# Worship Planning

# Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Third Sunday, Year B: Nurture Me!

Texts (non-lectionary): Genesis 1:1–13; Psalm 104:1–9; Genesis 9: 8–9, 12–13

Submitted by Lauren Hodgson

### Gathering: A Time of Creation

#### Music

“Gather Us In” (*More Voices* 7, piano only)

(*Music is played softly, in the background, as worshippers enter the worship space.*)

Gathering Words (Genesis 1:1–13)

(*If possible, split the reading between two voices—voice one reads days one and three; voice two reads day two and four, and so on. Have the readers read from the side of the worship space using hand-held mikes so they are not visible to the gathered congregation*. *Music continues quietly throughout the reading.*)

(*If PowerPoint is used: Make sure the opening slide is a solid colour, with the words—those that are underlined below—appearing on the screen in another, noticeable colour; the words should coincide with the reading and pop up at different places on the screen. If PowerPoint is not used: Invite someone fluent in sign language to stand at the front of the worship space and sign the reading as it is read aloud.*)

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth.

**2** Now the Earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

**3** And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

**4** God saw that the light was good and God separated the light from the darkness.

**5** God called the light “day,” and the darkness God called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

**6** And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.”

**7** So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.

**8** God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

**9** And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so.

**10** God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters God called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

**11** Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so.

**12** The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

**13** And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

(*At the end of the reading, a worship leader walks quietly to the centre of the chancel and lights the Christ candle. Where a person is signing the reading, that person might be the one to light the candle.*)

#### Call to Worship

Listen closely.

Listen to the hum of the Earth… (*pause*)

Listen to the murmuring of the grass… (*pause*)

Listen to the buzz of the birds, and the rustling of the forest… (*pause*)

Do you hear it?

Listen closely.

Listen closely as the melodies of creation

sing, shout, creak, and whisper around us.

Listen closely as our hearts sing within us.

Listen closely as all of creation yearns for nurture.

Do you hear it?

As we take these moments to listen,

we remember God’s call of creation:

“Let there be!”

And so, in this time of gathering,

let there be honest reflection.

Let there be radical discernment.

Let there be creative stirring.

Let there be space for connection.

Let there be nurture and care.

Come! Let us worship with one another and with all of creation!

#### Opening Hymn

“Before the Earth Had Yet Begun” (*Voices United* 301)

### Listening: A Time of Covenant

#### Children’s Time

(*Ahead of time, set up a small card table on which has been placed three pots: 1. a pot filled with soil in which the children will plant seeds; 2. a pot with a plant that has sprouted or begun to grow, but has not been nurtured and has wilted or browned, looking unhealthy; 3. a pot with a plant that is thriving and is flowering—ideally a plant that bears new seeds, creating the potential for new life. The pots and their contents should be covered so the children do not know what they are. They will be uncovered one by one*. *Also have ready seeds and Popsicle sticks. Leave some sticks blank and on others write words that relate to caring for plants, e.g., “water,” “sun,” “healthy environment,” “pruning.”*)

The focus of the children’s time is to create space for the children to reflect upon what it means to nurture creation. One way to open up this conversation might be to ask, “What do you think of when you hear the word, ‘nurture’?”

After receiving the children’s answers, ask if the group thinks that creation needs to be nurtured. Indicating the table, explain that you have brought along some supplies to help you talk about this.

First, uncover pot 1. Bring out the seeds and have one or two of the children plant a few seeds in this pot. Ask the children what will happen to this seed if you put the pot in a cupboard and ignore it. When they respond (suggesting that it would not grow or might grow, but will not be healthy), uncover pot 2.

Next, ask the children what would happen if instead of putting the plant away, you decide to nurture and take care of it, i.e., what kinds of care will this plant need in order to grow? Honour all responses and as the children offer suggestions for what the plant needs to grow that match the words on the Popsicle sticks, invite them to place the sticks into pot 1. Add new suggestions to the blank Popsicle sticks.

Once all answers have been received, uncover pot 3. Talk about how this plant, because of the nurture it has been given, is now about to create something new.

Close this time by asking, “What are some of the ways *you* can nurture creation?”

