

Hybrid Worship for September 25, 2022
Creation Time 3
Humanity Sunday

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: "Take, O Take Me As I Am" MV85

Take, O take me as I am
summon out what I shall be
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.

Call to Worship: *from seasonofcreation.org*

One: Peoples from every corner of creation,

All: Celebrate with all creatures on Earth!

One: Young and old across the planet,

All: Rejoice in the day that God has made!

One: Indigenous peoples of every land,

All: Help us sense the spirit deep in each land!

One: Black and white and brown and grey,

All: Celebrate with us the colours of creation!

One: All humanity on Planet Earth,

All: Praise God for our planet home.

Opening Prayer: *based on the words of Chief Seattle, 1854*

One: This we know: the earth does not belong to us,

All: we belong to the earth.

One: This we know: all things are connected,

All: like the blood that unites one family.

One: This we know: we did not weave the web of life,

All: we are merely a strand in it.

One: This we know: whatever we do to the web of life,

All: we do to ourselves.

One: Let us give thanks for the gift of creation,

All: let us give thanks that all things hold together in Christ. Amen.

Opening Hymn: "I'm an Earth-Being" Norman Habel (tune VU 409)

Born of this planet, I'm an Earth being,

Born of this planet, I'm an Earth child.

One with all beings, born of this planet,

I'm an Earth being, one with the wild.

Born of this planet, baptized with moisture,
I'm an Earth being, blessed by her rains;
Rising from oceans, flowing through rivers,
Earth's sacred waters pulse through my veins.

Born of this planet, flowing with breezes,
Children inhale Earth's infinite breath;
Earth's holy breathing enters my body,
Creating a presence deeper than death.

Born of this planet, one speck of stardust,
We feel the pulsing deep in our soul,
Mystr'y like music throbs in the landscape,
Earth like a mother, makes our lives whole.

Prayer for Confession, Reflection and Revelation from <http://www.webofcreation.org/>

If you are reading this service, or participating on ZOOM, you are invited to take a small amount of living material – a part of a plant, even a vegetable from your fridge, especially if it has a distinctive taste or smell, and hold it throughout this prayer.

One: As we rub this symbol in our hands we remember that we are all human beings created by one God.

All: O God, we thank you for the wonder and wisdom of the many tongues of humanity.

One: We remember and confess that we were created in God's image to serve and sustain our planet.

All: Christ, the true image of God, hear our cry.

One: We regret that we have forgotten that Earth is our home and treated this garden planet as a beast to be tamed and a place to be ruled.

All: Christ, the hope of all creation, we lament our failings.

One: We have also treated our fellow human beings shamelessly, abusing some because of ethnic differences and alienating others because of differing backgrounds.

All: Christ, our God become flesh, we are sorry. We are sorry.

One: We have, as human beings, sought to dominate nature and in so doing have killed our animal kin without concern and plundered our planet with abandon.

All: Christ, the source of all life, we are sorry. We are sorry.

One: God-in-Christ hears our confessions and forgives our sins against humanity.

**All: Christ, teach us to love all human beings
as your children and all creatures of Earth as our kin.**

One: This is the Good News in Jesus Christ:

God loves us more than we love ourselves.

God set us free to love others.

Thanks be to God.

Sung Response: "Behold I make all things new" MV 115

Behold, (behold,) behold (behold,) I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.

Behold, (behold,) behold (behold,) I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

Scripture Readings:

Genesis 1:26-28

The Inclusive Bible

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, to be like us. Let them be stewards of the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, the wild animals, and everything that crawls on the ground"

Humankind was created as God's reflection:

in the divine image God created them;

female and male, God made them.

God blessed them and said, "Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the earth -- and be responsible for it! Watch over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things on the earth!

Mark 10:35-45

The Inclusive Bible

Zebedee's children James and John approached Jesus.

"Teacher," they said, "we want you to grant our request."

"What is it?" Jesus asked.

They replied, "See to it that we sit next to you, one at your right and one at your left, when you come into your glory."

Jesus told them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I will drink or be baptized in the same baptism as I?"

