

Welcome / Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

***We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also acknowledge that the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – lived here before settlers of European descent claimed ownership of it and displaced those for whom this land was home. As we pursue our goals to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament this injustice in our history and commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.***

□ ***Like the murmur of the dove's song (verses 1 and 2) 385***

Call to Worship

**Window side:** Hey there, sun and moon! Hey there, shining stars!

**All: Praise God in highest heaven.**

**Wall side:** Hey there, wind and water! Hey there, grass and trees!

**All: Praise God all over the earth.**

**Window side:** Hey there, whoever flies! Hey there, whoever swims!

**All: Praise God from the heights and depths.**

**Wall side:** Hey there, old and young! Hey there, big and small!

**All: Praise God, everyone!**

□ ***All things bright and beautiful 435***

Gathering Prayer (Greeting God / Saying Sorry to God)

God, you love the earth you made, the sea and the sky, the animals and the trees, the birds and the bees. You even love the ground under our feet. We thank you for making so many bright and beautiful things — including all of us. You made us all for a purpose. Today help us think about why we're here in the middle of this bright and beautiful world. We join our voices with the wind and the waves, the geese and the gophers to praise your holy name.

**God, we love the earth you made, with trees to climb, water to swim in and grass to play on. Yet sometimes we forget to look after the earth. We make lots of garbage to bury. We dump things down the drain without thinking. We push animals out of their homes as if we owned everything. Forgive us when we forget the earth belongs to you and teach us a better way to go. Amen**

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<sup>1</sup> Elements of this service are adapted from "God's Good Old Earth" prepared in 2018 by the Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks.

## Words of Hope (A Kind Word About God's Love)

Dear friends, while it is true we have all made a mess of God's world in some ways, it is also true that God forgives us when we own up to what we've done. With Jesus' love we can become new people. So know that we make God glad when we remember to say we're sorry. Thanks be to God!

## What a Wonderful World! — Conversation About the Earth

- Do you like to spend time outside in God's creation?
- Are there limits to how you are able to enjoy God's creation?
- What interesting things do you see outside?
- Do you have a favourite creature you watch for?
- Do you have a favourite place to spend time outside?

## □ *Rain Down*

## #49 *Sing the Journey*

Forever and ever people have found the world an interesting place. Remember studying the world in school? In science? It was my favourite subject as both a student and teacher! We study to learn how things happen – how things grow – how the world changes from winter to spring to summer – why the wind blows and why the thunder booms. We learn a lot about the world in science. The Bible also tells us about the world – because God loves the world and all its creatures and because the whole world and everything in it was born out of God's love.

Let's listen to a story about the world being born. It's an ancient story, written about three thousand years ago...

Scripture **A story from Genesis, *The Book of Beginnings* – 1: 1-5**

[OT

1]

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the 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. Then God said, "*Let there be light*"; and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

When we think about God's love for the world, we can think about how we should treat the world because we believe God loves the world. Here is a creation story told in a different way...

Story ***The Seventh Direction: A Legend of Creation*** (Kevin Locke and Kristy Cameron)

Story ***Fergie Cleans Up***<sup>2</sup> Steve reads...

One summer day, some human campers pitched a tent close to the stream that led into the swamp. Fergie the Frog and his brother Freddie watched the campers with interest. The people hung their food in a tree so animals couldn't eat it. They put bottles in the stream to keep cool.

"Do you suppose they sleep in the mud?" asked Fergie.

"No," said Freddie. "They probably sleep in the trees, like raccoons. Then the bears won't eat them or their food."

The next morning Fergie woke up to find his mud hole covered in white bubbles. "Hey? What's this?" he asked.

"Camper fuzz," said his mother. "Those humans threw their dishwater in the stream. Now this foam is all over the swamp."

Fergie made a face. "Ick."

At supper, it got worse. The campers walked to the swamp and dumped charcoal from their barbecue in the Frogs' living room.

"It won't start a fire here," one of the campers said.

"What do you mean?" yelled Fergie. "It could start a fire in my bed! Do you want roast frog for breakfast?"

He was hopping mad, so mad he hopped on a piece of charcoal and sizzled his foot. "Ouch!" he croaked.

"Listen to the frogs croaking, Jane," said another camper. "Isn't it great to be away from the city noise?"

The Frogs decided they would move until their house cooled off. They went in different directions to look for safe places to hide. Fergie was in some tall reeds not very far from the stream when it happened.

The campers dumped their garbage. They dumped their garbage into the tall reeds—right on top of Fergie!

"Hey, watch that!" he croaked.

Then CLUNK! A big pop bottle fell right on top of Fergie.

Two hours later the search party found Fergie.

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<sup>2</sup> An original story by Nancy Cocks © 2003 an illustrated version by Novalis Press, Ottawa. The illustrated version is now out of print so permission to copy or reprint comes directly from Nancy.

“Ohhhh!” he groaned. Fergie couldn’t move because the bottle pinned his legs to the ground.

“Fergie! Are you all right?” cried Mother Frog.

