# Worship Planning

# Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# First Sunday, Year B: Love Me! (Using Lectionary readings)

Texts: Psalm 125; Mark 7:24–30

Submitted by Ambury Stuart

### Gathering and Centring

(\**a request to stand*)

#### Musical Prelude

#### Announcements

#### \*Opening Hymn

“This Is God’s Wondrous World” (*Voices United* 296)

#### \*Lighting the Christ Candle

(*Ambury Stuart writes: In my church, the Christ Candle is lit by child, who brings a lit taper up the centre aisle of the church and leads the congregation in the brief call and response that follow. All the children come forward at the time of the children's hymn and are provided with various percussion instruments and noise makers during the singing of this hymn. Then the children lead the congregation in the Lord's Prayer and pray their own prayer before going out to Sunday school. This replaces a children's story. Children play an important part in any service*.)

Leader: Open your hearts to the light of God's presence.

People: We will walk in the light.

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

People: Thanks be to God.

#### \*Call to Worship

Leader: We come to worship the Lord our God

People: Creator of all that is,

Leader: the Earth, the sea, and the sky.

People: A**ll** these belong to our God.

Leader: We are but a single strand

People: in a great web of life.

Leader: Let the whole universe give thanks and praise

People: this day and evermore.

#### Opening Prayer

Holy and eternal God:

you are our Creator, and we are your creatures.

Every breath we take, every thought we have exist only because of you.

You have given us the world for our dwelling place,

our earthly home: land, sea, and sky;

a place of great beauty and deep mystery.

How little is our thanks; how insufficient our praise

for such generous blessings and overwhelming grace.

And yet we are bold to pray

that you will accept our worship now:

our songs,

our prayers,

and our thoughts this day.

Keep us mindful of your presence and everlasting care for all your world, even us!

We ask it in the name of Jesus,

who went before us on our human journey

and showed the way to you.

Amen.

#### Prayers of Confession and Affirmation

**Leader:** We are created by God

and we are valued and loved by our Creator.

God knows our imperfections and our weaknesses

and loves us anyway.

Now God waits for us to confess

that we have lost our way,

and that we yearn to return again

on our pilgrimage journey

that leads to life.

People: Together we acknowledge our sins and shortcomings

before the author of all life.

**Leader:** Before God, with the people of God, I confess to my fears and my failings, to the harm they have caused to me and others, and to the brokenness in my life and community.

People: We grieve our brokenness together. But God forgives our human weakness, and reconciles us to God and one another in Christ.

**Leader:** Thanks be to God. Amen.

People: Before God, in the midst of God's people, we also confess to our fears and failings, to the harm they have caused to ourselves and others, and to the brokenness of our lives and communities.

**Leader:** We grieve our brokenness together.

But God forgives our human weaknesses

and transforms us through the power of the Spirit

to work with God for the healing of the world.

**People:** Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Leader:** Together, we sing of our Creator

People: who made us to live and move

and have our being in God.

**Leader:** Move among us, God; touch us with your love,

People: so that your love is always with us.

Leader: Transform our lives into right relationship

People: with each other and with you.

Leader: Together we sing of the Spirit,

People: always faithful and untamable,

always alive in the world.

Leader: Together we sing of the Spirit,

People: who speaks our prayers of deepest longing, who enfolds our concerns and confessions, who transforms us and the world.

Leader: We are a forgiven people.

People: God changes our lives,

our relationships, and our world.

Leader: Grateful for God's loving action,

People: we cannot keep from singing:

#### Sung Response (by all)

#### “Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New” (*More Voices* 115)

#### Anthem

#### Children's Hymn

“It's a Song of Praise to the Maker” (*More Voices* 30)

#### Lord's Prayer

#### Children's Prayer

### We Hear God's Word and Proclaim It

#### Responsive Psalm

Psalm 125 (*Voices United* page 849)

#### Gospel Reading

Mark 7:24–30

#### **Sermon**

“Growing Our Vision of the Circle of God’s Love”

(*Ambury Stuart writes: The ecological crises, including climate change and species extinction, are deeply troubling to thoughtful people, and the task of the preacher, particular in Creation Time, is to show how scripture informs and inspires us in the midst of these crises.*

*I prefer to begin with the Lectionary scripture for the day even though I realize that most preachers will hand-pick one of very few scripture passages that have an explicit, ecological theme. I do this because I want to convince my congregation that the church's response to the ecological crises is absolutely central to the declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our time, rather than one of many side-issues that the church highlights to increase its relevance in society. If I have to search out some specialized scripture to preach on the ecological crises, then I will have lost this argument in the minds of many before I begin.*)

### We Respond to God's Word

#### \*Hymn

“Draw the Circle Wide” (*More Voices* 145)

#### Offering

#### \*Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow…

#### Prayer of Dedication

#### Prayers of the People

(Ambury Stuart writes: I generally pray the prayers of the people without notes in order to stay connected with my congregation. I include here only those prayers that are connected with Creation Time or the sermon. Other worship leaders will want a prayer that includes specific issues of their congregation.)

God of all creation, we thank you for the world in all its variety and vitality. From the tiniest flower growing on the highest mountain to the strange animals we are still discovering in the deepest oceans, you love all of life with an overwhelming love. We human beings are so small and so limited. Compared with the expanse of creation's wildness, out habitat is so narrow and tightly specific. Compared with creation’s long life, we humans only showed up a few minutes ago. We pray that you will give us a sense of perspective concerning your world and our place in it. Expand our horizons to include all creation in our care and concern. Tear down the fences we build to keep those away whom we imagine to be outsiders. Help us to love widely, prodigiously, even wastefully as you love.

We pray for your creation and its distress in our time. Keep us mindful, O God, of our culpability in this distress; help us to see the connections between our lifestyles and the destruction of the Earth. As you renew our minds to recognize our responsibilities, renew also our hearts that we might reach out in love to threatened fellow creatures and their habitats. You alone are God; and only you can renew the Earth; but we know that this will not happen until we cease to destroy.

We pray for our leaders in government and in the churches. Give them wisdom so that they may lead wisely and well in the healing of your world.

All these prayers we lift up to you in the strong name of Jesus Christ, who learned from the Syrophoenician woman that his ministry included all, and who then went on to bless the whole creation with your love.

### We Go into the World

#### \*Closing Hymn

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

#### Commissioning

Leader: Our worship of God now continues for each one of us as we go our separate ways. All: It is God who gives us life.

We are blessed with every breath we take.

**Leader:** So now as we go, let us remember that we are blessed by God’s abundant grace wherever we are.

All: We go with the assurance of God’s love

and God’s grace at all times.

**Leader:** We are called to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God in all that we do.

All: May God strengthen us and bless us as we go.

#### Benediction

#### Choral Response

#### Musical Postlude