**Liturgy for a congregational setting for our public lands**

**1) Prayer for Fossil Fuels on National Park Lands** *(Exodus 3: 1-6)*

God, you called Moses long ago

with a burning bush that was not consumed.

This, you said, is holy ground – take off your shoes.

You call us to new holy ground, our public lands,

and there are fossil fuels,

a deep and beautiful burning beneath our feet.

Remind us. Like the bush --

these should not be consumed.

Accept, O God, our commitment –

barefoot and full of love. Amen.

**2) Prayer around light pollution and hope for the future**

*God brought Abraham outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then God said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And Abraham believed God; and it was reckoned it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:5-6*

God help us to find our way back to dark skies so that we can see the stars, realize we are not able to count them, and becoming humble, stand back from destroying the earth for our children and our children’s children. The hope of the future begins in your night so deep we recognize that there are lights that we do not make, quiet that does not come from our headphones, wonder and awe that holds back our hands from selfishness. May our parks and our wildernesses become places where we can go to find such dark skies, such perspectives of hope, and the Perseids of imagination to shape creation care so that we all can stand under the starlight together. amen

**3) Confession for our noise**

**Call to Confession**

The impact of noise pollution on our public lands – from air tours and snowmobiles to maintenance equipment to incessantly connected tourists is changing the experience of wilderness for human and animal alike.

**Confession**

God, we are a noisy people –

with our vehicles and our machines,

our air corridors,

our ever louder voices

on smartphones and in the air.

We confess that we spoil

quiet places for those who seek them,

destroy the soundscape

of historic sites,

confuse owls seeking food,

and creatures protecting their young,

harm mating frogs, nesting birds,

endanger our own hearing,

and make an acoustic assault

on God’s earth. amen

**Assurance of Grace** *(Psalm 46:10a)*

*‘Be still, and know that I am God!* God gives us the strength for quiet parks and quiet lives and for the care of gift of silence and sabbath in all creatures including ourselves.

**4) Confession for our trampling**

**Call to Confession**

We stopped natural fires

for a hundred years in Muir Woods,

until we came to understand –

fire makes rich the forest floor,

cleans out duff, pretty trillium,

horsehair fern and sorrel.

It hollows the rotted core of trees

around a healthy blackened scar.

Fire and fog make redwoods thrive

along the northern California coast.

So now we set new fires,

but make the paths more narrow

and raise them up

for we discovered human footsteps

treading down the shallow roots,

are the greatest danger.

**Confession**

God, we confess we damage the earth

by our very passing,

and we damage the earth

by failing to understand

what preserves it across the years.

Forgive our hard feet that trample

the very roots of life

and our thinking we have the right to go

anywhere, anytime we want.

Forgive us when we insist

on our solutions for your creation,

for we pray in the name

of the One who was mistaken

at the very moment of resurrection

for a Gardener. amen.

**Assurance of Grace (***Isaiah 52:7)*

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”*

God forgives the past and gives us such feet – swift, light, willing to share God’s love for mountain and valley.

**5)** **Gathering Time / Call to Worship** *(Genesis 28:10-19a )*

One: After laying his head on a stone pillow and dreaming a ladder of angels, Jacob woke up and said : “Surely God is in this place—and I did not know it!”

“Surely God was in this place.”

What was a public place in nature from your childhood days (whether that was long ago or right now)– where, if you thought about saying it, you could have turned around and said, amazed, “Surely God was in this place.”

Maybe it was the park down the street, a local wildlife preserve, butterfly or botanical garden, beach or a National Park or Monument. Please call them out one at a time and the rest of us will respond: “Surely God is in this place.”

**All: *(Call out special places)* …**

**Congregation responds: Surely God is in this place.**

One: Now call out some public places where you would like to visit – it does not matter if they have already been mentioned.

**All: *(Call out special places)* …**

**Congregation responds: Surely God is in this place.**

One: Now think of natural places that are personally special to you right now – your garden, a community garden … even a bench in a cemetery. We will respond the same fashion.

**All: *(Call out special places)* …**

**Congregation responds: Surely God is in this place.**

One: Finally I invite you to consider natural places or even creatures that are endangered or fragile, those that are vulnerable.

**All: *(Call out special places)* …**

**Congregation responds: Surely God is in this place.**

One: Jacob set aside the place where he woke with a stone and he poured oil on it and prayed. We, too, set aside beloved places and protect them so that others in our generation and generations to come may visit them -- feel the footsteps of angels and hear the voice of God.

**Congregation responds: Surely God all the places we remember, we visit, we lovingly care for, courageously protect, and hold in tenderness.**

*Maren C. Tirabassi*