

Westminster Presbyterian Church

July 25, 2021 | 10:00am
Live Streaming | In Person

Sacred Earth, Sacred Work: *Creation as Blessing*



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Path I: Recognizing Inherent Goodness

Prelude

Gathering and Welcoming

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

God is good!

All the time!

And all the time!

God is good!

Indeed, we gather to celebrate the goodness of God and all of God's creation. I invite you to stand in body and/or spirit as you are comfortable. Let us give thanks for this opportunity to be together! Bring to mind WHAT and WHO you are thankful for this morning!

Expanding Our Attention 360°

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

(choir sings) Gathered here in the mystery of this hour

Gathered here in one strong body

Gathered here in the struggle and the power

Spirit draw near

To worship is to heighten and expand our attention to God, to others, and to the world around us. We open all our senses in a special way—seeing the Divine in all things and in every direction. We are used to looking to the front of our space during worship—just as we often limit our perspectives in life. We will open our worship in this series by symbolizing our willingness to become more aware of life all around us and aware that our lives are a part of the cycles and seasons of creation, constantly moving and growing. I invite you to a quarter turn to your right.

(let us sing) **Spirit draw near**

When we dare to explore new directions, we discover new perspectives! Look to your right and left and see the people who are seated in front and behind you. Sometimes we only see our own slice of reality and don't open to really experience other's points of view. To gather as community is to delight in the unique contributions of each one!

Now I invite you to turn another quarter turn to face the back.

(let us sing) **Spirit draw near**

Here we look towards the door at the back of our space. This is where we came in from the different rhythms of our lives (and if you didn't come in there, think of it as a symbol of wherever you came in) ... Some came from laid back rhythms, some hectic and harried. But now we are here together and we take a moment to simply tune into the rhythm of this body, this community, this moment with God. Let's take a breath in

and then let it out—allowing any worries of what is left undone out there to be released just for a while. *[pause and breathe with the congregation]*

Let us turn another quarter turn.

Spirit draw near

To come to worship is to bring all of our lives. We face this fourth direction and know that all aspects of life—the good, the difficult, the things we are thankful for and the grief and fear that we may be facing—are ALL welcome here. Nothing is hidden from God and God welcomes it all to be transformed this day. Let us complete our turning to face the center of this room where the Light of Christ is coming into our midst.

Spirit draw near

Christ, our Light, is the center of this community! And when we turn to face that light in our midst, we see one another. For each one is created in the image and likeness of God and so when we see one another, we see more of the Divine shine through.

Gathered here in the mystery of this hour

Gathered here in one strong body

Gathered here in the struggle and the power

Spirit draw near

And all God's people said, "**Amen!**"

Synopsis of Week 1: In this first week of our series on creation spirituality, we focus on the idea of "original blessing." The universe, and all life within it, is fundamentally a blessing, fundamentally good, and created to flourish—including us. This doesn't prevent hardship and difficulties, but it does strengthen us as we go through tough times. It allows us to deepen in faith and spirituality without fear. Life in all its joys and struggles is a blessing—which means, it is something worth sharing. How might moving through our days with an eye for recognizing goodness and blessing transform our experience of life?

Praising

"For the Beauty of the Earth"

GTG, 14

Praying

Nancy Brock

Creating God, You who spun the galaxies and breathed into us the breath of life,
Open us to an awareness of the life coursing through us that is connected to all creation
so that we might become more tuned in to your life force, feeling more vitality in our
lives, and more loving towards all. We praise you as the One in whom we have life and
being. And all God's people say, **Amen.**

A Story for All Ages

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

Path II: Befriending the Dark Places

[Shannon: allow the room to settle and then a singing bowl begins to ring/sing]

Listening

Nancy Brock

"When Christ was in pain we were in pain. All creatures of God's creation that can
suffer pain suffered with him. The sky and the earth failed at the time of Christ's dying
because he too was part of nature." - Julian of Norwich

Letting Go and Holding with Love

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

I invite you to make a fist with your hands and imagine in those clenched fists is all that
you are holding tightly: fear, anxiety, worry, grief, loneliness, helplessness.
It may be a specific circumstance that has you tied in knots at the moment.