He moaned again. “I can’t move my legs. I think they’re broken.”

The whole Frog family pushed on the pop bottle until it rolled away. Then they carried Fergie to a safer place between the roots of a tree. As his mother bandaged his legs, Fergie asked, “Were those campers trying to hurt me on purpose?”

“No, Fergie, I don’t think so,” said Mother Frog. “They didn’t think about you.” She shook her head sadly. “They just didn’t think.”

### Reflecting on the story

We don’t always think about looking after animals and streams and trees. Sometimes people dump garbage wherever they like, not stopping to think. But we know that human beings can hurt the earth and God’s other creatures unless we are careful about the things we do. God asks us to look after the earth and take care of all the beautiful plants and animals that God made. May we be mindful so that what we do doesn’t hurt another one of God’s creatures.

□ *We cannot own the sunlit sky*

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Scripture **A story from Jesus as told in Mark 4: 26-29** [NT 38]

(Jesus said:) *“The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come.”*

Offering and Prayer

In the PCC’s Statement of Christian Belief, we confess “We are not owners, but stewards of God’s good earth. Concerned with the well-being of all of life, we welcome the truths and insights of all human skill and science about the world and the universe. Our stewardship calls us to explore ways of love and justice in respecting God’s creation and in seeking its responsible use for the common good.” On Earth Day, we give thanks that God gives growth from the earth and growth in God’s Spirit to help us follow Jesus in everything we do. May we give with joy to support this ministry.

□ **Praise God from whom all blessings flow** 306

**Generous God, you have blessed us with all we need to share the good news of your love for all creation. We dedicate these gifts and pray that they may bring healing, wholeness, and hope. May we all know your graciousness and love. Amen**

Prayers for all God’s People

- April** God bless the earth and the ground we walk on. Wherever we run and jump – walk and hike, make us grateful for the ground under our feet.
- Kittie** God bless the earth and the dirt we dig in. Bless the seeds we sow and make them grow Bless the plants and flowers with rain and sun. Bless the worms that wiggle and the bees that visit. Whenever we taste something from our gardens Make us grateful for the dirt we dig in.
- Dennis** God bless the earth and the wind the blows. Bless us with the summer breeze to cool us down. Wherever the wind has turned into storms Give people strength and courage to pick up the pieces of their lives and rebuild their homes. God keep us safe from storms this year.
- Marianne** God bless the earth and the rain that falls. Bless the water that refreshes the earth and allows us to drink, bathe and play in it. Wherever the water has turned into floods Give people strength and courage to clean up the mess and rebuild their communities. God keep us safe from floods this year.
- Heather** God bless the earth and the sky above us. Bless the air we breathe and the sun that rises. Bless the stars that twinkle and the dancing Northern Lights.

Help us live wisely under the sky. Caring for the air we breathe, the water that flows, the wind that blows and everything that grows. Help us remember the earth and everything in it belongs to you Let us treat everything as your gift.

**April** We give thanks O God as we pray this version of the Lord's Prayer together...

**Eternal Spirit Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!**

**The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us.**

**In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen**

□ *Soft rains of spring flow*

*#680 PCUSA*

When the Time Was Right<sup>3</sup>

**Fiona** God looked into space, but nothing was around:  
just darkness and wind, not a smell, sight or sound.  
Then God said, 'I think we'll have light.'  
So the darkness stopped when the time was right.

**Anne** God made night and day, but they weren't the same.  
Then God made sea and sky and gave each its name;  
and when God saw the ocean which was sparkling and bright,  
God was glad to have made water when the time was right.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from "When the Time Was Right"; He Was In the World p. 55-57; John L. Bell; GIA Publications ©1995.

**Jim** God said, 'Now I'd like to see land.  
I'd like meadows and mountains and shores full of sand.'  
So God brought earth from water and was pleased with the sight  
of the plants which all grew when the time was right.

**Amanda** Then God looked at the sky and found it too plain.  
It was all coloured blue and was filled up with rain.  
So God made sun and moon to change day into night  
and the stars blinked their eyes when the time was right.

**Fiona** God looked at the land and decided, one day,  
to put fish in the sea and make sure that they'd stay.  
God put birds in the air and they all shook with fright  
till God taught them to fly when the time was right.

**Anne** Then God made the animals, some small and some large,  
and soon God was asking 'Who on earth will take charge?'  
So God waited and wondered, till with careful insight  
God made man and made woman when the time was right.

**Jim** Then God watched from a distance to see what they'd do  
with the world and its creatures and with each other too.  
  
Sometimes they forgot what God wanted or said.  
Then they'd go their own way and do their will instead.  
And it hurt God that people, who had been made out of love,  
should forget how to live, what to say, where to move.

**Fiona** Should God punish and hate them?

**Anne** Should God leave them to fight?

**Jim** No. God sent to them Jesus when the time was right.

**Amanda** Today we enjoy all that God's love has done  
and give thanks for our world, for our lives, for the Son;  
and we sing songs of praise to express our delight  
at all God meant to be when the time was right.

□ *Go now in peace, never be afraid*