

Hybrid Worship for April 23, 2023
Third Sunday of Easter
Celebrating Earth Sunday

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: “Come and Fill Our Hearts” MV 16

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
You alone, O God, are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,
alleluia!

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: With the birds of the air God calls us to sing our praise.

All: We join our voices with creation in holy music making.

One: With the rocks and the trees God calls us to be present to one another.

All: We join our hearts with all that exists in sacred connection.

One: With the sky and wind and water God calls us to shape the world.

All: We join our actions and intentions together in support of the earth.

One: With bees and bears and beluga whales, God calls us to celebrate.

All: We come with joy to worship our Creator God.

One: Let us share words of wisdom from the Iona Community:

This we know: the earth does not belong to us,

All: we belong to the earth.

One: This we know: all things are connected,

All: like the blood that unites one family.

One: This we know: we did not weave the web of life,

All: we are merely a strand in it.

One: This we know: whatever we do to the web of life,

All: we do to ourselves.

One: Let us give thanks for the gift of creation,

All: let us give thanks that all things hold together in Christ.

Opening Hymn: “It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker” MV 30

It's a song of praise to the Maker,
the thrush sings high in the tree.
It's a song of praise to the Maker,
the gray whale sings in the sea,

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a call of life to the Giver
when waves and waterfalls roar.
It's a call of life to the Giver
when high tides break on the shore,

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a hymn of love to the Lover;
the bumblebees hum along.
It's a hymn of love to the Lover;
the summer breeze joins the song

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's the chorus of all creation;
it's sung by all living things.
It's the chorus of all creation;
a song the universe sings,

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: A Blessing

*Today we will collect the water and soil from Applewood households who want to participate,
and offer a blessing on these essential elements in our lives.*

Blessing of the Soil

Loving Creator God, we bring before you this soil,
teeming with the life of tiny creatures,

full of nutrients and goodness.

Without soil much life could not exist upon the earth.

By it we are nourished and to it we will return.

We thank you for this marvellous and intricate creation.

Help us to hold in reverence and respect the humble soil
that is your chosen means of feeding and providing for us.

Bless this soil and all the soil around us, the soil in our fields and gardens,
the soil on the hills and in the woodlands,
and teach us to be wise stewards of the soil that sustains us.

Amen

Blessing of the Water

Loving Creator God,

we bring to you this water of our daily living,
refreshing and renewing and necessary.

Without water no life would exist upon the earth.

We thank you for this marvellous creation,
from which all life has been created.

help us to hold in reverence and respect your gift of water
that sustains us and can transform us.

Bless the waters that surround us – lakes and rivers and streams,
the water that flows from our taps at home, and all the waters of the world.

Teach us to be faithful and wise stewards of the water that gives us life.

Amen

Sung Response: “All Things Bright and Beautiful” VU 291 (Chorus, verses, chorus)

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful:
in love, God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colours,
God made their tiny wings.

The purpleheaded mountains,
the river running by,
the sunset and the morning
that brightens up the sky;

The cold wind in the winter,
the pleasant summer sun,

the ripe fruits in the garden:
God made them every one.

The rocky mountain splendour,
the lone wolf's haunting call,
the great lakes and the prairies,
the forest in the fall;

God gave us eyes to see them,
and lips that we might tell
how great is God our maker,
who has made all things well.

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful:
in love, God made them all.

Scripture Reading:

Job 12:7-10 *The Inclusive Bible*

But turn to the animals,
and let them teach you;
the birds of the air will tell you the truth.
Listen to the plants of the earth,
and learn from them;
let the fish of the sea become your teachers.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of YHWH has done this?
In God's hand is the soul of every living thing;
in God's hand is the breath of all humankind.

Luke 24:13-35 *The Inclusive Bible*

That same day, two of the disciples were making their way to a village called Emmaus--which was about seven miles from Jerusalem--discussing all that had happened as they went.

While they were discussing these things, Jesus approached and began to walk along with them, though they were kept from recognizing Jesus, who asked them, "What are you two discussing as you go your way?"

They stopped and looked sad. One of them, Cleopas by name, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened these

past few days?"

