

# Marquand Reader

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## **Celebrating the Earth in Worship**

Earth Day (April 22) is a secular holiday—like Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Coming Out Day—that is observed on an annual basis by our worshiping community. But Earth Day has deeply theological undertones, with its emphasis on being caretakers of the earth—our mission of protecting and serving God’s creation. Consider the following introduction to a National Council of Churches’ liturgy for Earth Day, specifically about the quality of our air. Note specifically how it incorporates environmental facts with theological premises—this is a good example of how Christians can recognize and celebrate Earth Day:

God created the world and declared it good. Creation contains many delicate balances including those within our atmospheric system. The sun’s rays enter the atmosphere, warm our planet and provide us with energy and food. The atmosphere acts as a blanket trapping much of the sun’s warmth, permitting only some heat to escape back into space. Without this blanket of gases, including carbon dioxide, much of life on earth would not survive. God has called human beings to the tasks of restoring and protecting creation—maintaining the delicate balances of God’s world. Since the industrial revolution began, human activity has had a huge impact on the natural environment. Industrialization has been fueled by the burning of natural gas and petroleum which releases large amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere. Consequently, human beings are creating a thicker atmospheric blanket as we continue to add emissions from automobiles, power plants, and industry. More of the sun’s rays are being trapped. This is warming the earth causing climate changes. Scientists predict a significant change in climate in the next century if fuel usage continues at present rates. The consequences of accelerated climate change have already begun. They include drought, above-normal temperatures in some parts of the world, heavier than normal rain and snow storms in other areas resulting in flooding and land erosion, and a rise in sea level causing deterioration of coastal regions and islands. People living in wealthier areas of the world such as the United States, are the primary consumers of fossil fuels. However, those who are seeing the earliest and most severe effects of climate change are those living in the poorer regions of the world such as Bangladesh, the Marshall Islands, and parts of Africa. The hope of the world is that God, through Jesus Christ, is redeeming and transforming all of creation. As Colossians 1:20 states, “God is pleased to reconcile to [Godself] all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” The church is called to participate in God’s transformation of creation. Congregations and individuals have found ways they can address the challenges of climate change including: turning off lights and appliances to reduce their use of electricity and energy, choosing public transportation instead of single occupancy vehicles, and sharing their concerns about the environment with their neighbors, leaders of industries and their legislators. But first of all, Christians are praying—praying for wisdom and strength to help restore and protect the wonderful gift of creation.

Please join us this Friday, April 22, as the final community Eucharist of the year falls on Earth Day, and we gather around the communion table (outside, weather permitting) one final time to celebrate the gifts of God's creation in bread and wine!

### **Difficult Texts Series This Week**

Please join us this week for the ninth and final installment of the Marquand Chapel Difficult Texts Series. This week, Professor Carolyn Sharp will preach on Exodus 15:1-7, in which Moses and the Israelites give praise to God for destroying the Egyptians.

### **How Was it For You?**

This Friday at 12.30 in the ISM Great Hall, there will be an open community discussion of worship in Marquand. Come join Siobhan and Patrick in evaluating the year that (nearly) was.

### **A Look Ahead: The Next Two Weeks' Services**

*Please join over the next two weeks for the following services at 10:30 a.m.:*

Monday, April 18: 3<sup>rd</sup>-year M.Div. student Erika Jones will preach.

Tuesday, April 19: the ninth and final Difficult Texts Series service will feature Professor Carolyn Sharp preaching on Exodus 15:1-7.

Wednesday, April 20: sung morning prayer continues—the final week!

Thursday, April 21: graduating student Alison Branco Tichy will preach, with special music from the gospel choir.

Friday, April 22: the chapel team leads a community Eucharist service in honor of Earth Day, with Dale Peterson presiding.

*All who gather for worship are welcome at the communion table in Marquand Chapel.*

Monday, April 25: graduating students Jennifer Creswell and Ian Doescher will preach.

Friday, April 22: Siobhán Garrigan and Patrick Evans will lead the final chapel service of the academic year, with special music from Cece Jones and the Bible Belters.

**Reminder: the last day of chapel coincides with the last day of classes: Tuesday, April 26**

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The *Marquand Reader* is written by Siobhán Garrigan and Ian Doescher.