# Worship Planning

# Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Fourth Sunday, Year c: Stand Up for Me!

Texts (non-lectionary): Jeremiah 4:23–28; Psalm 146; 1 Corinthians 3:6–9

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### Preparation

*In the chancel area, set up an easel on which you have placed a blank canvas. Next to it place a variety of art supplies on a table. As the call to worship begins, a liturgical artist enters and begins creating on the canvas. The artist will work in this spot throughout the worship service. The piece that emerges will coincide with the flow of the service: abstract and evoking lament during the gathering; integrating multi-media collage* (*with responses from the children*) *during the time of listening; and evoking action and strong movement during the time of response.*

### Gathering

**Call to Worship**

*Use the lyrics of* “*Each Blade of Grass”* (*MV 37*) *for the call to worship*, *with the repeated phrase “Make full the circle of God” used as the responsive.*

**Gathering Prayer**

God of mystery:

you are a God of wholeness.

Give us new ways of encountering one another;

help us be open to the struggle of the world;

allow us to be honest about the ways

we do not listen to the cries of creation.

God, through our worship,

empower us to be active participants in your world,

listening with new ears

to the cries of pain and hope

from the depths of creation. Amen.

**Opening Hymn**

“Spirit, Open My Heart” (MV 79)

**Welcome**

This is a service of remembrance, of hope, and of action. We gather today to hear creation’s whispers. We gather to name honestly the ways in which creation is neglected, abandoned, and damaged by our actions. We take time to listen and we remember.

Through our remembering, we must also hope for something more, and as bold participants in God’s world, we are called to take action.

We invite you today into this time of prayer, of song and creativity, and of response as we listen to creation’s songs.

### Listening

**Children’s Time**

*Create a space where the congregation is open to hear the voices of creation—especially the places where creation is crying deeply.*

*As you introduce the theme to the children, place a number of pictures on the ground in front of you. Each picture is meant to illustrate a different way in which creation is crying out: places where we are called to stand up for creation* (*e.g., melting ice caps, vehicle exhaust pollution, endangered animal species, oil spills*)*.*

*Invite the children to listen for the cries of creation in each picture. Imagine that you can have a conversation with each picture and that you can hear the voice of creation. Ask, “I wonder what you hear creation saying in each of these pictures?”*

*Hold the pictures up one at a time and invite the children to share their responses for each picture. Hand out sticky notes and markers and ask the children to write their responses on the notes.* (*Children who cannot write—and those who might prefer a different medium—can draw their responses.*) *Stick all the notes onto the pictures.*

*Take a moment and acknowledge the importance of listening. As people of faith, God calls us to listen to what creation is saying. This can be hard to do, or often we forget to really listen.*

*Transition with the children into a time of wondering about what it means to respond—through bold action—and stand up for creation. If you could speak back to creation in each picture, what would you say? This time, give the children differently coloured sticky notes on which they can record their responses of how they can stand up for creation, and stick those onto the pictures as well.*

*As the children move to worship together in their own space, the pictures and their responses will stay behind. Invite the children to leave the pictures next to the liturgical artist as they will be integrated into the piece that is being created.*

**Hebrew Scripture**

Jeremiah 4:23–28

**Hymn**

“God Weeps” (MV 78)

**Psalm**

Psalm146

**Epistle Reading**

1 Corinthians 3:6–9

**Reflection Suggestions**

*Focus Theme: Creation calls to us saying, “Stand up for me!” Intimately connected through God, the way we live affects the life of all of creation. Standing up for creation involves listening deeply, responding authentically, and acting boldly.*

*The three scripture readings for this service illustrate the movement that this service is meant to mimic: from desolation to listening, to bold action. Justice, especially with regards to ecological issues, is a major theme throughout the scriptural tradition. This worship service specifically draws upon texts that make a clear connection between justice and the need for renewal; we cannot explore themes of ecological renewal without also addressing economic and social renewal. This is all intricately connected within God’s covenant with all of creation and within God’s call to each of us.*

*The Jeremiah passage illustrates what can become of creation. It is a desolate scene, which might not sound too far from our current reality—the many places where creation cries out. Fruitful land is desolate, and cities lie in ruins; and there is little here to turn our attention away from the destruction that is described.*

*Yet, desolation is not the end with God. Remembering God’s promise of covenant, we turn our thoughts toward a renewed landscape. Psalm 146 reminds us that God’s creation is beyond our knowing and worthy of song, even amidst desolation and despair.*

