**Order of service for the**

**Ecumenical Day of Creation**

**2023**

**That you may have life in abundance**

**Foreword**

In many of our member churches, confession or a confessional talk plays an important role. The penitents experience freedom from the burden of sin, but the person hearing confession is at the same time confronted with a multitude of problems in today's world. This school of suffering has been called one of the greatest universities in the world. Above all, in this situation one can experience people’s inner vacuum, which awakens their longing for fullness over and over again. The search for fulfilment makes us realise that the inner vacuum is connected with our own decisions. The pursuit of happiness in the short term, materialism, a culture of problems instead of solutions, the excessive use of social media – these are examples of this experience of an inner vacuum.

The reflection on creation, to which the churches are inviting us once again this year, can lead back to our own inner fullness. For example, a simple walk through the forest – maybe even without a mobile phone! -– offers us a moment of quiet that can lead both to a change of perspective on our own lives and to a consciousness of the value of God's creation. The world is the organism we all share, which we should protect like our own body. Nature conservation is not only important for our environment, but also essential for the protection of our own inner world, so that we can have life in abundance.

For 12 years now, the Council of Churches in Germany (ACK) has celebrated the multilateral project "Day of Creation", usually on the first Friday in September, which this year coincides with the beginning of the Orthodox church year on 1 September. The central celebration of this nationwide ecumenical project will take place in Bremen, a city which is connected with water in most people’s minds. From the very first celebration of the Ecumenical Day of Creation in Germany, we have been working together with the worldwide ecumenical community for the preservation of that creation which depends on water as the source of life.

The motto for this year's Day of Creation is: "That you may have life in abundance", a Bible verse from John 10:10. In John's Gospel, the term "world", Greek κόσμος, occurs particularly often and is described precisely. Κόσμος, which actually means "ornament, adornment", designates the world as God's good, "adorned" creation, in which we are called to live in abundance. This biblical motto thus calls us to fill and overcome our inner vacuum through an authentic encounter with the Creator and his creation.

My special thanks for organising this year's event go first and foremost to the City of Bremen and the ACK in Bremen with the entire preparation team, as well as to all those who help to celebrate this day throughout Germany. Last but not least, I would also like to thank the staff of the Ecumenical Centre in Frankfurt, who are responsible for the entire organisation of this project, so that Creation Day can be celebrated not only in Bremen, but in as many congregations as possible.

Let us set out together in search of "life in abundance"!

*Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron*

*Chairman of the ACK in Germany*

**So that you may have life in abundance**

On this year's central celebration of the
Day of Creation in Bremen

This year we are celebrating the Ecumenical Day of Creation in Bremen. When we think of Bremen, we inevitably recall the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm: donkey, dog, cat and rooster set off as the "Bremen Town Musicians", looking for a presumably better life; for there is no future for them where they come from. While they find something which they had not expected, they can nonetheless live in peace from now on. They find fullness, perhaps even fulfilment, but in another place and form from that which they had envisioned.

What it means to have a fulfilled life, or how one may strive towards it, is always to be considered individually. "Abundance" in life can refer to material things or to what fills the mind and heart. Perhaps both.

During a period of inflation, when prices are rising and things that you could always buy are temporarily not to be had, the "abundance" in a material sense is reduced. The availability of everything at all times can (no longer) be taken for granted. In spite of the bitterness we feel at this situation, we may at the same time ask what really fulfils our lives. What is it that we have in abundance, even if it is not obvious at first glance?

At the Ecumenical Day of Creation, we are looking for ways to reconcile our demanding materialistic world with our Christian, interdenominational mission to care for God's creation and to use with care the resources that exist in abundance. There is no doubt that the question of how to succeed in preserving creation must be at the top of the to-do list, because there is a growing discrepancy between the (supposed) need for material things and what the earth can offer.

It is therefore up to us to preserve creation in such a way that the abundance of its rich treasures, which God has provided for us, is not senselessly wasted. Wherever there is exploitation and pillaging and damage is done to nature and animals, it is important to put a stop to it. At the same time, we can and should be grateful for the immense richness that God has created in nature and for the beauty and wonders that we are entrusted with. Every year we make ourselves aware of this on the occasion of the Ecumenical Day of Creation. We gather strength in order to make use of a positive attitude towards the preservation of creation and turn it into practical activity. Even with small measures we can succeed in making a difference, because we who celebrate this day are many.