(*For the remainder of the service the children can explore this connection further by creating art pieces on the theme of covenant. The children can talk about what they do or might do to nurture creation (e.g., turn off the lights at home, walk or bike, eat locally grown food, plant a garden), and then make posters that state their individual commitments to care for creation. If time and resources allow, a leader can take a picture of each child holding a poster, and these can be printed and displayed somewhere in the church building for the congregation to share.*)

#### Psalm

Psalm 104:1–9

#### Scripture

Genesis 9:8–9, 12–13

#### Hymn

“Called by Earth and Sky” (*More Voices* 135)

#### Reflection Suggestions

Theme: In the beginning, God creates and sees that it is good. Creation is an act of nurture into which God calls us all; as we nurture creation, we, too, participate in acts of creation alongside God.

In 2011, I spent four months in Kenya, working with one of our United Church partners. Many of my days were spent in schools learning about child rights—and learning about them first-hand from children. Quite quickly, I noticed a prominent theme emerging from many of the students’ stories: child rights were often discussed within the context of caring for creation.

Many of the schools I visited have child rights clubs. One club has the primary focus of planting and tending a large garden on the school property. The children lovingly spend time each day in community with one another, with creation, and with God; as they care for one another, they care for creation. They spoke passionately about the ways in which their garden has transformed their school community, their families, their town, and their lives.

Children understand, perhaps better than many of us, the intimate connections between creation and humanity and the ways we are called to care for creation as creation cares for us.

In today’s readings from Genesis and Psalms, we hear that God’s covenant is with all of creation—and includes a call to nurture and care for creation. These readings remind us, in various ways, how God creates, blesses, and covenants with creation. As stewards of creation, we are called to continually enter and re-enter into this relationship When we think of nurturing, perhaps placid or gentle images come to mind; however, today’s readings challenge us to act boldly. As creation whispers, “Nurture me!” we listen for the loud yearning of “Empower me to create and recreate!”

**Questions for reflection and response**

* How have you been nurtured?
* In what ways is God calling you to nurture creation?
* Where do you hear creation grumbling for nurture?

### Responding: A Time of Care

#### Solo Song, Dance, and Reflection

“Long before the Night” (*Voices United* 282)

(*At the end of each pew there will be paper and other creative supplies. The service’s reflection time will be one of personal reflection during which worshippers are invited to take a piece of paper and some art supplies and, while remaining in the pews, draw, write, or create in some other way a prayer of hope for the nurturing of creation. One member of the choir will sing “Long before the Night” while a liturgical dance is shared at the front of the chancel. The dance will begin with a single dancer who dances with a long piece of solid-coloured fabric. After the first verse of the song, other dancers will, one by one, join the first dancer at the front. These dancers will also have long pieces of fabric; however, the fabric of the other dancers will be boldly patterned and multi-coloured. At the dance’s conclusion, these coloured pieces of fabric will be draped by each dancer at the front of the chancel and around the worship space*.)

#### Gathering our Gifts

(*As the offering is collected, worshippers are invited to offer their creations from the reflection time into the offering baskets, in addition to any money they wish to give. The money collected could be donated to a local organization supporting an ecological cause. A portion of the offering could be donated to an ecological cause supported by the Mission and Service Fund.*)

#### Prayer of Dedication

We offer these gifts to you today, God,

as a symbol of our commitment

to nurture, covenant, and care.

This we give with boldness, courage, and strength.

Amen.

#### Hymn

“Creator God You Gave Us Life” (*More Voices* 27)

#### Prayers of the People

God, whose power is great beyond our knowing,

whose love runs deeper than our hurtful actions of neglect,

who holds all of creation in your tender embrace:

 let us love, not only in words or speech, but in truth and action,

 let us be the stewards of deepened relationship and interaction,

 and the givers of life to creation that surrounds us.

We come to you in this quiet place

seeking your reassurance and your hope.

Come and cradle us in your arms of love.

As we inhale, breathe your life into our hearts.

As we exhale, help us to let go of heavy expectations and anxieties.

Help us to feel your love as close to us as the breath we breathe.

Today, God, we admit to the places where we fall short—

where we are not able to give enough,

do enough,

nurture enough.

Inspire in us a longing to be better stewards

and help us to live out our covenant commitment.

Allow the dreams and hopes that we have—

for ourselves, for our communities, and for all of creation—

to sprout forth with energy and new life.

And now, we continue our prayer through song.

#### Sing

“The Lord’s Prayer” (*Voices United* page 959)

#### Blessing

Go out into the world as listening, responding nurturers.

Go, knowing that God’s creation continues to unfold

around us and within us.

And as you go, know that you are

accompanied by Christ’s radical challenge,

guided by the Spirit’s creative movement,

and supported by God’s deep nurture,

now and always. Amen.

#### Commissioning Hymn

“Hey Ney Yana” (*More Voices* 217)