

Words for "O For A Thousand Trees" N. Habel

***O for a thousand trees to sing  
And join with us this day,  
With ferns and frogs and butterflies:  
A forest hymn of praise.***

***Come celebrate with all the land,  
Let species rare begin,  
With geese and owls and cockatoos:  
A choir of country kin.***

***Let ev'ry stream and river flow  
In song toward the sea;  
With whale and seal and albatross  
We thank God we are free.***

***O for a thousand trees to sing,  
And join with us this day,  
With ferns and frogs and butterflies:  
A forest hymn of praise.***

Worship at Home for September 13 2020

***This week we begin the Season of Creation, with a special focus on celebrating and remembering our God-given earth home and "all our relations." This year the broad theme is "The Spirit in Creation," and this week our theme is Forest, which matches our Podcast theme although here it is explored through different scripture.***

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:  
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

### Centering Prayer

Like a tall pine in the stillness of a moonlit night,  
we enter into the stillness of your presence, God.  
Like a September maple tree, we stand ready for your  
transformation, God, with vibrancy and with hope.  
Amen

Opening Music: "Garden" written by Mikali Anagnostis

<https://www.leichhardtuniting.org.au/music/garden>

### Opening Prayer *from seasonofcreation.com*

God, our Creator, whose glory fills our planet, help us to discern your vibrant presence among us, especially in the mysteries of the forest. Help us empathise with your forest creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the forest and all the creatures of the forest. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and renews all things in creation. Amen.

### Scripture Acts 17:16-28

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the market-place every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, 'What does this babblers want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.' (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.' Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being."

### Reflection

Like Paul walking the streets of Athens, we often don't have to look very far in our communities to see the objects and idols that people seem to worship. From the displays of luxury items in malls or marketing campaigns which depict 'successful' people as young, thin and wearing the latest fashions, it all seems so very far from Creator God, from the richness of forests and the wealth of healthy and diverse ecosystems. God calls us to look beyond the material and beyond

our own possessions to see the beauty and worth of all creation, to be awed by the bark of trees and the veins in leaves. God beckons us to offer our worship and praise with gratitude for all that surrounds us.

What are your experiences of forests? In this country, they cover over 35% of the land, from British Columbia's 800 year old Douglas Firs to the shorter pines at the north's tree line to majestic Maples in central Canada to Newfoundland and Labrador's vast forests. We are very much a country of trees. I recall hikes through the Northumberland forests as a child and teenager – much of it reforested with trees growing in rows, but also special trips to 'virgin' forest with its lush growth. I recall that there was always so much to see in a forest – a great diversity of plants and creatures, more shades of green than I could name, and a different view with every blink of an eye.

There is something 'primal' about forest for me, something that is humbling and at the same time comforting. I have always sensed God through the Spirit's presence in the forest, surrounded by living things that could continue to stand and grow beyond my lifetime, knowing that each element in that place is interconnected. I have felt connected to God in those green spaces that seem so ready for the change that the seasons bring, so full of life, so representative of the diversity I believe God has embedded in creation, and in us.

Yet forests throughout the world are under threat, are more vulnerable than perhaps we knew. Mining to extract oil and/or minerals, clearing for agriculture and urban development continue to rob the earth of the wealth of forests. If you'd like to learn more, you might read "[The State of the World's Forests 2020](#)" created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

We are reminded by Paul that God does not dwell in what human hands create, and that indeed God is creator of all. We can be reminded that God has touched this earth with beauty, with diversity: with forests and plains, with icy arctic waters and heated desert sands, with delicate fern plants, hardy mosses, and creatures that live on, under and in the trees of the forests. May we also be reminded that we are part of this creation, needing space to grow and flourish like the trees, needing the deep rootedness of our faith in order to weather the changes ahead, needing strength in community like a stand of old-growth forest, needing the light of God's love. Amen.

*Do you have special memories of a forest or grove? Have you visited or seen photographs of forests like Cathedral Grove on Vancouver Island? Can you spend a moment to appreciate a tree outside your home today?*

Music: "It's a Song of Praise to the Maker"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf63mbiP6S0>

Prayers of the People *From the seasonofcreation.org guide to the Season of Creation, adapted from "A Prayer for the Earth" by Pope Francis*

We pray in thanksgiving for Mother Earth in whom all life is rooted,  
Brother Sun whose energy radiates life, Sister Water who nurtures and revives us, and co-creatures with whom we live, and for whom we are called to till and keep this garden.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

In the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, hear our cries of compassion, and heal our world and all creatures. Inspire our hearts with a holy imagination, to rise, freed from the demands to produce and consume to imagine a just, sustainable way of living, where all have enough, and all may be restored.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

During this Season of Creation, grant us courage to observe a Sabbath for our planet. Strengthen us with the faith to trust in your providence. Inspire us with the creativity to share what we have been given. Teach us to be satisfied with enough. And as we proclaim a Jubilee for the Earth, send Your Holy Spirit to renew the face of the ground.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Creative Spirit, enlighten our hearts and remain with your world. Amen.

Closing music: "All Things Bright and Beautiful"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZNt4avXVcl>

### Blessing

#### *A Gaelic Blessing*

Deep peace of the running wave to you.

Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

Deep peace of the shining stars to you.

Deep peace of the gentle night to you.

Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.

Deep peace of Christ,

of Christ the light of the world to you.

Deep peace of Christ to you.

"Deep Peace" by John Rutter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMkkQMMnE0U>