Land's Story](#)" to tell the story, encouraging children to participate as indicated. Then place the sheet of brown construction paper in the middle of the group and invite a child to help glue on the picture for Land Sunday. Ask, "What makes the land happy?" Help the children to name things such as picking up litter, watering plants, and other ways to care for the land and write these words around the picture. Look at last week's picture of the Forest and talk about ways to look after the forests too. Glue both pictures onto a sheet of poster board and display in the meeting space.

## After the story

**Game** Sit in a circle. Hold up the ball and invite children to imagine that this is the planet Earth. Talk about how beautiful the planet is, with the land, the oceans, the forests, and the rivers. Play some music as they children pass "Earth" around the circle. When the music stops the child holding the ball will cuddle it and name one way that people can care for the Land. Explain that it is ok to repeat someone's idea, or to ask others to help with suggestions. After each suggestion, all children call out, "And that's a way to love God's Land!"

## Respond

Choose from the following activities:

- ☐ **Litter bag** We show we care for Land by keeping it clean. Distribute small paper bags and invite children to use markers or crayons to decorate their bags with pictures of flowers, trees, and animals. Help children fold over the tops of their bags, punch holes on one side, and loop a piece of string or yarn through the holes and tie. Encourage them to hang their bags in a car or on a bike to collect litter.
- ☐ **Mud play** Soil is a basic element of Land. It allows us to develop an appreciation for the



environment as we experience its diversity. Give each child a waterproof smock and explain the chosen activity (activities) from the resource sheet "[Mud Play](#)." Enjoy playing together with this very special element of Land.

- ☐ **Snack** Land provides lots of good things for us to eat. Serve a snack of items that come directly from nature (fruit, vegetables, seeds). As you share the different foods talk together about how each item was grown and harvested.



## Bless

**Gather** in the worship space and light the candle.

**Pray** Thank you, God, for land.

Thank you for the grass between our toes,  
for the dirt beneath our nails,  
for the warmth of the earth under us.

Help us to always care for the land. Amen.

**Blessing** Lead the group in the action poem, "[Parting poem](#)" (p. 76) or in singing the song, "We

Thank You, God" (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #22 *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

**Send** each child out with the words, "(Child's name), God is everywhere, in you and me, and in the land all around us."

Distribute copies of the "[Letter to Families](#)" (p. 75) for newcomers to take home.

## Reflect

What evidence did you see that children see themselves as a part of God's creation? What did they teach you about caring for the land?

**Story Tip**

When using a refrain, signal that it's time to say the refrain by making a gesture to the children, such as holding out your arms. This decreases the sense of interruption from the story.

# Land's Story

*(Before starting the story, invite children to practice the refrain by gesturing outwards and exclaiming, "God is everywhere!")*

In the beginning, God made me – Land.

*"God is everywhere!"*

On me, God built huge mountains and poured refreshing lakes.

*"God is everywhere!"*

In me, God planted tall trees and beautiful flowers and delicious vegetables to eat.

*"God is everywhere!"*

God gave sun to warm me, and rain to cool me.

*"God is everywhere!"*

God made animals, and insects, and people to enjoy me.

*"God is everywhere!"*

One day, a family came to share a meal on me. The father spread a blanket on the ground and the grandmother took food out of a basket. The children ran on me, their feet tickling me gently as they played.

*"God is everywhere!"*

When the people finished their meal, they threw a ball to each other. I loved hearing their laughter as they played. I felt happy!

*"God is everywhere!"*

When the people left, they gathered their blanket and their picnic basket and walked away. But they forgot some things. The boy had left a plastic bag on me. The girl had forgotten a juice container on me. The father didn't take his newspaper with him and the grandmother left her chocolate wrapper on me. I felt so sad.

Then another family came to play on me. They noticed the plastic bag, the juice container, the newspaper, and the chocolate wrapper. This family picked up the litter and put it into a bag to take away. They recycled the newspaper and the juice container. Now I felt happy!

*"God is everywhere!"*

Once again I was able to enjoy the playful jumping of children and the warm sun on me.

*"God is everywhere!"*



# Mud Play

Mud is one of the most basic elements of Land. It allows us to develop an appreciation for the environment as we experience its diversity. Mud can be a way of exploring with several of our senses at the same time. Mud can be an art medium – one that we can mould, dry, and decorate. Unlike many other media, mud permits us to make mistakes. We can experiment repeatedly, remoulding and reshaping it.

## *Here are some suggestions for playing and experimenting with mud...*

### **Mud painting**

Mix dirt with water to a desired consistency. Use paintbrushes to paint mud onto stiff paper. As an option, add small stones, feathers, leaves, or other natural items to this painting. (Be sure to wash out paintbrushes well at the end of this activity.)

### **Fingerpainting**

Place a large spoonful of thick mud in the middle of each large sheet of shiny finger-painting paper (or wallpaper sheet). Encourage children to feel the grit or smoothness of the mud as they explore this wonderful texture.

