



We are
Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge
Knox Didsbury Pastoral Charge
of the United Church of Canada
Sunday September 5th, 2021
Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan



Our mission statements:

Olds: A Family of Faith, Spiritually Motivated, Welcoming and Caring

Sundre: Believing, Caring, Sharing

Knox Didsbury: Caring, Sharing, Believing

*As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that our churches are all
on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the
people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3.*

*May we cherish and care for these lands and the people,
just as those who came before us have done.*

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

We gather together, in person or through technology, remembering Christ's life and ministry, and the life we are called to live.

We gather as God's people, searching for ways to live out our faith.

We gather to celebrate the last few summer weeks, and the gift of the seasons.

As we light the Christ candle let us rejoice in God's gift to us!

Thanks be to God!

Call to Worship

I am the circling hawk, dancing with joy for life.

God invites us to join in the dance.

I am faithful soil, nourishing each life I touch.

God invites us to join in the caring.

I am the swift stream, singing my thanks for life.

God invites us to join in the song.

I am the blazing star, bring wonder to life.

God invites us to join in the wonder.

I am the voice of Creation, praising the God who shapes life.

God invites us to join in the praise.

Hymn MV 30 It's a Song of Praise to the Maker

Opening Prayer

O God, for times when we have viewed Planet Earth as a source of endless resources,

Forgive us.

Earth's waters are polluted with toxins,

Forgive us.

For times when we have cared more about progress than Planet Earth,

Forgive us.

Help us to remember that the Earth is our home, our sanctuary.

May we celebrate that and live in the goodness of your grace. Amen.

Time with Children

“In the Beginning – based on Genesis 1”

from Read, Wonder, Listen: stories from the Bible for Young Readers

by Laura Alary and Ann Sheng, 2017. Wood Lake Publishing, used with permission

Hymn

MV 37 Each Blade of Grass

Scripture Genesis 1: 1-25

This is just one of the Creation stories found in the bible. Genesis 2, Psalm 8, and Proverbs 3 give us other versions. We are reminded of two things: that the Bible is a collection of tales about God's activity through history and of God's love for all of Creation.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day

and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Response to the Scripture Reading

This is the witness of the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

For a number of years, the Season’s of the Spirit worship resources have been offering an alternate in the fall to the regular lectionary readings that we follow. That alternate gives us readings for the Season of Creation. For a whole variety of reasons, I have always used the regular lectionary readings.

This year, however, we’ve had a group that have focused on Stewardship, and as I looked at the resources for this year’s Season of Creation, I found them to be really helpful; creative; and adaptive for our communities of faith – and, they really are about Stewardship, caring for God’s Creation.

So...Season of Creation...something new? Relatively so, when you consider church time. I was curious, and did a little Google study on when the Season became a thing in the church. It seems 1989 was the beginning...with the orthodox Christian churches commitment to the environment.

According to the National Catholic Reporter:

“The Season of Creation is a month-long prayerful observance that calls the planet’s 2.2 billion Christians to pray and care for God’s creation. It’s a time to reflect on our relationship with the environment — not just “distant” nature, but, crucially, the place where we live — and the ways in which our lifestyles and decisions as a society can endanger both the natural world and those inhabiting it, both humans and other creatures.”

From 1989, the idea has grown, and now many denominations participate in the development and sharing of resources for this season, that begins September 1st, The World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and ends on October 4th, the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

So, today, what better way to begin our celebration of the season of creation than with those wonderful images that we find in the first chapter of Genesis. We heard it spoken in the lovely contemporary poetic words of Laura Alary and Ann Sheng in the children's time; and we heard the words we all know, at least in part, from the bible.

The Season's of the Spirit's resource today is written by biblical scholar Dr. Norman Habel. He is one of the people who led in the development of the Season of Creation back in 1989, and his theology is rooted in eco-justice, in caring for the earth.

He relates this particular creation story to a birth narrative...and some of the images he uses are amazing. God is the midwife; the earth begins in the womb, the waters of the deep. The waters burst and the dry ground appears, earth is revealed, it is born.