"We can," they replied. Jesus said in response, "From the cup I drink of, you will drink; the baptism I am immersed in, you will share. But as for sitting at my right or my left, that is not mine to give; it is for those to whom it has been reserved."

The other ten, on hearing this, became indignant at James and John.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know how among the Gentiles those who exercise authority are domineering and arrogant; those 'great ones' know how to make their own importance felt. But it can't be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Promised One has come not to be served, but to serve -- to give one life in ransom for the many."

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

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: "As We Come Together"

Reflection: To live with respect in creation

Hymn: "Soil of God You and I" MV 174

Soil of God, you and I, stand ready to bear
seeds of faith nourished by God's tender care.

Growing in everyone for here God is found.

All stand together, we are Holy ground.

Soil of God, you and I, now ready to be

part of God's promise for others to see.

Open to everyone for here god is found.

All stand together, we are Holy ground.

Soil of God, you and I, now called to rebirth

joining as partners will all of the earth.
Living in harmony for here God is found.
All stand together, this is Holy ground.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music: ‘Wake O My Soul’ Pat Mayberry https://youtu.be/x_s_C8cfaWQ

Wake O my soul, to earth and sea and sky.
Wake to the forests, fields, the mountains high.
Open my eyes to ev'ry rock and tree,
Holy in all we see.

You the Light of all creation, Blessed by Your name.
Ev'ry seed ev'ry sould Your Love proclaim.
You the Light of all creation, Blessed be Your name.
Ev'ry seed, ev'ry soul Your Love proclaim.

Wake O my soul, to justice and to peace.
Wake to a world where hate and war shall cease.
Where ev'ry truth and story is revealed
wounds of the past can heal.

Wake O my soul, to laughter and to song.
Sing alleluia ev'ry doubt be gone.
Stir in our hearts a sacred harmony,
a prayer of community.

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:

**All: Ever-present God,
with this offering, we present also ourselves:
all that we have been,
all that we are,
and all that we shall become,
and our resolve to walk in your way.
Accept us and our offering, we pray for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

One: Loving God, today we pray with grateful hearts for the vast
diversity of the human family. We thank you for the mystery of
newborns who move us to tenderness, and for our elder folk
whose lives are so full of wisdom and experience.

- Two: *We thank you, God, for curious young adults and searching middle-agers, for newly retired folks and semi-retired ones, and for all those who share our journeys in this community of faith.*
- One: We celebrate all your people God – all colours, all genders, all sexual orientations, all backgrounds, all cultures, all expressions of faith, all abilities.
Help us to continue to create space in our buildings, our hearts, and our lives for those who look, or speak, or act, or love differently than we do.
- Two: *Parent God, we are thankful that you call us into relationships with both your creation and your people. We thank you for family ties and for friendships, for our church family and for the global family. We remember, God, that being in relationship with others is both a privilege and a commitment, and we share our joys as well as our struggles and our tears with the human family.*
- One: Today, Caring God, we pray especially for Agnes Paterson, who is now in your care.
We pray for Agnes' family – her children Dave, Lee, Todd and Tracey and their families, and for all who feel the pain of her death. We lift our prayers for all who are grieving this day, trusting that you will find ways to bring comfort and healing to all those who mourn.
- Two: *We remember and pray for the vulnerable people in our world today – women and children forced to work in the brickyards of Afghanistan, families seeking asylum and safety from famine, violence and war, indigenous families still seeking for the truth about lost loved ones, individuals struggling with health concerns whether of body, mind or spirit.*
- One: Give us the courage, the wisdom and the will, O God,
to create a world where all people are respected, honoured,
and have what they need to live with health, with opportunities, and in safety.
- Two: *Lead us to the work of justice, the vocation of compassion, and the labour of love for all in your name.*
- One: We lift our voices in song as we share the prayer that Jesus taught us -

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed by 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 the glory are yours
now and for forever.

Closing Hymn: "For the Beauty of the Earth" VU 226 (Tune VU 81)

For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon, and stars of light,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

For each perfect gift sublime
to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Amen

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

Jesus knows us so well. He knows us at our best, when we offer humble thanks and praise to God. He knows us in our searching moments, and guides us to see God's presence and God's reign in the world around us. He knows us at our worst, when we demand to be given what we think we are owed, when we jostle for status and position that has nothing to do with God's realm on earth.