[pause - singing bowl continues]

Now I invite you to slowly open your fists and imagine a letting go into the loving
embrace of the Spirit who transforms all things. As we let go and open up, we see that
now our hands and hearts are more ready to hold, with love,
the concerns of others and the pain of the world. Let us say together . . .

Breathe in the pain

Breathe on out the love

May my heart be the place

Where this world is changed forever.

We remember and hold with love...*[leader inserts congregational, community and world
concerns here...listing names, places, occurrences, etc.]*

We also remember and hold with love these things lifted silently and aloud from this gathered body... [*people lift up other concerns from where they are silently or aloud*]

I invite you to place your hands now on your heart. In this silence we lift up all those things difficult to put into words, but felt in the depths of our hearts...

Each week we will explore a version of the prayer Jesus taught. This first week we encounter a translation directly from the Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.

Let us pray together:

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos,

Focus your light within us – make it useful:

Create your reign of unity now

Your one desire then acts with ours,

As in all light, So in all forms.

Grant us what we need each day in bread and insight:

Loose the cords of mistakes binding us,

As we release the strands we hold of other's guilt.

Don't let surface things delude us,

But free us from what holds us back.

From you is born all ruling will,

The power and the life to do,

The song that beautifies all,

From age to age it renews.

I affirm this with my whole being.

Truly power to these statements –

may they be the ground from which all my actions grow. Amen

- Aramaic Lord's Prayer by Douglas-Klotz'

Path III: Exclaiming the Divine Creative

Bringing Words to Life Genesis 1:1-2:4 Nancy Brock & Rev. Dr. Shannon

Smythe (Shannon reads bold parts)

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "**Light!**"

And light appeared.

God saw that light was good
and separated light from dark.

God named the light Day,
he named the dark Night.

It was evening, it was morning—
Day One.

God spoke: "**Sky! In the middle of the waters;
separate water from water!**"

God made sky.

God separated the water under sky
from the water above sky.

And there it was:

God named sky the Heavens;

It was evening, it was morning—
Day Two.

God spoke: "**Separate!**"

Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;

Land, appear!"

And there it was.

God named the land Earth.

God named the pooled water Ocean.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "**Earth, green up! Grow all varieties
of seed-bearing plants,
Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."**

And there it was.
Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,
all varieties,
And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Three.

God spoke: “**Lights! Come out!
Shine in Heaven’s sky!
Separate Day from Night.
Mark seasons and days and years,
Lights in Heaven’s sky to give light to Earth.**”
And there it was.

God made two big lights, the larger
to take charge of Day,
The smaller to be in charge of Night;
and God made the stars.
God placed them in the heavenly sky
to light up Earth
And oversee Day and Night,
to separate light and dark.
God saw that it was good.
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Four.

God spoke: “**Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!**”
God created the huge whales,
all the swarm of life in the waters,
And every kind and species of flying birds.
God saw that it was good.
God blessed them: “Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!

Birds, reproduce on Earth!"
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Five.

God spoke: **"Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds."**

And there it was:
wild animals of every kind,
Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.
God saw that it was good.

God spoke: **"Let us make human beings in our image, make them
reflecting our nature**

**So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,**

**And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."**

God created human beings;

God created them godlike,

Reflecting God's nature.

God created them [in gender-diversity].

God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!

**Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."**

Then God said, **"I've given you**

every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth

And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,

given them to you for food.

To all animals and all birds,

everything that moves and breathes,

I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."

And there it was.

God looked over everything God had made;
it was so good, so very good!
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Six.

Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.

