# Worship Planning

# Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Third Sunday, Year c: Walk Lightly upon Me!

Texts (non-lectionary): Genesis 13:1–17; Matthew 10:29; Mark 2:23; Matthew 6:28; Psalm 119:64*a*, 90b, 133

Submitted by Pat Milliken

### Gathering

(*A drum beat could be used to call the people into worship, evolving into the processional.*)

#### Processional

“We Are Marching” (*Voices United* 646)

(*This may be a traditional processional with choir and worship leaders, or perhaps children and adults who wish to participate could join the processional, entering into worship with the singing of “We Are Marching.”*)

#### Gathering Words

Here we are, feet dancing with excitement,

toes tapping joy,

shoes stomping with the rhythm of creation.

Here we are, marching in the light of God

**Sung Refrain:** “We are marching in the light of God” (*Voices United* 646, first 4 repeats only)

It must also be said,

there are times when we come—

shuffling along the way;

when we come stumbling a little,

out of sync,

unsure of our footsteps,

yet we come, marching in the light of God.

**Sung Refrain:** “We are marching in the light of God”

Here we are,

a gathering of people

a congregation

a church

joining with all of creation

in praise and thanksgiving

for we are marching in the light of God.

**Sung Refrain:** “We are marching in the light of God”

#### Gathering Prayer

Spirit of holiness,

move in creation;

breathe life;

gather us into love.

May we know your presence woven through this time.

Be in our dance as we join creation’s song:

when we forget the steps, guide our feet;

when we lose our path, recall us to your way;

when we stumble, lift us into joy.

God, our Creator,

our Redeemer,

our Sustainer,

be with us now

as always.

Amen.

#### Song of Praise

“Never Ending Joy” (*More Voices* 40)

or

“All Creatures of Our God and King” (*Voices United* 217)

### Listening

#### Story Time for All God’s Children

***Focus: Walk Lightly on the Earth***

This is an opportunity to introduce the focus for this worship by explaining the intention of the United Church to explore creation themes by asking what creation might say to us if we would only listen. "Walk lightly upon me!” is one of 15 possibilities. (There are five services for each of Years A, B, and C.) Ask the children why creation might say this to us—children tend to be very aware of environmental concerns and will likely offer suggestions that are rich in wisdom.

Other answers might lie in an imaginary trail walk: around the sanctuary post a variety of signs similar to those encountered while walking along one of the nature trails in your area, for example:

Take nothing but pictures.

Leave nothing but footprints.

Use nothing but time;

Keep nothing but memories

Leave tracks not trash.

Trampling kills meadows—please stay on the trail.

As you walk with the children and other participants around the sanctuary, imagine the sights and sounds you would discover on your walk—tracks in the snow in winter, wild flowers in spring, the shade of trees in the summer heat, the leaves of fall crunching underfoot. Practise “walking lightly.” If blank signs are provided, the children could create their own sign to remind people to walk lightly on God’s Earth.

Alternatives:

Teach the chorus of “Take Off Your Shoes” (*All God’s Children Sing* 39).The choir might sing the verses and the congregation join in at the chorus.

Read *Wonderful Earth!* by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen (Hunt & Thorpe, 1998), or *Song of Creation* by Paul Goble (Eerdmans, 2004).

#### Prayer of Confession

You, O God, created land, and sea, and sky:

small, tiny plants to grace the Earth,

giant trees with roots deep in soil and arms reaching into the sky;

and animals, from giant, blundering elephants to chattering chipmunks,

You, O God, created.

**Creator God,**

**we have forgotten.**

**We thought this world was our world,**

**a world exclusively for our use.**

**Creator,**

**forgive.**

You, O God, created an abundance of space:

forests to shelter a herd of deer and a pack of wolves;

prairie grasslands to host thundering bison and whistling prairie dogs;

bogs for turtles and water snakes;

ponds for bull frogs and great blue herons,

You, O God, created.

**Creator God,**

**we have forgotten.**

**We thought this world was our world,**

**a world to subjugate and redefine.**

**Creator,**

**forgive.**

You, O God, created all kinds of people

in a never-ending variety of shapes, sizes, and colours:

people to cultivate the land and tend the earth

people to gather in praise on a Sabbath day

people to minister, to support, to love.

You, O God, created.

**Creator God,**

**we have forgotten**

**We thought these were our lives,**

**lives to spend as we wished.**

**Creator,**

**forgive.**

You, O God, created,

and it was good.

**Creator God, forgive us.**

**We have forgotten. Amen.**

#### Assurance of Pardon

We forget.

God remembers.

In faithfulness, in love,

God remembers

and waits for us to remember.

And when we remember, we discover God’s forgiving presence.

God is here, acting in creation,

renewing,

recreating,

redeeming.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### Hymn

“Teach Me, God, to Wonder” (*Voices United* 299, verses 1–2)

or

“O Beautiful Gaia” (*More Voices* 41)

#### Scripture Reading

Genesis 13:1–17 – Abraham and Lot go their separate ways.