*The Epistle reading prepares us for response. Paul’s message to the early church is a commentary on leadership in the church; however, Paul uses language that brings creation to our imagination, evoking care of the created world. Paul reminds us of the transformation that is possible when we work from a place of interconnection rather than competition. Together with God, all of creation must work together, taking complementary action for the achievement of a common whole.*

*Allow your reflection to respond to your local context. How, in your context, is creation saying, “Stand up for me!”? You might choose one of two directions to go with this.*

*The first direction is to think about abundance and what is enough. How does shifting our thinking—from scarcity to abundance—help us to respond to creation’s call to “Stand up for me!”? What are examples from your community where individuals or groups are standing up for creation, rooted within a place of abundant thinking and living?*

*The other direction is to reflect upon accompaniment. This might draw in a global focus with stories of global environmental programs that are rooted in the practice of accompaniment. Perhaps you might share a story that illustrates the dialogue between “standing up for”* (*accompaniment*) *and seeking peace.*

***Questions to Offer for Reflection:***

* In what ways do acts of justice restore and renew? What does that have to do with caring for creation?
* Where are identifiable places within your community where the link between poverty and ecology is apparent?
* What is enough?
* Where are *you* called to stand up for creation?

**Song of Response**

“Creating God, Your Fingers Trace” (VU 265)

### Responding

**Celebrations and Moments of Awe**

Part of what it means to respond is to begin to transform the ways we encounter the world. This often means that we shift from encountering creation from a place of scarcity to a place of abundance.

To help the community do this together, worshippers are invited to share, aloud with the gathered community, recent moments of awe—experiences of creation when God’s presence was living and moving through them, and when the call from creation to “stand up for me” was vividly real.

**Gathering Our Gifts**

**Offering Doxology**

“There’s a River of Life” (MV 160)

**Prayer of Dedication**

With all that we are,

and all that we have,

we give to you, God.

We offer these gifts now

as a reminder of the many places

where creation grumbles, in need of care.

Help us continue to give freely

and act boldly. Amen.

**Song**

“God of the Sparrow” (VU 229)

**Prayers of the People**

As we gather today, we take a moment

to encounter creation through our senses.

As we taste, touch, smell, hear, and see,

we experience more fully your beauty of creation in the world,

and we encounter the places to which you call us, God.

We know that creation is restless;

we take a moment to listen,

to hear the grumbling,

the whispers,

the excited cheers,

and the agonizing wails.

We see the signs of desolation and destruction.

We ask that you help us notice, more fully,

the places within this world that are longing for renewal;

we also ask that you help us notice the places

of abundance and life.

God, through our tasting, our smelling, and our touching,

may we encounter the world anew.

May we be open to the groans and struggles,

and also open to transformation.

We pray for all of the places—

within ourselves, within our communities,

and within the world—

that are in need of your tender love.

We hold in silence the prayers that are on our hearts today.

(*silence*)

Thank you for providing us with countless opportunities

in which we are reminded of the importance of challenge.

We give great thanks

for the times when we are pushed—

shoved, even—

outside of our comfort zones.

It is these times when we learn the most about ourselves,

and consequently, when we learn the most about you.

Continue to plant in us seeds of learning

and the ever-flowing desire to grow.

God, we know that your vision is well beyond our ability to see,

and we thank you for the fullness of your hope for all of creation.

We feel the pulsing of our own breath;

with each inhale and exhale

we are reminded that you are closer to us

than the breath that we breathe.

And with our feet firmly rooted on the ground,

creation beneath us,

we feel your stable presence in our lives.

We offer all of these prayers to you,

those spoken aloud

and those too deep for words.

And now we pray together the prayer that Jesus teaches…

**The Lord’s Prayer**

A Paraphrase (VU 916)

**Closing Hymn**

“There Is Room for All” (MV 62)

(*As this hymn is being sung, the liturgical artist, who has continued to work at the front, stands up and takes the canvas off of the easel. On the back of the canvas there is piece of wood, which was not noticeable when the canvas was on the easel, that can be pulled down, turning the canvas into an artful protest sign. The artist stands next to the worship leader as the blessing and commissioning is offered, and then the artist leads the worship leader out of the worship space, and worshippers are invited to follow in a symbolic act of going forth, standing up for creation.*)

**Sending Forth and Blessing**

Go out from this place, ready to hear creation’s call.

Go out, ready to answer, “I am here, standing up for you!”

And as you go, know that the love of God surrounds you,

the peace of Christ empowers you,

and the fellowship of the Spirit moves within you

and all of creation, now and always. Amen.