



Let Justice and Peace Flow “Creator and Poet”

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green** cloth or scarf because we are now in “ordinary” time or a time of “growing together”. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Video - Creation Hymn (Illustrated Ministries)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PFviVtPbXg

Light Candle

Jesus said:

“I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

We light this candle, and we are invited to be drawn to its flame, just as God draws us to Godself.

So we take a deep breathe and know ourselves loved and held.



Introduction

Friends, today is Father’s Day.

While it seems not to attract quite as much attention as its counterpart in May, it is still important to acknowledge that this day is a celebration for many, and at the same time can be deeply challenging for many - so we hold together the joy shared by those who will celebrate today, and the grief, hurt, and perhaps even anger, of those whose fathers are no longer here, or whose relationship with their father is not what they had hoped, and of those men who have been unable to have children of their own.

Today also marks the beginning of the Season of Creation.

For those who notice these things, we have decided to move away from the readings set out in the lectionary for this time.

Over the next 4 weeks, our worship together will focus around various themes of creation, shaped by a song we have been singing for some time now, called *Creator and Poet*, written by Sandra Sears. Each week, we will take a verse of that song/hymn and reflect on what it might be teaching us about God, about ourselves and about the creation of which we are a part.

Today, we’ll explore what it means for God’s voice, God’ presence, to be known through creation and, we’ll explore the language we use when we speak about God...

Call to Worship

Friends, it is the Season of Creation!

Today we gather here in the household of God,
surrounded by our broken, beautiful, scarred and glorious world,
joining our voice to earth's song of praise.

We gather to worship the God of rivers and oceans and waterfalls,
of rainforest and desert place.

We gather to hear the cry of the prophets and the groaning of creation,
and to join that mighty river of justice and peace.

We come to be quenched by living water, giver of life.

We come to plant our feet on this earth, parched for justice.

May the Creator, fountain of life,

Jesus the Christ, pulse of life,

and Holy Spirit, breath of life, be always with you.

And also with you!

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders:

those who have carried the sacred stories from generation to generation

those who carry the sacred stories today

and those who are learning and growing so that the sacred stories may be carried into the future.

We pray for the future of their communities and that our hearts and minds will be open as we shape a future together.

May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler, This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

Introduction

The prophet Amos:

²¹I hate, I despise your festivals,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them,

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals

I will not look upon.

²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;

I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴But let justice roll down like water

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Amos 5:21-24

God of justice, as we gather here this morning,

may our offering be more than our words and our songs,

but may we learn to embody your justice and wholeness in the world.

As we open ourselves to your boundless love and grace,

may such love and grace flow through us into the world. Amen.

Sing - God of Creation (tune: TIS 156)

Let's sing a song of praise - these words offer prayer and praise - you will know the tune...

God of Creation,
Gentle life-giver
Present at birth, and
all through our days
Author of sunrise
Song in the night sky
Here in this place, we offer our praise.

Spirit of Comfort
blow through Creation
stir up new life, breathe
peace through our world
Healer of hearts, and
hope for tomorrow
weave all our sorrows into new dawn.

Jesus, Companion
teacher and healer
friend of the grieving,
suffering, the poor
Stand with your people
whisper among us
promise of mercy, goodness for all.

Here we give thanks for
life in its fullness
blessings received
your gifts to us all
Make us a people
filled with compassion
selflessly giving, serving your world.

Craig Mitchell (2017)

Reading: Psalm 19:1-6, 14

- ¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- ² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
- ³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
- ⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hidden from its heat.

- ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Prayer - Praise

Let us pray...

Father and Mother, creator and poet,
speaking your wisdom in forest and glade:
telling your glory in ocean and river,
pouring your pleasure on all you have made,
we offer here our hearts and minds and all that we are, in praise.

You shaped the coastline,
you moulded the Great Dividing Range,
you designed the trees and plants and flowers,
and you created such a vast array of animals, birds, and creatures large and small.
Each part of your creation tells something of your story,
your Spirit dances on the wind
and we catch our breath as we ponder the beauty and magnificence of it all.