#### Reflections

This scripture passage is rich in possibilities for the context of environmental issues and the theme of walking lightly on the land.

Within the story we have a land that is overburdened (“the land could not support both of them living together,” verse 6) and a people contentious and divided—tensions that are reflected in our own time. Issues of land use and abuse continue to bring brother and sister, parent and child, uncle and nephew into conflict.

Then we have Lot, the greedy one, who claims the best for himself and in so doing sets the stage for future tragedy. (Remember the story of Lot’s wife?)

And we see Abraham walking the land that God has given him, claiming it for his own while remembering that this land was a gift from God, to be held in trust for future generations. It’s an image repeated in today’s world when a farmer faithfully walks the land, checking fields, kneeling on the earth to discover if the seed has yet sprouted—if there will be another’s seasons harvest.

Voices from the secular world join the call to walk lightly on the land. You might consider researching David Suzuki, a well-recognized spokesperson for the environment. Other resources might include Michael Jackson’s *Earth Song* video, available on YouTube, or perhaps Ray Bradbury’s short story *The Sound of Thunder* in which the death of a single butterfly distorts creation. Either reading the story or watching the video would lead into a discussion on what it means to listen to creation and to walk lightly.

#### Responsive Reading

(*Plan for a reading for two voices plus a congregational response.*)

**Voice 1:**

Jesus the Christ said “Yet not one of them [sparrows] will fall to the ground apart from [God].” (from Matthew 10:29)

**Voice 2:**

The bob white quails are scarce in the land.

Even as meadowlarks and bobolinks lose their homes,

barn owls no longer swoop through the night sky.

God sees a little sparrow fall.

We must share this Earth with all of creation.

**All: We will walk lightly on the Earth.**

**Voice 1:**

Jesus the Christ walked with his friends across a field of ripening grain, feeding their hunger. (based on Mark 2:23)

**Voice 2:**

Hickory nuts spill from their husks;

puff balls burst from the earth;

an abundance of elderberries tug blossom heads downward:

a harvest of plenty for all God’s creation.

We must remember that the abundance is for sharing.

**All: We will walk lightly on the Earth.**

**Voice 1:**

Jesus the Christ said “Consider the lilies of the field.” (from Matthew 6:28)

**Voice 2:**

Daffodils spread across an abandoned lot

while wild flowers reclaim the roadside;

persistent dandelions push through a sidewalk crack

and dogtooth violets claim a woodlot floor.

Fragile, created grace;

gifts to treasure;

proclamations of hope.

The earth can bloom again.

**All: We will walk lightly on the Earth.**

**The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love;**

**you have established the earth and it stands fast.**

**Keep my steps steady, according to your promise.**

(from Psalm 119:64*a*, 90*b,* 133)

**Hymn:**

“God of the Sparrow”(*Voices United* 229)

or

“Each Blade of Grass”(*More Voices* 37)

### Responding

#### Gathering Our Gifts

We remember the gifts of creation, a world abundantly blessed.

We remember the life of Christ, lived in joy and given in love.

We live within the abundant grace of God;

how can we respond but with offerings of love?

Our offering will be received.

#### Sung Response

“What Can I Do?” (*More Voices* 191)

or

“We Give Thee but Thine Own” (*Voices United* 543)

#### Prayer of Dedication

Living God, you are the heart of life,

pattern within the chaos

and breath to the clay.

You established a universe,

created the planet Earth and

called us to tend the earth as your co-creators.

With hands and feet,

heart and life

may we be doers of your word.

Bless our offering

and guide our spending of it

that we might bring hope for a new day of justice and peace.

Amen.

#### Prayer for the Day

Holy One, Breath of Creation,

this day may we walk lightly on your Earth.

May we celebrate the fragile strength of your creation,

which calls our hearts into awe and our souls into worship.

We are honoured to be called co-creators,

given the joy and responsibility of tending your garden.

#### Sung Response

“To Show by Touch and Word” (*Voices United* 427, verse 1)

Compassionate God, heartbeat of creation,

this day may we seek justice for the meadowlark, the polar bear,

the leopard frog, the painted turtle,

the white ash and pine,

the tall grass prairie, the permafrost layer of soil;

for all the threatened species of this earth.

Remind us that in their loss, we are diminished.

May we be their voice;

may we be their hope;

may we be their true companion on this Earth.

**Sung Response**

“To Show by Touch and Word” (*Voices United* 427, verse 2)

Loving God, our hope and our joy,

may we embrace your will for our living:

sharing the Earth in justice and fairness,

tending the Earth in compassion and care,

walking lightly on the Earth for all of our days.

#### Sung Response

“To Show by Touch and Word” (*Voices United* 427, verse 3)

(*At this point include prayer for local and pastoral concerns.*)

#### The Lord’s Prayer

#### Hymn

“Touch the Earth Lightly” (*Voices United* 307)

#### Commissioning

“Go, Make a Diff’rence” (*More Voices* 209)

or

“We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection” (*Voices United* 586)