Jesus said to them, "What things?"

They said, "About Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet powerful in word and deed in the eyes of God all the people---how our chief priests and leaders delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him.

"We were hoping that he was the One who would set Israel free. Besides all this, today--the third day since these things happened--some women of our group have just brought us some astonishing news. They were at the tomb before dawn and didn't find the body; they returned and informed us that they had seen a vision of angels, who declared that Jesus was alive. Some of our number went to the tomb and found it to be just as the women said, but they didn't find Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, "What little sense you have! How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced! Didn't the Messiah have to undergo all this to enter into glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted for them every passage of scripture which referred to the Messiah. By now they were near the village they were going to, and Jesus appeared to be going further. But they said eagerly, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening--the day is practically over. So the savior went in and stayed with them.

After sitting down with them to eat, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, who immediately vanished from their sight.

They said to one another, "Weren't our hearts burning inside us as this one talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven and the rest of the company assembled. They were greeted with, "Christ has risen! It's true! Jesus has appeared to Simon!" Then the travellers recounted what had happened on the road, and how they had come to know Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: "With Respect In Creation"

Reflection: Earth, Sky, Water

Hymn: "Called by Earth and Sky" MV 135

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious these waters, endless seas,
deep ocean's dream, waters of healing,
rivers of rain, the wash of love again.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious this gift, the air we breathe;
wind born and free. Breath of the Spirit,
blow through this place, our gathering and our grace.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious these mountains, ancient sands;
vast fragile land. Seeds of our wakening,
rooted and strong, Creation's faithful song.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious the fire that lights our way,
bright dawning day. Fire of passion,
sorrow undone, our faith and justice one.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky, called by earth and sky,
called by earth and sky.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music: "Cover Me"

Hymn of Dedication: "Behold, Behold" MV 115

Behold, behold, I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold, behold, I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

Offering Prayer:

**All: Loving Creator, accept the gifts we offer
in this time of worship and beyond.**

**May what we share plant seeds of hope,
allow life to flourish, and reflect our care
for all you have created. Amen**

Prayers of the People

God, we come with thankful hearts to this time of prayer.
We are thankful for the intricacies and diversity
found in your creation, and for the way that all life
is woven together on this planet earth.

We thank you for the air that moves around us,
carrying sweet scents and changing temperatures,
seeds and pollen and the promise of change to come.
We thank you for the life that streams through our skies –
insects and birds and flying mammals of great variety.

We thank you for the waters of the earth – for flowing rivers
and trickling streams, for ocean's waves and still, clear lakes,
We thank you for the life which is both mysterious and astounding
that is found in the deepest part of the ocean or at the surface
of our favourite pond – tadpoles and hammerhead sharks, krill and
blue whales, water lilies and kelp.

We thank you for the soil of the earth – sandy or silt, clay or loam,
the deep black earth of the Holland Marsh, the thin topsoil of the Canadian Shield,
sandy deserts and coastlines, and the soil in our own gardens and planters.
We thank you for the life it nurtures, for the life hidden underground –
earthworms and ants, fungi and algae, moles and groundhogs,
the deep roots of trees and bushes.

Give us the wisdom to love and care for the earth

just as you love and care for us, God.

Prayer in Music:

*There's the wonder of sunset at evening,
The wonder as sunrise I see,
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul
Is the wonder that God loves me.*

*O the wonder of it all the wonder of it all
Just to think that God loves me
O the wonder of it all, the wonder of it all
Just to think that God loves me.*

*There's the wonder of springtime and harvest,
The sky, the stars, the sun.
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul
Is a wonder that's only begun.*

We know that by our own actions creation is at risk –
as skies become filled with pollutants,
as waters become filled with refuse,
as soil is poisoned with chemicals of our own making,
as climate changes and crises make all living things more vulnerable.

We pray for those who advocate for creation –
scientists and activists, teachers and researchers,
farmers and fisherfolk and all who tend the earth.
We pray for those most affected by the climate crisis around the globe.