Once birth happens, as Habel says:

“Baby earth comes alive...Creator Spirit animates Earth so that she can bring forth vegetation of every species. Earth is explicitly transformed from a dry embryo to a living planet. The animation reveals a divine force; Earth has an innate spiritual impulse. Our role as custodians, is to be in tune with the innate impulse of Earth and to keep Earth alive.”

Dr. Norman Habel, Seasons of the Spirit,
SeasonsFusion Season of Creation, Pentecost 2, 2021 page 22.

Habel goes on to write of how earth is blessed with light, which is “one of the pivotal elements that enable Mother Earth to flourish. Light means life.” After light, comes creatures of the earth, sky and the waters, including humans – all extending the idea of birthing and earth as mother. (Habel, 2021)

At the time the Genesis creation story was written, the people were in exile in Babylon. This story of God, and God's relationship with Creation would have brought those people a sense of hope, as they lived that reality of being exiled from their homeland.

The Season's of the Spirit resource invites us to think of the times in life when we feel exiled, when we feel displaced. I can't help this summer, of thinking of the

many people in British Columbia who experienced evacuation from their homes as fires approached; and more recently, how the people in regions affected by the hurricanes of the last week have felt, and the people of Haiti, following the earthquake last week.

There are also those who are being affected by the drought conditions across the prairies, in Canada and parts of the US. People faced with having to sell herds, or face economic challenges trying to keep those herds feed; people whose annual income will plummet because of the condition of their crops.

Those feelings of exile often are related to natural disasters – forest fires, hurricanes, flooding...which in turn, science is telling us, is related to climate change.

One also cannot speak of exile without thinking of the people of Afghanistan, as the Taliban took over and the clock turned back years. So many live in fear of what is to come. My heart goes out to them.

Of course, we can't overlook the rising numbers of COVID cases, not just in our own province, but a many places in the world. How many have not felt a sense of despair with restrictions and limitations that meant for months we couldn't see family and friends? How many have been touched by this virus in terms of long haul effects, or loss of loved ones?

Yet, in the midst of those feelings of exile, of those times of despair – we can find glimmers of hope, we can find light. I think of the people in BC who are offering to shelter pets and livestock, and others opening their homes or their yards for people to park trailers for temporary housing. They are reaching out as light in the midst of exile.

In the case of the hurricanes, again, we see, in news stories, people reaching out to help too.

As far as the crisis in Afghanistan goes – there are helpers too- people risking to help others get out of the country; people outside of the region working to help – military personnel, government officials, making efforts to find solutions to the struggles. People like you and I, offering our prayers.

In the case of COVID...we must celebrate and give thanks for the many front line workers, the medical personnel, the cleaners and care-givers.

Those who are the helpers, those who are the care-givers of earth and it's inhabitants, bring hope and light to the world. As we begin this journey through the Season of Creation, and this celebration of Earth and all it's goodness, I offer more words from Norman Habel, in the poem:

“I Am Earth, Baby Earth”

In the beginning, I was waiting deep in the primal womb. I was waiting in the darkness like an embryo waiting to be born. Above, God hovered over the waters, like a midwife.

Then God said, “Light. We need some light so that Earth can be seen.” And night entered primal darkness.

Then God said, “Space, we need some space for Earth to appear.” So God placed the canopy over the waters with space below it.

Light! Space! Action!

Then God said, “Let the primal waters part and let the land waiting beneath appear.” Suddenly the waters burst and I came forth, a newborn child of God.

Do you know what God named me? Earth!

Yes, I am baby Earth.

To demonstrate that I was alive and breathing, God said, “Let Earth bring forth vegetation, every kind of flora.”

Soon I was alive and really green!

God looked at me, this new living being, this baby from the deep and said, “Beautiful.”

Copyright Norman Habel. Used by permission.

Hymn VU 307 Touch the Earth Lightly

This Week’s Minute for Mission

The people of Haiti need emergency shelter, clean water, and food.

