



Genesis 3:14–19; 4:8–16
Psalm 139:7–12
 the focus in age-level materials
Romans 5:12–17
Matthew 12:38–40



Resources based on semi-continuous readings of the *Revised Common Lectionary* can be found in the RCL folder.

Land Sunday

The Season of Creation offers intentional time to consider the role of all creation in Bible stories and in our lives, and to remember that humans are just one part of the ever-unfolding story of God's creation.

This week's texts call us to reconnect with our special relationship with Land, Earth, with whom we have an intimate relationship some people take for granted. How will we sit with Land, enjoy their company, hear their story, and find ourselves invited into the worship of Creator with them?

Genesis 3:14–19; 4:8–16 The Bible begins with the story of Land, whom many, including the scholar Brigitte Kahl, 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 Earth. Land no longer gives food to Adam easily. Adam and Eve's son Cain kills their other son Abel. Here, Land comes forth as a witness, crying to God of Abel's blood. Just as the first humans have a relationship with God and the other creatures, they also have a relationship with 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, we can hurt or heal Land with our actions.

Psalm 139:7–12 In keeping with the world view of the time, the psalmist thought of the cosmos as a vast domed stadium. Pillars held up flat Earth and beneath Earth was an underworld known as Sheol. The dome separated the sky from heaven, the dwelling place of God. This ancient understanding of geography is reflected in the psalm: "If I ascend to heaven...if I descend to Sheol...if I settle at the farthest limits of the sea."

Human understanding of reality is constantly evolving. We share the psalmist's appreciation of the mysterious, all-pervasive presence of the divine in creation, and with the psalmist might ask, "Where can I flee from your presence? Where can I go from your spirit?"

I am Land, earth from which all Earth children arise. Holy One, I and my Earth-kin rejoice at your holiness, your loveliness, and your generous invitation to partner with your creative Spirit in bringing life to its fullness and flourishing.

This week's psalm, with its attention to geography, invites us to hear Land speak. We imagine Land praying the psalmist's prayer and thus open ourselves to listen to the voice of Land. The logic of the psalmist is clear; there is no place any creature can flee, not even Land itself, where the creative love of God will not find us. Hearing from Land can open the possibility of a relationship between people and Land that is mutually healing and holy.

Paul's lengthy and confusing speech on grace in **Romans 5:12–17** reminds us of Land's central role in delivering mercy, love, and healing, despite the pain we heap upon it. Thinking back to the bloody ground to which Land testifies in the story of Cain and Abel, it is a wonderful surprise to read of God's abundant grace. While Paul's writing is centred in Christ, it is also implicitly centred in Land, who Jesus took into his human being.

Matthew 12:38–40 identifies the religious leaders of the day asking Jesus for a sign to confirm his status, presence, and relationship to God. The gospel writer's images of Jonah going into the belly of the whale and Jesus going into the heart of Land call up ancient wisdom that says the way through our troubles is to go into them. Jonah's journey into the belly of the whale and Jesus' journey into the heart of Earth conclude with life renewed or resurrection.

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



Jesus and the Land

The relationship between the people of the land and the Creator will again and again remind us that there were many examples of Indigenous people who, seeing the invisible attributes made plain around them in Creation, gave thanks to the Creator, just as the writer of epistle to the Romans points out: “For [Creator’s] invisible attributes ... have been clearly perceived ever since the Creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Romans 1:20, ESV). (Although I am not sure this is the best passage because the writer of Romans seems to assume that no one gets the right understanding about Creator.) I like the story of Abram and Melchizedek (also sometimes transliterated as Melchisedech or Malki Tzedek), found in Genesis 14:18–20. Here is a person who knows the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even before there is an Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Melchizedek is an Indigenous priest who is in the land, even before Abraham is in the land. Again, Indigenous people understand the Creator who inhabits the world and now has come close in the Jesus who takes a body, or should I say is given a body, by Mary.