Confession

Here, in this beautiful place, we are so aware of the awesome power held in your creation,
O God,
the crash of the waves,
the wail of the wind,
the rumble of thunder,
and flashes of lightning,
in the heat of the lava flows
and in the torrents of water flowing over a waterfall.

Forgive us when we forget that such awesomeness is also accompanied by incredible fragility:

the delicate intricacy of a spider's web,
the exquisite design of a sea shell,
the careful equilibrium that holds habitats and sanctuary,
the amazing rainbow in the colours of coral and fish, flowers and tiny birds,
the extraordinary engineering of our human bodies.

We are sorry for trampling through your creation,
we are sorry for our carelessness in our living and our impact on the world around us,
we are sorry for our insistence on progress that destroys the homes of native wildlife and
strains the very fabric of this planet,
we hear the cry of creation and ask for your forgiveness.

God, from the moment we are born, we feel your grace,
in the arms that hold us,
in the breeze that brushes our faces,
in the whispered words that sing to us and soothe us,
in the love of family and community that enfolds us.
We are always whole and always part of creation's wholeness,
no matter what we do.

Remind us of our sacred oneness - with you, with each other and with all of creation.
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Adapted (in part) from *Seasons of the Spirit*,
Resources for 3 September 2023, Season of Creation 2023, p.27

Sing - The Heavens Shall Declare (TIS 746)

This song is not about God coming on the clouds, it invites us to look for and to see God in the world around us.

The heavens shall declare the glory of his name,
all creation bow at the coming of the King;
every eye shall see,
every heart will know,
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess:
holy, holy, holy is the Lord;
see the coming of the King; holy is the Lord.

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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Matthew 23:37-39

³⁷ 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸See, your house is left to you, desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." '

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Read: Big Mama Makes The World

Sing: Creator and Poet (Seasons 3-10)

So let's sing our "theme song", if you like, for the next few weeks - what images does it open up for you?

Father and Mother, creator and poet,
speaking your wisdom in forest and glade:
telling your glory in ocean and river,
pouring your pleasure on all you have
made.

Spirit, you danced at the dawn of creation,
rising, rejoicing on jubilant wings.
Yours is the rhythm of cycle and season,
yours is the heartbeat of all living things.

Christ of the cosmos, you sang into being,
galaxies spinning through measureless
space;
coming among us, and sharing our
weakness;
singing your songs of redemption and
grace.

God, you have made us of stardust and
spirit.
Etching your image on ev'ry cell.
We are your love song, your poem and
rhythm.
All co-creators, your story to tell.

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Reflection

Come, my kin, and pray with me to our Creator.
Give thanks for breath; give thanks for life!
Give thanks for love from which creation flows.

Give thanks for Earth from which each living being rose!

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 3 September 2023, Season of Creation 2023, p.24

*Father and Mother, creator and poet,
speaking your wisdom in forest and glade:
telling your glory in ocean and river,
pouring your pleasure on all you have made.*

How do you speak about God?

If I were to ask you to describe God, what would you say?

For many of us, our default is to call God, "Father".

And, indeed, it is Jesus who uses that term frequently when referring to God.

Jesus also uses the term "abba" in Mark's gospel (Mark 14:36), an Aramaic term which is closer to "papa" or "dad" and encourages us to think of God in that way.

But it is not the *only* way to think or to speak about God.

First, we need to recognise that while Jesus drew the comparison between God and our earthly fathers, that comparison is not helpful to everyone, particularly those who have experienced a difficult relationship with a father who has been less than we perhaps hoped, or whose father was absent for whatever reason.

We also need to acknowledge that the term "father" is unavoidably gender-specific, and for some that locks God into a form that is unhelpful.

The reading, we have heard from Matthew's gospel invites us to expand our thinking in this space - Jesus refers to himself in the feminine, a hen who gathers her chickens to her to warm and protect them (Matthew 23:37), a mother.

When we sing about the wisdom of God being spoken in "forest and glade", it points to the Hebrew Scriptures. There, when God's wisdom is spoken of, it is again described in feminine form (see, in particular, Proverbs 8), where wisdom calls and raises *her* voice (Proverbs 8:1).