The motto of this year's Creation Day is an excerpt from a verse in John's Gospel. Christ's work, his sacrifice on the cross, and God's promise that with him a life in abundance is possible – these things give us hope and comfort. The promise of "abundance" for one's own life is a rich treasure, one that does not depend on material.

At this service, we want to celebrate all of this: God's promise to us, the hope it gives us and the strength that comes from it with the motivation to work for the creation. Where is abundance in your life? I am glad that you are celebrating the Ecumenical Day of Creation and focusing on all that serves to fill your life richly and moves you in God's amazing creation.

From Bremen I wish you every blessing on Creation Day from Bremen.

Sincere greetings from

Kirsten Locker

*Chairperson of the ACK in Bremen*

**Abbreviations**

CSL Cantarile Sfintei Liturghii (Chants of the Divine Liturgy), 1999

EG Evangelisches Gesangbuch (Protestant Hymnal), Edition for the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Lower Saxony and for the Bremen Evangelical Church, 1994

freiTöne Supplement to the Protestant Hymnal (EG), 1994

FU FundStücke , 2009

FuL Feiern und Loben (Baptist Hymn Book), 2003

GL Gotteslob (Catholic Hymnal), edition for the (arch)dioceses of Hamburg, Hildesheim and Osnabrück, 2013

**Worship service of the ACK**

on the Ecumenical Day of Creation 2023

**Instrumental music**

**Entry Hymn *"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation"*** (EG 316, 1 + 4 - 5; GL 392, 1 + 4 - 5; FuL 55, 1 + 4-5)

OR

 ***"Kommt herbei, singt dem Herrn” (Come hither, sing unto the Lord)*** (GL 140, 1-3)

**Liturgical welcome**

**Opening**

Bremen – a vibrant city in the north of Germany. This is where the texts for this year's Ecumenical Day of Creation were written. One of the best-known landmarks in Germany is to be found in this city: the bronze figure of the Bremen Town Musicians, a monument in the city centre to the characters from the Grimms' fairy tale of the same name – donkey, dog, cat and rooster. Perhaps you remember this fairy tale?

Once upon a time a donkey, a dog, a cat and a rooster, who met by chance, were all in danger of suffering the same fate. Because they were old and could no longer fulfil expectations, their owners planned to give them away, or to slaughter, shoot or drown them. "Something better than death we can find anywhere" is probably the most famous sentence of the fairy tale, and for this reason the animals set out to seek a new and better life in Bremen and become Town Musicians there. The promise from the Gospel of John, "That you may have life in abundance", is an incentive and encouragement for so many who set out today for a better life. Migrants who are threatened with death in their homeland for various reasons: some because they do not have enough food due to climate change, others because they are persecuted for political or religious reasons, or because war is raging in their country.

As with so many who are on the move and leave their homes, it is a leap into the unknown. At least the four animals going to Bremen have each other. In our time, many people are lonely and abandoned, completely alone on the journey and also where they finally arrive. The fairy tale ends with a story of strength and companionship: the four animals put a group of robbers on the run. Neither the donkey nor the dog, cat or rooster could have done this alone. Together, however, they succeed, because each of them does their job in their place. "That you may have life in abundance" is also a promise to us today. We have come together from all directions, bringing our own cares and problems, but also our joys. We come from different traditions, from different churches, from different countries. None of us can claim the abundance exclusively for themselves. It is only jointly, in ecumenical solidarity, that we can represent the abundance of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is only jointly that we can be a strong Christian voice in the world.

The fairy tale ends with the four animals staying in the house where they drove the robbers out. They don't even get as far as Bremen. So they have found abundance elsewhere, not where they had expected it at all. "That you may have life in abundance" is a promise that does not easily pass our lips in view of the continuing destruction of creation. On today's Ecumenical Day of Creation, we as Christians want to make it clear: we have a responsibility towards our environment and as creatures. We bear part of the blame for the fact that people and animals elsewhere are losing their livelihoods, while we live here in "overabundance". We want to consider how we can fill our lives with abundance without exploiting creation, so that in other places the abundance remains. It is time to turn around and ensure abundance for all people – maybe not where we think it is, but where we are.

**Prayer for forgiveness**

Creation is suffering. We also contribute to its exploitation and the devastating consequences. We ask for forgiveness where we destroy our livelihoods and those of others, whether by negligence or deliberately.

Lord, have mercy.