That Jesus was in the land is important for the First Peoples, because it fits with the idea that the land was sacred. Sacred,

as anthropologists and other academics use the term, refers to something that is not ordinary or profane but has special or sacred status. This division can work, but not quite the way that it works in some Western churches. In the Western church, they make something sacred and then it is always sacred and must be kept from the profane. It seems to be thought that if something profane touches the sacred it becomes “unsacred” or ordinary. Indigenous people have preferred to regard all things as sacred because at any point in time Creator could do something powerful within Creation, and that powerful working makes a place sacred. Often, we journey to these sacred places because something powerful happened there. Indigenous peoples, then, in anticipation of Creator doing something powerful, maintain an attitude of awe and anticipation, trying to understand the movement that is all around us and within which we live our lives. The journey upon the land, then, is put into stories, songs, and Ceremonies that remind us and help us to understand the journey upon the earth. When the story of Jesus was preached, the story of his coming was taken into our stories and into the Indigenous Christ tabernacles; he sets up his tent in our midst.”

“Jesus, the Land, and the Journey” in Our Home and Treaty Land: walking our creation story, by Matthew Anderson and Raymond Aldred. Copyright © 2022 Raymond Aldred and Matthew Anderson, Wood Lake Publishing Inc. Used by permission.



Life within Which I Live

Based on Psalm 139:7–12

Land addresses Creator in prayer:

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I escape your presence?

If my particles fly to the heavens,
you are there.
In my depths of rock and sediment,
you are there.

If grains fly on the feet and wings
of butterflies, bees, and birds,
or wash from seashore to ocean bed
with the tides,
even there, your hand leads me,
your hand holds me tight.

If I say, "Night frightens me,
seems to smother me,
the light of Sun and Moon and Stars
has left me all alone,"
even fear does not frighten you,
for you see Night's beauty as clearly as Day's.

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Nowhere can I be without you.

Thank you, Creator, Life in which I live,
Light by which I see.
Amen.

A recording of this story is available in
MP3 format in the Audio Stories folder.



Bible story

Materials

- Recording of today's story "[Life within Which I Live](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story
- Paper or drawing pads
- Basic supplies

The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story "Life within Which I Live."
2. Using the materials provided, respond to Land's song.
 - **What colour do you feel in the hope in Land's song?**
 - **How might lines and shapes dance across your page because God is there?**



Story and activities for the very young to use in church or at home.

God Is with Us Everywhere

A story based on Psalm 139:7–12

God is always present with us anywhere on Earth,
even in the skies.

We can go to the North Pole or the South Pole, or any
continent and...

God is there.

You can find any place on a map and know that...

God is there.

We can't hide from God.

God looks after us and cares for us.

God guides us, and we feel as comfortable as
we would if someone was cuddling us.

God's Spirit is like the gusts of wind.

It goes everywhere, blowing goodness throughout
the universe.

God's Spirit plays hide and seek with us.

God peeks through the clouds.

God hides below the ocean floor.

God is in the green spaces of the land,
in the land where it seems nothing will grow.

We can't weigh or measure God.

We can't put a fence around God and keep God in.

God is with us now and will be with us always,
whatever may happen to us.

If you are sitting down, lying down, or walking
around...

God is there.

If we make mistakes and do things that are wrong,
however, we feel...

God is there.

When you look up in the sky and see the moon and
the stars...

God is there.

God is with us everywhere.

Take a Closer Look

You will need strainers, magnifying glasses, spoons,
newsprint or copy paper, and soil.

Directions

1. Look at the soil through a magnifying glass. What can you see?
2. Use the strainer to sift the soil onto the newsprint and examine what is left in the strainer. You may find all kinds of things, such as small stones, berries, twigs, moss, seeds, and pieces of bird feathers.
3. List all the things you discover.
4. Look at the sifted soil through a magnifying glass. How does it look different?
5. Touch the soil and rub it between your fingers, listen to the sound as it moves on the paper, and smell it.
6. What happens when you press some soil between your fingers?



I Can Care for the Land, Too

The land is important for all sorts of little creatures and every person. We need healthy land to grow food. Sometimes we do not look after the land. Sometimes people poison the land with litter. This hurts the land, plants, animals, and people, too.

Every person, whether you are an adult or a child, can help care for the land.

What are some ways that you can help care for the land?
(Pick up litter, help start a mulch, start an earthworm farm...)

1. Place your hand on the paper.
2. Spread your fingers.
3. Trace around your hand.
4. In each of your fingers, draw or write one thing you can do to help care for the land.
5. In the palm of the hand you have traced, draw a picture of what the land can look like when we care for it.