The Hebrew word for the spirit of God, *ruakh*, which also carries the sense or meaning of the wind and breath, is also a feminine word capturing a sense of the divine presence and energy.¹

Today, there are many who say that to assign God any gender at all reduces God to our human constructs and the construct of our language - and even the song we sang earlier "The Heavens shall declare" includes the descriptor, *see the coming of the king*, again a term that holds a particular gender and, I might say, a whole system of male leadership and dominion. It limits how we understand the God who is beyond our human societal constructs - but I might say more about that at the end of the month when we look at who we, humans, are created by God to be.

For now, let's notice that when God first speaks to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3), God describes God's self simply as "I am" - that's it!, "I am." Nothing more. And one of the names the ancient Hebrew people used for God was a sacred word, almost a whisper, *Yahweh*. Neither of these terms need a gender to shape the God they are describing.

So what are some other words we might use to describe God?

Here are some you will have heard me use: Ancient of Days, Creator, Loving Parent, Divine Presence, Eternal Love (with capital "E" and "L"), Wisdom.

¹ *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol.2, p.859

Janice has introduced us to the term, "Holy Friend".

The song invites us to consider God as "Creator", alongside "Poet" - perhaps capturing a more artistic, beautiful, sense of creation.

And so how might we be conscious of using a wide range of descriptors - all of which fall short of the completeness of the wonder that is our Creator - but perhaps invite and prompt us to think more broadly about who God is.

The last two lines of the first verse, then, speak of:

telling your glory in ocean and river

Remember, God's *glory* is not some kind of shining light or radiant beam, it is simply a way of indicating God's *presence*. So the oceans and rivers, the forests and glades, speak of God's wisdom and God's presence, they reveal something of God to us.

The psalmist in Psalm 19 tells us that they don't need words like we do - their very being shouts of who God is and of God's presence right here and now - "the heavens are telling the glory of God", shouting to all who have eyes, ears and hearts to hear (Psalm 19:1-4).

And then we are reminded that we are part of this creation - we are part of God's world that speaks of God's wisdom and tells of God's presence without us making a sound...

That is, before we have opened our mouths, our being, our living, our presence has already proclaimed something of who God is in the world...

There is something in that that is both deeply comforting - I don't need to have all the right words to say - and deeply challenging - what does my life say about the One who I say I follow?

This verse ends:

pouring your pleasure on all you have made.

God's creation, the forests and oceans and rivers, also remind us of God's pleasure in God's creation: It is good, very good!

And again, I am challenged when I ask, how does my being, my living tell of God's pleasure in God's creation?

So perhaps this week, you might take some time to spend in the wide expanse of God's creation. Perhaps on your daily walk, or when you are sitting in the garden, maybe this week you could make a special effort to stand on the cliffs at Kiama and look out to sea across the vast expanse of ocean and sky, or go for a walk in the rainforest or amongst the valleys and fields in Jamberoo, along the river or the beach - let's face it, we have it all here on our doorstep! - so take some time and wonder, what wisdom can you see, what of God's presence is this environment trying to tell you?

And hear again God's assurance - it is good, very, very good!

And then spend a moment thinking about how you echo that song in your living?

Let's pray,

Father and Mother, Creator and Poet,
draw near to us as we draw near to you.

As we stretch our hearts and minds to understand more of who you are,
compel us into your world and to open our eyes and ears and hearts to what your world is trying to tell us about who you are and who you call us to be.

And then help us to shape our living to sing your song, to shout your praise, in all that we are and all that we do. Amen.

Responding

Prayer for Others

God of love whom we cling to, and God of mystery,

We thank you for the blessing of Fathers in our lives, for Grandfathers and Uncles and those men who offer love, support and guidance where Father has not been a good relationship or where loss has removed them from families too soon. We can sit in gratitude and joy remembering the deep blessing in our lives. And we pray Father that you empower, strengthen and guide all who take on the role of Father, through it's many challenges.

We thank you Father God for your great love for us...always present in our lives...just a simple turn of our attention finding you there.

We bathe in your wonder with all of Creation.

Here, we find what is both sun-dappled and drought-stricken;
both lush and barren; both teeming with life and broken by disease and death.

We do not have answers but seek to be transformed by you, trusting in you, used by you..