By the seventh day
God had finished God's work. **[Whew!]**
On the seventh day
God rested from all this work. **[Yes!]**
God blessed the seventh day.
God made it a Holy Day
Because on that day God rested from the work,
all the creating God had done **[and it was so very good].**
This is the story of how it all started,
of Heaven and Earth when they were created.

This is a Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

All creation is a word of God.

All creation speaks volumes of God.

Sermonizing

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

Making Something New

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

Blessing Our Offering

Nancy Brock

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Let us return to God the offerings of our life and the gifts of the earth. We invite you to join this community in stewarding not only your money, but also your lives. Your pledges and offerings may be given securely online or by cash or check in the baskets as you enter and exit the church.

Path IV: Embodying Compassion and Power

Holding On

Nancy Brock

Before we head out we want to highlight a couple of opportunities to hold onto our connection to each other and compassion for the world through this week.

Opportunities to practice our connection and compassion are to join us for our next 6 week Zoom Adult Education study of the Pentateuch, which starts up this coming Wednesday at 10am. We are also excited that our Prayer Shawl ministry is getting reignited. The plan is to resume with meetings on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 10am in the church library. All knitters, crocheters whether current, in your past, or in your future are invited to come to get to know one another, to pray for those on our prayer list, and to knit/crochet together.

Go For It!

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

Benediction Song

“You Shall Go Out with Joy”

GTG 80

Thank you to those involved in worship today:

Ushers: Nancy Tompkins
& Adele Trout

Liturgist: Nancy Brock

Musician: Steve Johnson

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

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Remember in Prayer

Pray for all those touched recently by violence and natural disasters, the healing of national hostility and mistrust, efforts to feed the poor and provide shelter for the homeless in our area, and the following people:

Jay Carlson, Clare MacDonald's son-in-law, and father of 2 young daughters, suffered a blood clot in his head. He has been released from hospital and is slowly recovering with the help of neuro physical therapy.

Ed Carter (102) is under hospice care in the skilled nursing unit at The Moorings. He is comfortable and appreciates our prayers and in-person visits by Covid-vaccinated friends.

Linda Book continues her battle with multiple myeloma cancer.

Chuck Burton, extended family of Lois Rayner, is dealing with issues related to cancer.

Pauline Cottingham is doing well, despite the general decline in her health.

Peter Cullin, Sue Culin's brother-in-law, is undergoing chemotherapy.

Honey Hill, Sue Cullin's step-niece, is awaiting the results of a biopsy.

Lacey Meade, Betty Pratt's daughter, completed her last round of chemotherapy.

Betty Pratt is feeling better, though she has some memory issues.

Janet Waugaman, Sally Waugaman's daughter, continues to lose mobility due to Multiple System Atrophy.

John Witmer is recovering at home following heart surgery, and is working to regain his strength and energy.

Our church has a prayer chain of members who will pray for any person you ask. Contact Leslie Marsh by phone at 302-542-9927 or email at cmarshjr@verizon.net

**Thank you to all the following Volunteers for the “Ice Cream on Us “
Event**

Sarah Altvater

Nancy Brock

Linda Crowe

Phil & Marylea Franz

Christine Hansvick

Glenn & Sharon Higbie

Charlotte Jacobs

Debbie Magliette

Sarah Ortolani

Suzi Berry

Julie Bucklin

Faith Duncan

Lois Gillespie

Claudine Harkins

Genie Hindall

Barbara Macfie

Rosemary Mirocco

Mimi Peters

Mary Boyer

Waneta Chaffinch

Bonnie Ekas

Brian Harron

John Hawkins

Bill & Sandra Hrin

Lib Macnab

Dave & Deb Norton

Ed & Carol Pillsbury

Lois Ann Raynor

Melissa Schrock

John Still

Cherie Touchet

Metropolitan Community Church of Rehoboth

Silvia Ritchie

Pastor Shannon Smythe

Kevin & Micah Subers

Adele Trout

John & Kay Rotach

Dave Smith

Nancy Tompkins

Ken & Nancy Witmer