### **Mud making**

Bring in an extra-large container of dirt. Children could help sift it to remove stones, twigs, leaves, and other items. (Set the nature items aside to use later.) In an old plastic dishpan, or similar container, help the children stir the dirt with water, starting with a combination of three parts dirt to two parts water and adjusting the amounts as necessary. Invite the children to explore the mud with their hands and fingers: How does it feel? What does it look like? Sound like? Smell like?

### **Mud table**

If you have access to a sand or water table, mix these two elements together. Invite the children to compare the differences between the dry sand and the wet sand. What toys work best with dry sand? Wet sand? How does the dry sand feel? How does the wet sand feel?

### **Baking with mud**

Use mud as a “batter” for all kinds of delicacies! Bring in some baking pans. Encourage the children to pretend to make muffins, cakes, and of course, pies. They might use small stones or leaves to “decorate” their creations.

### **Mud prints**

Invite children to place their mud-covered hands or feet on a clean sheet of paper or large plain bedsheet to make impressions. Option: add glue to the mixture before making handprints on the paper.

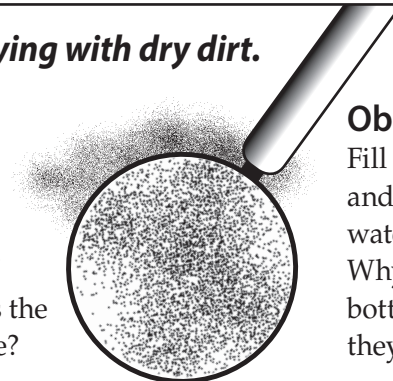
### **Mud balls**

Use very thick mud and shape it into balls by rolling the “dough” in the hands. Decorate the balls with flowers, leaves, rocks, or small twigs. Stack the mud balls on top of each other to create a unique sculpture.

## *If mud play isn't a possibility, try playing with dry dirt.*

### **Exploring dirt**

Cover a table with newspaper and spread a bucket of dirt on it. Give the children small sifters and magnifying glasses to use for examining the dirt. Can they see any parts of plants, stones, or rocks in the dirt? What does the dirt look like? What does it feel and smell like?



### **Observing dirt in water**

Fill a clear jar partway with dirt and water. Stir up the dirt and water and notice what happens. Why is the dirt sinking to the bottom? What would happen if they stirred it up again?

# Letter to Families

Welcome to the second half of the *Season after Pentecost*, the longest season of the church year, which began the week after Pentecost Sunday (June 7) and ends on November 22, the Sunday before Advent.

**During September** we celebrate the *Season of Creation*. During these four weeks children will be exploring stories about creation on the themes of Forests, Land, Wilderness/Outback, and Rivers. Care for creation will be emphasized as we invite the children to learn more about God's amazing world. The following song can be sung as you go for a walk through your neighbourhood or in your imaginations. Invite children to add verses that speak of trees and the creatures that live in the forests, the flowers growing in the soil of gardens, the plants and animals you might find in a wilderness or outback area, and the activities you could do on or beside a river. What else could you do together to honour, explore, and celebrate creation?

**Singing game** (tune: "Do You Know the Muffin Man?")

As you sing the song you can invite children to make up some actions for each verse.

Can you see the tall pine tree, the big gum tree, the shady tree?

Can you see the many trees, growing in the forest?

Can you see the flowers that bloom, the corn so high, the green, green grass?

Can you see the many plants, growing in the land?

Can you see the smooth, smooth sand, the great big rocks, the stripy snake?

Can you feel the bright hot sun, in the wilderness?

Can you see the fish that swim, the frogs that jump, the bugs that skate?

Can you see the water that swirls, as it flows in the river?

In October and November, we move into the last half of the *Season after Pentecost*. During October, children will hear stories from the book of Exodus about Moses and his leadership of the Hebrew people. In November, the children will hear some of Jesus' stories and parables about living in God's way, recorded in Matthew 23 and 25. The following action poem can help them remember that they are always surrounded by God's love.

Where do we see God? (*Shrug shoulders.*)

Let's look all around. (*Shade eyes with hand.*)

God's love is there, shining through,  
in me (*point to self*) and in you (*point to others*).

Where do we find God? (*Shrug shoulders.*)

Let's look all around. (*Shade eyes with hand.*)

God's love can be found,  
the whole wide world around (*spread arms wide*).

We will be praying for your child during these weeks. We ask that you and your child pray for us as well as we prepare for and lead the sessions each week. May these months be ones of growth and discovery for your child and your family.

Blessings,

**Suggested resources:** *The Family Story Bible* and *Family Story Bible Colouring Book*, illustrated by Margaret Kyle, or *The Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*. For older children, *Read, Wonder, Listen: Stories from the Bible for Young Readers*. Both are available from the publisher of *Seasons of the Spirit* at [www.woodlakebooks.com](http://www.woodlakebooks.com).



# Additional Songs and Poems

## Welcome song

(tune: "London Bridges")

Welcome, welcome, we are here!  
Clap your hands! Shout a cheer!  
We'll sing and pray and learn today,  
to live and grow in God's good way.

## Parting poem

Where do we see God? (*Shrug shoulders.*)  
Let's look all around. (*Shade eyes with hand.*)  
God's love is there, shining through,  
in me (*point to self*) and in you (*point to others*).