We listen for your song of justice and hope as we hear the beauty and peace of the bird song.

*We pray for people who long for a resolution to their striving -
for the people of Ukraine,
for the First Nations of this country,
for sufferers of abuse and violence,
for those struggling to find shelter or to make ends meet.*

Teach us to trust in the abundance you provide for us in nature.

*O God, help us to be extravagant in our loving,
and forgetfully generous in our giving
that no-one among us need ever go hungry.*

Show us how to soar with the winds of change, like seeds upon the wind that come to rest and sprout into new life.

*O God, give us courage to face uncertain futures,
give us wisdom and patience to bring our friends and neighbours along with us.*

You bless us with joy in the bird song and laughter in Macaques.

Encourage us to revel in delight with the simple joy of nature all around us.

There is no reason for you to do this but only for sheer joy.

O God, help us find joy in the simple things of life and to share such joy with the people around us.

Look at soil, you knead into your wonder decomposed leaves and branches.

You witness to the power of resurrection in transforming what is dead into the very source of life.

*We pray for those who are grieving - the loss of a loved one, a friend, lost opportunities or employment, losses with dementia
may we surround them with the warmth of your love and the light of hope.*

Look to our trees, you absorb so much of our world's greenhouse gas emissions,

and we need to remember to share in this work to care for our whole ecosystem.
*O God, teach us to care for this earth and all its creatures and habitats,
give us courage to embrace the changes needed in our own lifestyles for the sake of all
creation.*

Look what the Ant teaches us, you lift and carry more than 50 times your weight and
remind us that we can carry some of the load.

*O God, prompt us to lift the burdens of our friends and neighbours,
and to offer our gifts of time, money and skills in serving you.*

We find our connection in the wind and plants.

We remember who we are and whose we are.

O Mystery, wash over us with the wisdom we need today.

Ground us in your grace, now and always. Amen.

Adapted from *Seasons of the Spirit*,
Resources for 3 September 2023, Season of Creation 2023, p.28

Offering

As we have received, so we consider our response...

*We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our
response to God's nudging today.*

God of mystery, no longer unknown,

you invite us to open conversations, discern connections,

and seek always to develop relationships and communities of life and hope.

We align our lives with your love for the whole world and join our longing with your desire
for all generations to live, move, and be in you. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 3 September 2023, Season of Creation 2023, p.28

Sending

Sing - Pilgrim Song (NSYC03)

*Our song as we go reminds us of who we are and whose we are and offers us hope for
who we are becoming...*

We believe in God
in whom the universe
in all its beauty was born.
We believe in Christ,
the Saviour of the world,
and the Spirit who travels with us.

*For we are the people
who travel in Christ's way,
yes we are the people
seeking God's new day,
we are the people
the Spirit binds as one,
together in faith we journey on.*

We believe in Christ,
God come as one with us,
who died to set the world free.
We believe Christ lives,
His Spirit is with us,
that in our lives God's new world will come.
For we are the people ...

There will come a day
creation will be free
and love will rule all the world.
Until then we'll seek
to care for all the earth
and to live for the glory of God.

For we are the people ...

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Sending

Let us pray...

Creator and Poet,

you send us

to be your apostolic Church,

to go into the world:

flowing with grace

eroding injustice

flooding the world with peace and love.

Like rivers in the desert,

bringing life-giving water to all those who thirst,

may we be channels of your working,

channelling justice and rightness

where there is a drought of hope because of their absence.

As we join with you in your mission of transformation, healing and redemption,

be with us as you go before us.

Send us out once more to do your will.

Now and always. Amen.

Rev Jon Humphries, adapted, Uniting Church Assembly,
Season of Creation 2023, <https://uniting.church/season-of-creation-2023/>

Blessing

And may the blessing of

the Creator, the fountain of life,

Jesus the Christ, the pulse of life,

and Holy Spirit, the breath of life,

be with you always. Amen

Liturgy adapted from material from:

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 3 September 2023, Season of Creation 2023
Uniting Church Assembly, *Season of Creation 2023*, <https://uniting.church/season-of-creation-2023/>

Rev Kath Merrifield

3 September 2023