# In Truth and Action A Service for Earth Day

### Hymn Suggestions

VU 227 “For the Fruit of All Creation”

VU 242 “Let All Things Now Living”

VU 331 “The Church’s One Foundation”

VU 481 “Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

VU 515 “Holy Spirit, Source of Love”

VU 678 “For the Healing of the Nations”MV 3 “River”

MV 139 “True Faith Needs No Defence”

MV 144 “Like a Healing Stream”

MV 163 “River Running in You and Me”

## Gathering

### Call to Worship

We are one flock,

**we are called to be one in community.**

We have boldness before God

**because we know we are loved and known**

and so, in the same, way let us love each other, siblings and cousins.

**not only in word or speech**

but in truth and action—let us join together as one flock to worship the one God. **Amen.**

### Prayer of Approach

**Holy One, Heart of Creation,**

**you know us and call us into bold service.**

**We come together this day to celebrate your creation,**

**the beautiful streams that surround us and provide us with food and water,**

**and that are often the centre of our communities.**

**We come to hear hard stories of where our still waters have been lost, communities broken.**

**Open our hearts to hear the cries of our family, of partners in Canada and abroad**

**so that we may be empowered to act in love for one another.**

**For you are our shepherd, who leads us toward green pastures. Amen.**

### Prayer of Confession

**Holy One,**

**we are blessed to live in a land of plentiful natural resources.**

**We are blessed to have rules of law that protect our human dignity.**

**We recognize that these blessings are not extended to others,**

**we recognize that our privilege allows us to exploit others.**

**We recognize that, in this country and overseas,**

**mining has allowed us to reap the rewards of natural resources**

**while also harming your creation and fracturing communities.**

**We recognize the harm caused by our want for more.**

**Heal us in our desire for ever more resources;**

**forgive those times when we do not speak up against injustice,**

**and embolden us to be agents of your change in this world.**

**For the building of the kin-dom, Amen.**

### Assurance of Pardon

Scripture assures us, The Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want (Psalm 23).

“Whenever our hearts condemn us…God is greater than our hearts, and…knows everything” (1 John 3:20).

As a shepherd cares for scattered sheep, our God cares, forgives us, and calls us into community.

Members of the one flock—we are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Listening

### Scripture

Acts 4:5–12

Psalm 23

1 John 3:16–24

John 10:11–18

## Responding

### Sermon

On August 4, 2014, 26 billion litres of waste water containing dangerous chemicals poured into local waterways and one of the world’s deepest freshwater lakes. Quesnel Lake, in central British Columbia, birthing waters of salmon and an important tributary of the Fraser River watershed, was irreparably changed when the dam at the Mount Polley Mine broke in the middle of the night.

“For as long as I can remember, the waters of B.C.’s Quesnel Lake played an important role in my community,” said Jacinda Mack, coordinator of First Nations Women Advocating Responsible Mining. “We fished for trout and swam in its depths, camped along its shores and picked berries and medicines in the surrounding Cariboo Mountains. The entire time, we were sharing our Xat’sull language and culture with our children.” Jacinda’s community has been devastated by the mine waste spill and the ongoing contamination of the water through mine activities. Despite calls from affected communities, church groups, and environmental organizations, there has been no accountability or justice for the people, for the animals, for all life living near Quesnel Lake.

Seven thousand kilometres away, Indigenous Lenca communities in Honduras are fighting to stop a mega-dam from being built on the sacred Gualcarque River. Berta Caceres was their leader when on March 2, 2016, she was shot and killed in her home for her outspoken voice of dissent. Berta worked tirelessly to protect a river and a way of life at risk. The Gualcarque River provides Berta’s community with food and drinking water, and Berta’s murder sent a clear message to anyone standing up to protect the earth that they were in danger.

The lone witness to her murder said, “Our dream is to build a different world, to generate life amid so much violence and death, but they do not even allow us to do that.” Surely Berta, and her community, were walking in the most fearsome valleys in the days and months before her murder. As an outspoken and committed woman leader, she had been defamed, criticized, and threatened, yet her struggle for the earth and the sacred water continued; evil surrounded her, yet she walked proudly in the footsteps of her ancestors, listening and answering the call of Creator to protect life.

April 22 is Earth Day. It’s a day to remember and care for the earth. It’s also a day for action and justice. There’s a common chorus in Latin American hymns, “God is not in heaven. God is in our brothers and sisters.” We know this from 1 John 3:16–18: “We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

Berta laid down her life for her kin; her death is remembered as the day her seed was sown to be reborn in a million others who would live by her example. She wasn’t only fighting for the river sacred to her people, but for all rivers and lakes. “Wake up humanity!” she said as she received the Goldman Environmental Prize the year before she was killed. “There is no time left.”

Sister Streams was a movement created by the communities impacted by the Mount Polley Mine disaster to remember and honour our waters, to pray for justice and their safekeeping. August 4 is a day to remember that we have only one planet and we, as guardians of the earth, must protect it. As we struggle to respond to the call to be people of faith, caretakers of the earth and each other, let our discomfort challenge us to use our voice for the voiceless, the trees, the waters and the mountains, like Berta and Jacinda. This Earth Day, as we walk on new grass and the abundance of life and promise blooms all around us, let us work together to protect Mother Earth, our common home. Let us defend her and keep her, honouring the sacrifices that so many have made for us and doing our part to live the vision of Jesus for a world of peace with justice.

### Offering

### Prayers of the People

**Creator, Shepherd who laid down his life for love of us,**

**be with us in the light of the violence in our world.**

**Be with the families of El Estor, Guatemala;**

**as they continue to fight for justice in the shootings**

**that killed Aldofo Ich, and paralyzed German Chub.**

**Shootings related to Canadian mining overseas.**

**Be with the families who relied on the gifts of Lake Quensel**

**which was decimated when the tailings dam burst at Mount Polley Mine**

**in central British Columbia, releasing a 26 billion litres of mine waste into Polley Lake, Hazeltine Creek, and Quesnel Lake—headwaters and spawning grounds of the Fraser River watershed.**

**May their stories and ongoing court proceedings,**

**cause our country and our world to rethink**

**our treatment of Indigenous peoples**

**and our mining practices overseas and at home.**

**Help us to discern the best way forward,**

*(the following are Maritime examples, you are encouraged to use examples from your own context)*

**for the Sisson Brook Mine,**

**for Kellys Mountain,**

**and for all mining here and abroad.**

**That we may truly understand the blessings**

**we have received from the earth,**

**and use it wisely.**

**We pray for miners,**

**for those who put their lives at risk**

**on the job of providing us with resources from the earth.**

**We pray for land defenders,**

**for those who question the status quo.**

**May we show compassion and love to both.**

**We ask it in Christ’s name,**

**our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.**

—United for Mining Justice (UfMJ) is a network of United Church of Canada folks and allies working towards a just extractive sector laws and practices, for an accountable Canadian mining industry, and for local and national jurisdiction over mineral resources. Our vision is a society where people’s traditions, values and rights are respected.