He knows that we need to hear that the meek are blessed, and that we need to be told that we should love God first with all that we have, and love our neighbours as ourselves. Jesus knows that despite what he teaches, we will still try to find status or ranking in God's eyes, and that we need to be told that if we are to walk the path of Christ, if we are to become 'great' on this path, we must become the servants of all.

I wonder if James and John planned their conversation with Jesus, and if they really believed that they would be granted their request? What were they actually thinking? Were they worried about what was ahead for Jesus – and for themselves? Jesus had, just before this passage, reminded them of what was to come for him – the mocking, the spitting, the death but also the resurrection. We really don't know, but we are told that the other disciples were not pleased with their question – perhaps because they had not thought to ask this of Jesus first.

Jesus does not respond with anger, he does not tell any of the disciples that they are being foolish, or self-serving, or just plain selfish. He does remind them that while they are thinking about some other-worldly time of glory, their real work and worth and status is tied to their reality – to the reality of how they treat each other, how they relate to one another, to service and servanthood.

Unfortunately humanity's history is not one of unselfish service to each other. Throughout time – and even today – there are individuals and groups, nations or institutions or corporations who seek to gain power and status and wealth by manipulating others, while claiming that they have a right to be in that place of authority. We've all seen the slogans and ads from companies who tell us how many customers they have 'served, without really having the goal of true 'servanthood' in mind. We have all heard the stories – so many shocking stories – of how our own Indigenous families and children were treated by a government and by institutions that saw 'service' as opportunities to control or even eradicate a way of being.

I could go on, of course – you don't have to read much news to find stories of ill treatment, of the opposite of the servant life to which Jesus calls us, including the ways in which we treat God's creation. In the Genesis verses included for this service, the Inclusive Bible translation reminds us that we have often mistaken service for domination. Older translations of the scriptures used that language – domination over the birds of the air or the fish of the sea rather than the more descriptive and perhaps accurate words of stewardship and care, words that denote servanthood.

Jesus also knew scripture, and in his call to the servant life perhaps harkens back to some these first verses in the Torah. Care for and serve God's creation – including humanity. Care for and serve all those creatures and growing things and our very planet, because we are all a part of what God has created. Become the servants we are called to be, for the sake of God's world right here and right now.

For Jesus' followers on that road to Jerusalem where our story today takes place, the servant life was one of humility, where the needs of those they encountered would be seen equal as or greater than their own. In practical terms, that might have meant insuring that everyone in their group had enough to eat, or a comfortable place to rest, it was care and stewardship of each other. It might also have meant making changes in their thinking as they learned to truly serve without striving to be 'the top of the heap.' I imagine it would have been as difficult for them as it would be for us.

To be servants – to truly and humbly put the needs of others first – is not an easy task. It calls us to think deeply about our choices, what we purchase and who produced that food or that item, and whether it was made or grown ethically and in an environmentally sustainable way. It calls us to examine our actions – are we serving others and changing lives when we give to a charity, or wear an orange T-Shirt for Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Day (this coming Friday)? The call to servanthood calls us to more action as well, because we cannot truly serve one another without effort. Are we serving our indigenous siblings by taking concrete action like writing to our Members of Parliament asking them to address the concerns of communities? Are we serving our 2SLGBTQ+ siblings by actively learning about their needs and challenges, and offering safer space and an inclusive welcome as well as advocacy?

We do not enter into this servant work alone – God accompanies us, and can inspire us to take those risks and those actions to become better servants in the world. Jesus, too, knows our struggle, and provides that example of unselfish service as he touched and washed feet, as he taught and led and listened and ultimately walked to the cross. The Spirit, too, weaves in and through our lives and our work, ready to show us the path to serving in good ways.

Want to be great? Serve! Want to follow Jesus? Serve! Want to know God's reign in our time? Be servant, steward and care-giver for creation, and humanity.

Amen