The goods of this Earth are unfairly distributed. While we often live in affluence, other people struggle to survive – even on our very doorstep. We ask for forgiveness where we do not share the abundance with one another.

Christ, have mercy.

We humans have been entrusted with God's creation. Too often we disregard this command. We ask for forgiveness when we fail to live up to our responsibility towards our fellow creatures.

Lord, have mercy.

**Old Testament Reading**

**Deuteronomy** 8:7 -14a and 17 -18 (Translation: New Revised Standard Version)

Moses spoke to the people:

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land,
a land with flowing streams,
with springs and underground waters
welling up in valleys and hills,
a land of wheat and barley,
of vines and fig trees and pomegranates,
a land of olive trees and honey,
a land where you may eat bread without scarcity,
where you will lack nothing,
a land whose stones are iron
and from whose hills you may mine copper.

You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God
for the good land that he has given you.
Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God,
by failing to keep his commandments,
his ordinances, and his statutes,
which I am commanding you today.

When you have eaten your fill
and have built fine houses and live in them,
and when your herds and flocks have multiplied,
and your silver and gold is multiplied,
and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself,
forgetting the Lord your God.

Do not say to yourself,
‘My power and the might of my own hand
have gained me this wealth.’
But remember the Lord your God,
for it is he who gives you power to get wealth,
so that he may confirm his covenant
that he swore to your ancestors,
as he is doing today.

**Psalm prayer**

Ps 36:5-10 (Translation: New International Version)

Response:

Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.

Lord, your steadfast love extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.

 Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
 your justice like the great deep.

You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!

 People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
 They feast in the abundance of your house;
 you give them drink from your river of delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

 Continue your love to those who know you,
 your righteousness to the upright in heart.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit.

 As it was in the beginning,

 is now, and ever shall be. Amen

Response:

Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.

***"Trisagion"*** (Cantarile Sfintei Liturghii / Chants of the Divine Liturgy, 1999, p. 28).



OR

***"Trisagion"*** (EG 185.4)

OR

***"Trisagion"*** (GL 300)

**New Testament Reading**

John 10:7-10 (Translation: New Revised Standard Version)

Jesus said to them,

‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and bandits;
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

**Hymn *"Wie ein Fest nach langer Trauer (So ist Versöhnung)”
(Like celebration after sorrow)*** (GL 872, from the supplement of the (arch)dioceses of Hamburg, Hildesheim and Osnabrück / FU 77 / FuL 371)

**Sermon**

**Instrumental music**

**Symbolic action**

Together with your service sheet you have been given a paper sandwich bag. This bag should serve as an inspiration for you. We all have various things and goods in abundance in our lives. Often we only look first at what is missing. But if we take a moment to pause and think, all of us will find something that is there in abundance. From that, we can give something away. This might be time you spend with someone, or clothes you give away to a needy person. Can you offer financial help to someone or to an organisation? This little bag can hold whatever is in your life. It should serve as a symbolic reminder to you of all the richness which fills your life.

**Hymn *"God gab uns Atem, damit wir leben”
(God gave us breath to live)*** (EG 432)

OR

***"Anker in der Zeit" –*** *also under the title* ***"Es gibt bedingungslose Liebe”
(There is Unconditional Love)***(FuL 353)

OR ***"Silent be and listen"*** (canon, freiTöne no. 2)

OR ***Silence*** (find material at www.schoepfungstag.info)

We are now glad to hold a time of **silence** for a few minutes. Silence has long been the essential devotional form of the Quakers. I will end the silence with the word **"Thank you".** Let usbegin our silence **now**.

**Creed**

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (ecumenical version)

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate
from the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried;
on the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven.
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
he will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father;
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified;
who has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

**Intercessions**

*Minister*

Merciful, eternal God,

You are a God of guidance and abundance. As you led your beloved people Israel through the desert into fertile land, so you also lead us through time and give us a foretaste of your abundance.

We beseech you:

*Minister 1*

Help us to see the beauty of your good creation and to work to preserve it. Open up the way and help us to take the necessary steps out of the climate crisis, so that the livelihood of future generations can be secured and they can experience the wonders of your creation.

We call upon you, gracious God:

*Congregation*

Kyrie eleison (EG 178.9 / GL 155)

*M1* We live in a country where there is enough bread for everyone to eat. And yet more and more people are falling into poverty. Strengthen in us the understanding that you intended all people to share in the goods of life on this earth, and that true abundance can only be there where we share it, so that the gap between rich and poor in our community is eliminated.

