

**Hybrid Worship for September 11, 2022**  
**Creation Time 1**

**Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements**

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

**Centering Music: “Gather Us In” MV 7**

Gather us in, ground us in you.  
Gather us in, ground us in you.  
Gather us in, gather us in,  
ground us, ground us in you.

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: God welcomes us to worship –  
in pews or on our couches,  
with prayers and hymns on our lips.

**All: God welcomes us to life in community –  
over screens or in person,  
at each stage and age in our lives.**

One: When we have been absent, and even when we have been lost,

**All: God welcomes us back.**

One: When we are ready to celebrate

**All: God infuses us with welcoming joy.**

One: When we are ready to repent

**All: God fills us with welcome grace.**

One: Let's pray together:

**All: Loving and Creating God,  
today we gather and celebrate welcome,  
and return to what we have known.  
Inspire us to look forward, and lead us from  
where we are to where you would vision us to be,  
from what is comfortable into what may be challenging,  
knowing that you take each step with us.**

**As we also celebrate creation – and ‘all our relations’ -  
help us to continue to grow in our awareness**

**of the needs and the fragility of our earth home.  
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen**

**Opening Hymn: "It's a Song of Praise to the Maker" MV 30**

It's a song of praise to the Maker,  
the thrush sings high in the tree.  
It's a song of praise to the Maker,  
the gray whale sings in the sea,

and by the Spirit you and I can  
join our voice to the holy cry  
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a call of life to the Giver  
when waves and waterfalls roar.  
It's a call of life to the Giver  
when high tides break on the shore,

and by the Spirit you and I can  
join our voice to the holy cry  
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a hymn of love to the Lover;  
the bumblebees hum along.  
It's a hymn of love to the Lover;  
the summer breeze joins the song

and by the Spirit you and I can  
join our voice to the holy cry  
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's the chorus of all creation;  
it's sung by all living things.  
It's the chorus of all creation;  
a song the universe sings,

and by the Spirit you and I can  
join our voice to the holy cry  
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

**Introduction to Creation Time from <https://seasonofcreation.org/>**

*The theme for 2022 is: Listen to the Voice of Creation.* During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have become familiar with the concept of being muted during virtual conversations. Often, people using a platform do not have the capacity to unmute themselves. Even more do not even have access to digital

platforms, and so their voices are never heard. Many voices are muted in public discourse around climate change and the ethics of Earth-keeping. These are the voices of those who suffer the impacts of climate change. These are the voices of those who hold generational wisdom about how to live gratefully within the limits of the land. These are the voices of a diminishing diversity of more than human species. It is the voice of the Earth. The 2022 Season of Creation theme raises awareness of our need to listen to the voice of all creation.

*The burning bush is the Symbol for the Season of Creation 2022.* We invite you to use the symbol during your events. Today, the prevalence of unnatural fires are a sign of the devastating effects that climate change has on the most vulnerable of our planet. Human greed, desertification and land misuse lead to the disintegration of ecosystems, the destruction of habitats, and the loss of livelihoods and species at an alarming rate. Creation cries out as forests crackle, animals flee, and people are forced to migrate due to the fires of injustice that we have caused. On the contrary, the fire that called to Moses as he tended the flock on Mt. Horeb did not consume or destroy the bush. This was a flame of the Spirit that revealed God's life sustaining presence. This holy fire affirmed that God heard the cries of all who suffered, and promised to be with us as we followed faithfully to deliverance from injustice. During the Season of Creation, this symbol calls us to listen to the voice of creation, and faithfully respond through worship, repentance and action. Moses was told to remove his sandals, for he was standing on holy ground in God's presence. May this symbol move us to remove the "sandals" of our unsustainable lifestyles that disconnect us from creation and our Creator, contemplate our connection to the holy ground where we live, and listen for the voice of creation.

**Prayer for Reflection and Revelation "Burning Bush" Luca Terrana and Matteo Manicardi**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5TYyosHmTA>

A burning bush you are,  
glowing and endless love.  
Living in your midst,  
to live by you,  
to be alive in you.  
This fire does not consume  
the essence of every person.  
You show yourself in creation  
in all of the beauty that speaks and cries out  
that you are Love  
in a flower,  
in the waves of the sea,  
in the dawn,  
in the song of a swan,  
in a kiss of a child to his mother  
in the farewell of a dying father.