Published On: August 21, 2021

On the morning of Saturday, August 14, Haiti was struck by a severe earthquake. Precious lives have been lost. Many homes and community buildings have been destroyed. Hospitals have also been damaged, and acutely injured and traumatized people are struggling to find help.

The earthquake follows sharply on the heels of other disasters, including a massive earthquake in 2010 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016. To make the situation even worse, Tropical Storm Grace hit Haiti on August 16.

The impact of the most recent earthquake is all the more devastating because of political instability, a severe economic downturn, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In the face of the current political crisis, Haitian citizens are working to create an agreement to facilitate a successful interim government to build a different future for their country.

The United Church of Canada is in contact with Mission & Service partners in Haiti to find out how we can support their communities. Already, we know that the people of Haiti need emergency shelter, clean water, and food. The church has made it possible for members to designate donations to help Haiti when they make a gift through a [special emergency fund](#).

Please hold the people of Haiti in [prayer](#).

Offertory Music MV 191 What Can I Do?

Offertory Prayer

Loving God, receive our offering this day; may it be used to ease the suffering of those you love, and bring hope to the world. We bring our gifts in praise and thanksgiving for your abundant grace. Amen.

Hymn VU 468 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

Prayers for the Day

O God, Creator of all, as we celebrate the wonders of creation, we know that we have a role to play in sustaining that wonder, in caring for the earth and all its inhabitants – people, animals, birds, sea creatures, plant life, even the air and the waters that surround us.

Help us to be faithful stewards of this earth, of your creation. Help us to be co-creators, with you, and with one another. May we do our best to live in peace and harmony.

This day, we give thanks for those who teach, and those who learn. We pray that schools and other places of learning may be safe places of love and joy.

We pray for those in our midst who are struggling with illness, that they may experience healing and hope...

We pray for those living with loss – through broken relationships, through death, through change in employment, that they may know comfort...

We pray for those who are experiencing moments of exile, times of despair, that they may find peace...

We pray for those in parts of the world torn by violence and political turmoil, and those living with the aftermath of natural disaster, may the light of hope shine... and we take a moment of silence to lift the prayers of our hearts to you, O God.

In praise and thanksgiving, we join our voices, in the words of Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

Hymn VU 427 To Show By Touch and Word

A Blessing for Today

May the joy of the soaring birds be ours,

May the peace of star-filled nights be ours.

May the hope of sprouting seeds be ours.

May the strength of flowing rivers be ours.

May God's love for all of creation be ours, this day and forevermore.

Amen.

Choral Benediction MV 224 May the God of Peace

Postlude

Thank you for taking time to be part of the Olds-Sundre and Knox (Didsbury) Pastoral Charges worship experience.

Olds and Knox are worshipping together at 9:30 a.m., some people in person at each church, and some participating in worship via live stream. Sundre's worship, for the next two weeks in at 1:30, in person, at the church there.

We are continuing to practise careful COVID precautions in all our meeting places.

The bulletin and sermon will continue to be posted to the websites, for those who are unable to join us, or to access the livestreaming.

Also, we have a Facebook presence at "Olds and Sundre United Churches".

Each week, via email, there will be updates and announcements sent to each community of faith. If you'd like to receive those emails, please contact your church office and ask to be included.

*Please note: On **September 12, following worship**, each church will be holding a meeting to make decisions related to moving forward with the shared ministry arrangement, and to accept the drafted Memorandum of Agreement associated with that. To learn more, contact one of the churches, or Tammy.*

Questions? Wish to financially support our ministries? Contact information for our churches:

Olds United Church

4810 50th Street, Olds AB. T4H 1E4

email office@oldsunited.ca website www.oldsunited.ca 403-556-3052

Sundre United Church

Box 614 118 Centre Street North, Sundre AB. T0M 1X0

email sundreuc@telus.net website www.sundreunited.ca 403-638-4428

Knox United Church

P.O. Box 57 1406 - 19th Avenue Didsbury, AB, TOM OWO

email knoxdidsbury@shaw.ca website www.knoxunited.com 403-335-8373

Rev. Tammy's confidential email minister@oldsunited.ca