Where do we find God? (*Shrug shoulders.*)  
Let's look all around. (*Shade eyes with hand.*)  
God's love can be found,  
the whole wide world around (*spread arms wide*).

## God Is with Us

(tune: "B-I-N-G-O")

God's with me and (*point to self*).  
God's with you and (*point to another*).  
God is with us always (*make a circle with arms*).  
Yes, yes, when we love (*clap for each word*),  
Yes, yes, when we care (*clap for each word*),  
Yes, yes, when we help (*clap for each word*),  
God's with us every day (*place hands over heart*).

## Gathering song

(tune: "Jesus Loves Me")

Thank you for this lovely day (*arms held wide*).  
Thank you for the ways to pray (*hand together*).  
Thank you for the friends we see (*wave to each other*).  
Thank you for your love for me (*hug self*).  
Yes, God, we thank you (*hands out, palms up*).  
Yes, God, we thank you (*hands out, palms up*).  
Yes, God, we thank you (*hands out, palms up*).  
We thank you every day (*hands over heart*).

## Blessing song

(tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

Now let's go out to share God's love,  
share God's love, share God's love.  
Every day, in every way,  
let's share God's love with all.  
(Repeat if desired, substituting the last line with phrases, such as "Let's be a friend to all" or "Let's show our care for all" or "Let's try and help someone.")

## Shout It Out

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Share, share, share God's love,  
share God's love today.  
Shout it out and tell your friends,  
God's love is here to stay!

## Ten Young Bridesmaids

(Start by holding up 10 fingers. Put one finger down as each bridesmaid runs out of oil.)

- 10 young bridesmaids with lamps burning fine.  
One ran out of oil and then there were 9.
- 9 young bridesmaids said, "The bridegroom is late."  
One ran out of oil and then there were 8.
- 8 young bridesmaids said, "Now it's past eleven."  
One ran out of oil and then there were 7.
- 7 young bridesmaids, with brightly burning wicks.  
One ran out of oil and then there were 6.
- 6 young women asked, "When will he arrive?"  
One ran out of oil and then there were 5.
- 5 young bridesmaids, standing in the room.  
"Finally he's coming! Here comes the groom."
- 5 young bridesmaids with lamps burning bright,  
went to the wedding and shared their light.

Just like the bridesmaids, we make choices, too.  
We can let our lights shine depending on what we do.



# Ideas for the Season of Creation

## Creation corner

For the four weeks of the Season of Creation create a “nature corner” with items for the children to explore each week. Encourage children to search for items from nature during the week and bring some items to contribute to the collection.

💧 Cover a small table or cardboard box with a length of aqua material and place in a corner of the meeting space.

🌿 Gather a variety of items from nature (such as feathers, seashells, stones, pinecones, leaves, gum nuts, seed pods, twigs, sand, bowl of water, small potted plant) and arrange on the table or box.

👥 Ensure that there are more items than the number of children in the group.

🔄 If possible, add to the collection each week to keep it interesting.

## Story setting

During the Season of Creation, each story will be told from the perspective of one aspect of creation. Creating a story stage each week can help set the scene and encourage children to hear that week’s “voice of creation.” Invite children to help place a large piece of fabric on the floor before the story time each week: green for Forest Sunday, brown for Land Sunday, grey or white for Wilderness/Outback Sunday, and blue for River Sunday.

Children are tactile and sensory learners, so if you have a large meeting space, consider creating a more elaborate setting each week. Here are some suggestions:

## Forest Sunday

- Cover furniture or a wall with green fabric. Place brown fabric on the ground.
- Play a CD of birdcalls or nature sounds.
- Mount pictures of forests and trees or of forest creatures.
- Scatter a variety of natural items (such as pinecones, seed pods, leaves, pine needles, branches, sticks, bark, seedlings, dirt, feathers, roots, lichen, gumnuts) in the area surrounding the children.
- Bring soft toy animals of forest creatures (such as wolf, bear, fox, squirrel, kookaburra, wombat).

## Land Sunday

- Cover a section of the floor with brown, tan, beige, or yellow fabric.
- Bring potted plants, soil, watering can.
- Mount pictures of plants, soil, worms, grass, animals that burrow in the soil.
- Place a picnic blanket where you might sit to enjoy the story.
- Scatter some scarring elements (such as recycled crumpled newspaper, clean snack wrappers, clean drink containers, clean plastic bags) in the area surrounding the children.

## Wilderness/Outback Sunday

- Cover a section of the floor with grey fabric.
- Bring a sand tray (a baking sheet with sand).
- Bring rocks or gravel displayed in low containers.
- Mount pictures of desert scenes, outback scenes, rocky terrain.

## River Sunday

- Cover a section of the floor with blue fabric.
- Display a fishing net and other fishing accessories attractively on the walls and floor.
- Bring an aquarium with live or plastic fish.
- Bring a basin of water with rocks scattered on the bottom.
- Mount pictures of rivers, waterfalls, and streams.
- Play a CD of water sounds (waves crashing, river flowing).

