

**Online Joint Worship for the Mid Fraser Cluster of the
United Churches of Canada
Season of Creation: Forest
Sept 27th, 2020**

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

**Words of Welcome, Announcements
from Each Congregation and Land Acknowledgment**

Thank you for Connecting for Worship

Today's Leadership included

Preacher: The Rev. Bill Booth

Presiding: The Rev. Tim Bowman

The Rev. Tracy Fairfield

The Rev. Michael Collison

Musician: Jacob Greenan

Song Leader & Soloist: Deborah Handley & Julia Rohan

Lighting the Christ Candle for Each Congregation

People are invited to share their prayers in the chat during the worship service.

A Reading: Tim

- From Sallie McFague, The Body of God: An Ecological Theology, Augsburg Fortress, 1993, pp. 210-211.

Call to Worship: Tim

In the forest there is little distinction between death and life.

The rhythm of its breathing is the breath of God.

In this virtual space made real by the presence of God,

there is little distinction between Creator and Created,

between the Speaker and the Spoken-Into-Life.

**Let us celebrate our unity and discover together this God
who has made us one.**

Hymn: "This Paradise" - Julia Rohan

Verse 1: Before the universe was born God slept and had a vision,
fueled by boundless energy his dream became his mission
He raised his arms and spread them wide to all eternity
and from his hands Creation sprang in all its mystery.

CHORUS:

We're all part of the miracle, God's dream still coming true

A world created out of love, a gift to me and you

Arranged in changing seasons, life to death and back again

Oh, thank you Lord, for Mother Earth, this Paradise we're in!

Verse 2: God separated light from dark, She made the night and day

So we could have our time to sleep, our time to work and play

She separated sea from land, so grasses could grow green

Made tiny seeds and towering trees and fruits that we could eat. **Chorus**

Verse 3: God made the stars and galaxies, the glittering Milky Way
He made the sun to warm us and the moon to guide our way
He filled the sea with swimming fish, the sky with flying birds
On land he placed the walking things, from ants to elephant herds. **Chorus**

Verse 4: And when God saw what she had made, the forests and the streams
The valleys and the thunder clouds were just like in her dreams
But there was one thing missing -- a witness who could see
all the wonders she'd created -- so she made Humanity. **Chorus**

Learning With Our Children: Michael

Song: "Praise God for This Holy Ground" MV 42

Praise God for this holy ground, Place and people, sight and sound.

Refrain after each verse:

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! God's goodness is eternal!

Praise God in whose word we find Food for body, soul, and mind. **R)**

Praise God who through Christ makes known All are loved and called God's own. **R)**

Praise God's Spirit who befriends, Raises, humbles, breaks, and mends. **R)**

Though praise ends, praise is begun Where God's will is gladly done. **R)**

"Forests - More Than Meets the Eye" Ken Soneff

Blessing of the Tree

WE LISTEN FOR THE WORD

Scripture Reading: Acts 17:22-28

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'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon: "Quiet Forest" Bill

Hymn: VU 374 - "Come and Find the Quiet Centre"

*Come and find the quiet centre in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.*

*Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.*

*In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
here's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!*

WE RESPOND IN LOVE AND ACTION

Prayer of Confession: Michael

Hear the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 1:12): "The vine is dried up and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree - all the trees of the field - are dried up. Surely the people's joy is withered away."

(A few moments of silence)

Creator God, you planted a world of beauty and variety,
filled with trees for food and shade.

We have turned forests into deserts, and many living trees into disposable consumer products. We confess our selfishness in misusing your handiwork to resource our greed. Lord have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

Redeemer Lord, whose hands worked with wood and whose body was broken upon the tree of Calvary, we confess that it was our sin. We have sought to become wise in our own eyes, and thus eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We repent and return to you, to receive from the tree of life.

Christ have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Spirit of God, you make all things new, causing seeds to grow, buds to blossom, fruit to ripen. Sow within us the seeds of repentance and humility, to live gently within the community of creation, and to bring forth the fruit of your Kingdom of justice and peace.

Lord have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

- Source: "The Tree of Life and The Life of Trees," A Rocha.

Assurance: Michael

May the Lord forgive us and cleanse us from our sins, and call us to follow his purpose in the garden of creation, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sung Response: "Day After Day" MV 123

Day after day, night after night,
You speak through everything. 3x

Prayers for the World and for All of the Creation: Tracy

Prayers of the People: From Chat shared prayers. Tim

Holy God, you hear our words; you hear our hearts. We are known and heard deeply, graciously, constantly. Confident in this grace, we sing/say together the words that Jesus taught us...

The Lord's Prayer - Adapted [Sung] "Ground of All Being" by David Poole
Taught and Sung by Deborah Handley

Ground of all being, Mother of life, Father of the universe.
May we know your presence here, seeking your will upon earth.
Grant all your creatures food for today, and strength for our families.
Pardon our falseness as we forgive those who are untrue to us.
Do not forsake us in our need, but lead us to new birth.
For the glory of life and the light of life are your forever.

Acknowledging Our Gifts for the Work of God: Michael

Just as the roots of trees knit the forest together,
your love, God, unites and sustains us.

**May our gifts of money, however given;
our gifts of time and talent; passion and patience;
given in your name, make your love visible
and unite and sustain your people.**

Prayer of Dedication: Michael

These are the gifts of God, given for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

Hymn: "Creator God, You Are There" Words & Music: Margaret Rizza

In the darkness of the still night in the dawning of the daylight,
in the mystery of creation, Creator God, you are there.
in the breath of every being, in the birthing and the growing,
in the earth and all its fullness, Creator God, you are there.

In the homeless and the hungry, in the broken and the lonely,
in the grieving of your people, Creator God, you are there.
in the tears and in the heartache,
in the Love through which we serve you,
in the anguish of the dying, Creator God, you are there.

In our hearts and in our thinking, in the longing and the dreaming,
in the yearning of our heartbeat, Creator God, you are there.
In the love for one another, in the sharing of our being
in receiving and forgiving, Creator God, you are there.

In our joys, our hopes, our healing, in awakening to revealing,
in your call and our responding, Creator God, you are there.
In our prayer and in our service, in our praise and in our worship,
in your love that is eternal, Creator God, you are there.

Commissioning and Benediction: Tracy

Sung Response: “Isaiah 55: You Shall Go Out With Joy” VU 884

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace;
The mountains and the hills Will break forth before you;
There'll be shouts of joy, And all the trees of the field
Will clap, will clap their hands!
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands, (*clap, clap*)
The trees of the field will clap their hands (*clap, clap*)
The trees of the field will clap their hands (*clap clap*)
While you go out with joy. Repeat X3

Postlude:

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