 We call upon you, gracious God:

*C* Kyrie eleison (EG 178.9 / GL 155)

*M1* We pray for the people who are fleeing from poverty, violence and war and who suffer need as they flee, people who do not know how and where they will arrive in the country from which they hope for a better future. Guide and protect them on their way and give them people to go beside them, reach out to them and support them as they arrive.

 We call upon you, gracious God:

*C* Kyrie eleison (EG 178.9 / GL 155)

*M1* We live by your Word, the liberating Gospel of the old and new covenants. Help us not to forget that which we live by and to place ourselves at the service of your good creation, in love for the people and in praise of your glory. Make us a visible sign of hope that is fulfilled.

 We call upon you, gracious God:

*C* Kyrie eleison (EG 178.9 / GL 155)

*M1* Your Word is proclaimed in a multitude of voices and colours, in a richness of forms in the various denominations. Let us recognise that the abundance of life and truth does not lie with one church alone, but that it can only be wholly found in the unity of all faith communities in reconciled diversity. This is how we can live in your abundance.

 We call upon you, gracious God:

*C* Kyrie eleison (EG 178.9 / GL 155)

*M1* Merciful and gracious God,
we feel weak and disheartened when violence and war prevail, when hatred and greed destroy love and our environment. Fill us with the power of hope and make us instruments of your peace. Help us to do what serves reconciliation and harmonious coexistence. Where people are divided, let your healing love work.

 We call upon you, gracious God:

*M* As your beloved sons and daughters, we trust ourselves to you in prayer, united in the words taught us by your Son Jesus Christ:

**Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen**.**

**Announcement of the collection**

**Hymn**

***"Sonne der Gerechtigkeit”***

***(Sun of righteousness, arise)*** (EG 262, 1 + 4 - 6; GL 481; FuL 164)

OR

***"Brich mit den Hungrigen dein Brot"***

***(Break with the hungry your own bread)*** (EG 420)

**Blessing**

We are blessed people – and now we beseech you, let us be a blessing. Just as Abraham received the blessing and also bestowed blessing, so do we wish to fulfil your command to bring reconciliation, justice, freedom, good news and loving fellowship into this world. In your name and in your power. Great God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – grant us your blessing and let us be a blessing to others!

**Hymn**

***"Geh unter der Gnade"***

***(Go under his grace)*** (FuL 438)

OR

***"May the ways"***

***(May the road rise to meet you)*** (GL 849 from the supplement of the (arch)dioceses of Hamburg, Hildesheim and Osnabrück, FU 120).

**Instrumental music**

**Exit**

**The Ecumenical Day of Creation**

Christians believe in the triune Creator God. They view with concern the overexploitation of nature. For this reason, the European churches have committed themselves in the Charta Oecumenica to "establish an ecumenical day of prayer for the integrity of creation in the European churches". The Council of Churches in Germany (ACK) has adopted this self-commitment and introduced an Ecumenical Day of Creation. The nationwide celebration usually takes place every year on the first Friday in September. The focus is on praising the Creator, personal repentance in the face of the destruction of creation, and practical advice for concrete steps to protect the threatened creation. In local parishes, the Day of Creation can also be celebrated on another day within the Season of Creation from 1 September to 4 October. In this way, traditions that have already grown up in different places and regions as well as the dates of school and public holidays can be taken into account. The ACK strongly recommends that the Day of Creation be celebrated locally in ecumenical solidarity and denominational diversity by at least three different denominations.

This booklet contains the order of service for worship on the Ecumenical Day of Creation 2023 under the motto "That you may have life in abundance" (John 10:10). It is a suggestion to be used in the preparation and conduct of worship services, and local congregations are invited to use this template for their own services.

**Further material**

You can find further material on our homepage: **www.schoepfungstag.info**

**Imprint**

**Publisher and ordering address**

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We would like to publish as many dates and events as possible for the Ecumenical Day of Creation at www.schoepfungstag.info. We kindly ask you to send us dates and information about worship services and events to info@ack-oec.de. Many thanks in advance!

*Your Ecumenical Centre*

**Invitation to the Central Celebration 2024**

On 6 September 2024, the central celebration of the Ecumenical Day of Creation will take place in Eberswalde. You are cordially invited to attend! For more information, see: **www.schoepfungstag.info**

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