You are Love  
In a man who climbs the slope,

in a woman who chooses life,  
in a star bursting with light,  
in the forgiveness that brings pain.

You are earth, water, air and fire.

Let's take off our shoes in front of so much love.  
We need only to listen to the beautiful, the good, the true,  
that lies around us.

You are Love  
in a flower,  
in the waves of the sea,  
in the dawn,  
in the song of a swan,  
in a kiss of a child to his mother  
in the farewell of a dying father.

You are Love  
In a man who climbs the slope,  
in a woman who chooses life,  
in a star bursting with light,  
in the forgiveness that brings pain.

You are earth, water, air and fire.

**Scripture Readings:**

Jeremiah 4:11–12, 22–28

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights in the desert towards my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse— a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgement against them.

'For my people are foolish,  
they do not know me;  
they are stupid children,  
they have no understanding.  
They are skilled in doing evil,  
but do not know how to do good.'

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;  
and to the heavens, and they had no light.  
I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,  
and all the hills moved to and fro.

I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,  
and all the birds of the air had fled.  
I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,  
and all its cities were laid in ruins  
before the Lord, before his fierce anger.  
For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.  
Because of this the earth shall mourn,  
and the heavens above grow black;  
for I have spoken, I have purposed;  
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Luke 15:1-10

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'  
So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.  
'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

**Choir: "With Respect in Creation"**

**Reflection:** Rejoicing and Repenting

**Hymn: "Touch the Earth Lightly" VU 307**

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,  
nourish the life of the world in our care:  
gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,  
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger, who create hunger,  
agents of death for all creatures that live,  
we who would foster clouds of disaster,  
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening, birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and air that is sweet,  
health in God's garden, hope in God's children,  
regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,  
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,  
using us gently and making us one.

### **Introduction to the Offering**

**Gift of Music:** "Somebody Bigger than You and I"

**Hymn of Dedication:** "For the Gift of Creation" VU 538

For the gift of creation, the gift of your love,  
and the gift of the Spirit by which we live,  
we thank you and give you the fruit of our hands.  
May your grace be proclaimed by the gifts that we give.

**Prayer of Dedication:** *(together)*

**All:**     **Holy God, our gifts stem from your gifts to us.  
Help us to remember your love and care  
in each offering we make, each gift we share,  
and may our sharing bring hope, peace,  
wholeness and transformation to your creatures  
and your creation.  
Amen**

### **Prayers of the People**

**One:**   With grateful hearts we bring our prayers to you this day, Holy One.  
We thank you, God, for the warmth of welcome and the comforting  
feelings of 'coming home' to a place and space that is familiar and warm.

**Two:**   *We are grateful God, for friendships new and old,  
for our families large and small –  
the ones given to us and the ones we discover and choose.*

**One:**   We thank you for the fading summer season, and all that creation  
shares in these cooling days – vegetables ripening for harvest,  
apples waiting for the first touch of frost, misty mornings and  
touches of colour in trees.

**Two:**   *We thank you, God, for all the ways you search us out and find us*

*when we are vulnerable and when we are joyful,  
when we feel lost and when we are sure of ourselves.*

One: We know, Holy God, that there are those who do not or have not felt welcomed by church, by society, even by you God.

Two: *And so pray for those who have ever felt lost or pushed away –  
the lonely and the grieving, the homeless and the hungry,  
those who live with mental illness and those who love them,  
members of the 2SLGBTQ + community,  
those whose lives are surrounded by violence and unrest.  
We pray that we can be open and welcoming to those who seek you,  
both as your church and as your people.*

One: We remember, God, those who are journeying away from us at this time – students, travellers, and those whose work in our midst is over or changing. We lift up Noah, Leah, Rob and Simone as they begin their university studies for the first time. We lift up Ian Blackport as he leaves behind youth ministry to explore a new career, and we pray for Nancy Beatty as she continues into her retirement from her role as Office Administrator.

Two: *Hear all our prayers, God, who answers in and through us.*

One: Hear our prayers, God, as we sing and pray the words that Jesus taught us -

### **The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959**

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.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil,  
For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen

### **Closing Hymn: "All Things Bright and Beautiful" VU 291**

All things bright and beautiful,  
all creatures great and small,  
all things wise and wonderful,  
in love God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,  
each little bird that sings,  
God made their glowing colors,  
God made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountain,  
the river running by,  
the sunset, and the morning  
that brightens up the sky:

The cold wind in the winter,  
the pleasant summer sun,  
the ripe fruits in the garden,  
God made them every one.

