# Worship Planning

# Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Second Sunday, Year C: Seek My Intelligence!

Texts (non-lectionary): Ezekiel 34:11–31; Psalm 65 or Psalm 15; Luke 6:12–16

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### Preparation

*Display pictures of mountains, hills, and valleys and plan to use songs about mountains and valleys, e.g.:*

 *“Only for a While” performed by Anita Baker*

 *“The Valley Song, performed by Jars of Clay*

 *“Ain’t Mountain High Enough” performed by Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell*

### Gathering

**Welcome**

We invite you to be present to the voices and themes of creation as we seek to hear God’s calling through our worship today.

**Call to Worship**

Listen to the pebbles… What are they saying?

**They shout for a place to land.**

Listen to the leaves… What are their hopes?

**They hope to rustle through the wind and glisten through the light.**

Listen to the waters… Where are they moving?

**They are rushing together, on an endless journey.**

Listen to creation… Where is God speaking to us?

**God is moving, living, and breathing in everything!**

**Let us listen to the wisdom of God through creation.**

**Opening Hymn**

“All things bright and beautiful” (*Voices United* 291)

**Gathering Prayer**

God of sunlight and moon shadows,

you are a Creator of so much beauty.

Remind us to let this love sink deep within us.

We regret that we do not always listen.

We forget to seek the ever-wise voice of creation.

God, in our time together,

tune our minds and open our hearts

that we may learn to speak with creation,

through creation’s moans and joys,

as we seek to grow closer to you, our Great Artist. Amen.

### Listening

**Children’s Time: Climbing the mountain**

Display pictures of large mountains that people have climbed. If possible, bring some climbing gear to show the children (congregation).

Ask: Have you ever, or do you know someone who has climbed a mountain? Then wonder together: Why would someone climb a mountain? After all, it is:

* dangerous: you could hurt yourself and might not have quick access to help; the air is thin which might cause you to pass out; and it can get very cold at the top (you could suffer from hypothermia)
* expensive: you need to buy a lot of equipment including special shoes, ropes, bags, and clothing
* physically demanding: you have to be able to climb and walk long distances with limited food; you have to continue even when you are tired; and when you reach the top, it is a long walk down

Even though mountain-climbing is challenging, discuss with the children (congregation) some of the reasons why people continue to climb mountains. You may wish to share a testimonial from a climber within your community.

Conclude by giving thanks for the wonders of God’s creation, including majestic mountains.

**Hebrew Scripture**

Ezekiel 34:11–31

**Hymn**

“Behold, behold I make all things new” (*More Voices* 115)

**Psalm**

Psalm 65 (*Voices United* page 782, read responsively)

or

Psalm 15 (*Voices United* page 736, read responsively)

**Reading**

Luke 6:12–16

**Reflection Suggestions**

Focus Theme: Seeking Wisdom in Thin Places

There is something sacredly special about mountains (just as there is something sacred about all of God’s creation). In biblical times, mountains were seen as what we might call “thin places” (borrowing from Celtic tradition), a space where people felt closer to the Holy presence, God’s home even. References to mountains and hills are made over 200 times in the Bible. Something about the mountains brings wisdom and insight to those who aspire to (Isaiah 2:3), rest at (Isaiah 11:9; 25:10), escape in (Genesis 19:17; Joshua 2:16), and are instructed by (Exodus 19:20; Micah 4:2) the mountains. Remember, in biblical times, Samaritans were not trusted—partly because they worshipped at the “wrong” mountain (Amos 6:1).

Today, mountains are still experienced as “thin places,” worthy of pilgrimages. For many, a mountaintop experience is analogous to a pinnacle moment of great certainty in faith. In many ways, looking to the mountains has always been a way of seeking God’s intelligence. What does a mountaintop experience mean in your context and for your community? What is a valley experience? Where and how do you seek wisdom when in the valley? When on the mountaintop?

In the Hebrew reading, Ezekiel provides an example of good leadership by reminding the people of God’s leadership style as the good shepherd. God not only cares for us within the heights and folds of the mountains, but ensures that the hills become a blessing to us under God’s care.

Throughout the Second Testament we are reminded of the significance of mountains. Jesus teaches, transforms, and feeds others on mountains, and today he prays on the mountainside before calling his disciples. What significance is there in Jesus seeking the sacred in this space before taking a large step in his ministry? How can we be attentive to the “thin places” in our lives? How can we seek the full benefit of these places? Following that night, Jesus preached The Beatitudes. Had the mountain been a source of quiet reflection, wisdom, and calling? What is the significance of “thin places” in creation?

**Song of Response**

“To bless the earth” (*Voices United* page 783)

**Responding**

**Gathering Our Gifts**

Dear Friends,

we only have to look around in nature to see God’s love enfolding us.

Let us now give in gratitude and thanksgiving.

**Offering Doxology**

Offertory hymn: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” (*Voices United* 541)

**Prayer of Dedication**

Dear God,

we are all so blessed in the world around us.

We seek to care for creation as you care so lovingly for us.

Accept these gifts and those of our hearts

to continue living your way in the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

**Song**

“O God, hear my prayer” (*Voices United* 948) (*sung responsively throughout the Prayers of the People*)

**Prayers of the People**

Holy God, we come to you with prayers of thanksgiving… for the beauty of the fall, the crisp cool morning air, and the beginning transformation of the seasons. We are grateful for the fruit of the ground, the gifts of the land that are in our midst. We give thanks for people who tend the soil, who feed the hungry, and who imagine a different kin-dom here on earth.

God of Glory, we lift up the abundance of care that surrounds us: the sustaining connection of family, friends, partners, mentors, and teachers who encourage and challenge us, knowing who we are and whose we are. We pray for those dear to us, nestled in our hearts, that they may feel and know they are beloved.

Compassionate God, we fail to live up to being co-creators with you. We recognize the burden on creation sometimes seem too heavy for us to carry. Help us learn the needs of the earth when we hear it groaning. Help us care for sisters and brothers in other lands so that they may fully live. Help us learn from them so that we also may fully live. Nudge us to the path of deep listening.

Merciful God, sometimes our hearts break in the midst of affliction and oppression: lands that face degradation, people who face dehumanizing powers, creatures who face extinction. We pray that all peoples may hear these cries and turn to listen to your path of peace, your land flowing with milk and honey.

God of love, be with us today and in the days ahead. Nudge us when we’re feeling stuck in our thoughts, sustain us when we’re feeling a scarcity of time and energy, comfort us when we feel burdened by the oppression in the world, and show us the way toward recognizing your glory and abundance ever around us.

In Jesus’ name, we offer these prayers and those buried deep within us. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

A Paraphrase (*Voices United* 916)

**Closing Hymn**

“For the gift of creation” (Voices United 538)

**Sending Forth and Blessing**

Let us go forth responding to the wisdom of creation, hearing the calls for justice, and seeking to be in right relationship with the earth.

May God’s glorious creation nourish you.

May Jesus continue to walk with you.

May the love of the Holy Spirit fill you.

Today and forevermore. Amen.