Open our eyes to see what changes we can make,
open our hearts to the struggles of those affected by
climate and ecological changes – plant, animal or human,
open our minds to learning and changing in order to bring flourishing life to all.

We pray with one voice as we sing the prayer that Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power and
glory are yours,
now and forever.

Closing Hymn: “Let All Things Now Living” VU 242
Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
to God our Creator triumphantly raise;
who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,
by guiding us on to the end of our days.
God's banners are o'er us, pure light goes before us,
a pillar of fire shining forth in the night;
till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,
as forward we travel from light into Light.

By law God enforces, the stars in their courses
and sun in its orbit obediently shine;
the hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
the depths of the ocean proclaim God divine.
We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing;
with glad adoration a song let us raise:
till all things now living unite in thanksgiving,
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise.

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Amen VU974

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

Yesterday was Earth Day, with events and celebrations held by many organizations and groups across the GTA. Did you mark Earth Day in a special way? Did you take time to think about our intimate connection not just to the planet, but to “all our relations” in God’s great web of life? Earth Day began some 50 years ago, as environmentalists and others in the US faced growing concerns about the state of creation. It has become a world-wide event, and an opportunity for us to learn and to take action.

The problem with a once-a-year event is that we can slip away from thinking about climate change, loss of biodiversity, loss of species and habitat, polluted earth and sky and water on the other 364 days of the year. Experts warn us that a constant and concerted effort to make change in our habits and in our treatment of our earth home is the only way to secure a healthy planet for the generations to come. Earth Day needs to be every day.

In the beautiful opening creation poem of the book of Genesis, God calls us to be stewards of creation – to fill the earth but be responsible for it – not just when a crisis occurs, not just when we are reminded, but at all times. We could remember that humankind were the last of God’s creations in this story, not the first or even the second – God looked at ALL of creation and saw that it was good!

Scripture like the passage from Job can also remind us that even though we are God’s beloved people, we are not the only creatures that have worth and wisdom to share in God’s creation. Many Indigenous peoples around the globe have taught us that we need to be more mindful of our place in the web of life, and in our relationship with the earth. These messages from scripture and teachings are not new – they have been part of tradition and culture for millennia, but we still find ourselves here in the 21st century in the midst of a climate crisis, still polluting our earth home at rates which have and could see the destruction of many forms of life – perhaps including our own.

So change is needed, and many of us have already taken steps to reduce or use of single-use plastics, bottled and commercialized water, and throw-away containers. Some of us have purchased electric or hybrid vehicles that may ease the strain on the environment, added solar panels to our homes as we have done here at the church, and regularly make decisions with care of the planet in mind. I believe that as people of faith it can be easier to add those changes to our lives when we actually see and recognize God’s presence in the earth, sky and water that sustains us – just as those disciples on the Emmaus Road finally recognized the presence of God - recognized Jesus – in their travelling companion.

Jesus is made known to Cleopas and the other follower as they are being fed and nurtured, being given what they need to survive. Perhaps we can find God in the soil of the earth, in the rich smell of dirt after the rain, in the miraculous and thriving life beneath our feet – mostly hidden but still providing us with the medium to produce food that nurtures and sustains us. Soil that continues to create and sustain life, just as God does.

Perhaps we can find God in the sky – in the air that we breathe, in the feeling of cool air rushing into our lungs on a cold winter morning, in the breezes off a lake on a warm summer day. Filled with just what we need to survive, the air that surrounds us is like God’s love – constant, renewing, essential. Perhaps we can find God’s presence in the waters of the earth, water that is necessary for us to live and to thrive. God’s gentleness might be experienced in a slow moving stream, God’s playfulness in the rain, God’s power in crashing ocean waves or mighty waterfalls. God’s hope might be felt when we are able to quench our thirst with a drink of cold water, or offer a cup to a stranger.

Finding God in these elements - and in everything that shares our earth home – can draw us into action that seeks to bring justice and healing not just to people but to the planet itself. It can lead us back to the direction we were given almost as soon as we were created – to be part of God’s good creation, to tend it and care for it.

May we find the wisdom to act together, the courage to change, the sacred in all creation, and the presence of God in earth and sky and water.

Amen