God gave us eyes to see them,  
and lips that we might tell  
how great is God almighty,  
who has made all things well.

All things bright and beautiful,  
all creatures great and small,  
all things wise and wonderful,  
in love God made them all.

#### **Commissioning /Blessing**

May God, who sang the universe into being, go with you.  
May Christ, who is God's love song to the world, attend you.  
May the Holy Spirit continue to sing God's love  
into each and every heart, each and every day.

**Sung Amen VU 974**

#### **Rev. Joanne's Reflection**

We've designated this Sunday as a "welcome back" time for our community, an opportunity to mark the return to some of our pre-pandemic practices and our return from a summer break from worship as a community. Our hope was that we today we might celebrate finding renewed energy and purpose together, and inspiration for the work ahead, and that there might be an increase in attendance as folk make their way back to worship in-person or on-line. The scripture assigned for this Sunday from the book of Jeremiah is perhaps not the one we would choose for a welcoming.

Jeremiah was a powerful prophet, and was known for his rich imagery and his own struggle with the message God had for him to share, as well as being persecuted by many because of his prophecies about the coming fall of Jerusalem. The threat of invasion from Babylon was very real as he preached, and we know that Jeremiah lived through that fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's temple, and the exile to Babylon. Today's passage comes from a early point in Jeremiah's life as a



prophet of God, and The Inclusive Bible uses somewhat gentler language than the NRSV, but these can still be hard words for us to hear -

“My people are fools –  
they don’t even know me,” says YHWH.

“They are spoiled children –  
they do not understand.

They are clever only in crime –  
they know nothing of goodness.”

Eventually, God reveals through Jeremiah that there will be a new covenant between God and God’s people – one that will be written on their hearts, but here we are given an image of a God angry with those who have fallen away from relationship with the Holy One. This passage continues with a bleak picture of creation, seen as God’s punishment in Jeremiah’s vision, almost a reversal of the creation story we know so well:

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;  
and to the heavens, and they had no light.  
I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,  
and all the birds of the air had fled.

On this first Sunday of the Season of Creation, Jeremiah’s words may seem to describe the earth’s climate and environmental crisis - resulting not from God’s punishment but as the inevitable result of the way we have treated the planet over many generations. We *have* been foolish in many ways, and disconnected from God and from creation, and clever mostly in finding ways to satisfy our wants and desires.

How can we find welcome and inspiration in these words that seem full of condemnation and punishment? Where is the loving and forgiving God that we have come to know in Jesus?

In just a few words from this scripture, I think we can find hope and purpose. Here is what God says, writes Jeremiah, “yet I will not make a full end.”

There is always another chance with God, always a “welcome back” when we are wandering in spirit, always an opportunity to find renewed life after what seems like a devastating time – like a pandemic – when the world seemed bleak. There is also always an opportunity to repent – not a word we use often, perhaps not a practice we follow often, but honestly and earnestly naming our mistakes and errors, whether in word, action or thought, and working to address those same mistakes can bring us back into right relationship with God.

Jesus uses the word ‘sinner’ to describe those who have become distant from God, like the sheep who wandered away from the shepherd, or the coin that has rolled away from the woman. We are ‘sinners’ when we lose our connection to the Holy Source, the Creator, to God. We can become lost – our horizons can seem darkened, our choices perhaps become self-serving. We cannot feel the welcome of God’s inclusive love.

We can also be “found” by God – like the sheep or the coins found by those for whom they had value, just as God values us. Found by and in community, found in a quiet moment when we offer to God our prayers and our contemplations on our actions and ways of thinking, found when we reach out in just and loving action, found when we acknowledge that WE value our relationship with God.

There will be rejoicing, Jesus tells us – the very inhabitants of heaven will celebrate when we return to God’s love and re-establish connection. There will be the shouts of angels when we commit to correcting our mistakes – when we act on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, when we change our actions in order to care for a bruised planet and vulnerable ecosystems, when we decide that there is still more we can do to provide a safer space for our siblings from the 2SLGBTQ+ margins, when we speak only with kindness and respect for others.

So welcome back – to our flawed but beloved community. Welcome back to our virtual space or our in-person space, welcome back to work, and sometimes making mistakes, and seeking connection with the Divine as we seek connection with each other. Who knows what we may find together!