# Season of Creation Theme Service

# Creation and Creativity

*by Rod Sykes*

### You Will Need

* worship leader/preacher
* two readers
* three further voices for “Doc Brown’s Museum of Invention” done in Reader’s Theatre format, or actors if you choose to do it in skit format:

Doc Brown

Marty McFly

Jennifer, Marty’s fiancée

* props: white lab coat, large Bible

## Gathering

## Announcements, etc.

## Explanation of the Service

(*And teaching of the congregational sung response if the sung Eucharist option is chosen*)

**Worship leader:** Most of today’s service of worship is a celebration of the creation and the creativity of our Creator. Through dialogues, reflections, and short vignettes, we will explore the resonance between God’s infinite creativity and our human imagination. Joining me in the service will be a Bible reader, a speaker who represents the scientific perspective, and three characters from the much beloved movie, *Back to the Future*: Doc Brown, Marty McFly, and Marty’s girlfriend Jennifer.

(*Possible location of Children’s Moment: Introduce a painting or drawing that one of the children has prepared beforehand that represents people dancing or doing some other artistic activity. Discuss with the children some of the other ways people engage in play that also requires work, since that’s what the creative arts involve. Lead into the idea that when God made the world God worked hard, but it was so much fun that it felt like play.*

*For an alternative Children’s Moment, see page 10.*)

## Creation and Creativity

### Choral Introit

“Before the Earth Had Yet Begun,” verse 1 (*Voices United* 301)

and/or

### Call to Worship

When insight floods a human mind,
when a solution arises in a vexed heart,
when the light bulb goes on,
in such creative moments
we hear an echo of the act of creation itself,
and catch a glimpse of the Creator of all,
whom we come to worship now.

### Part 1: Creation

(*Opening dialogue: Reader One retrieves Bible from the communion table and opens it at the lectern. Reader Two dons the white lab coat and joins Reader One at lectern.*)

**Reader One:** Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep…”

“In the beginning…”

**Reader Two:** The beginning. The beginning is a problem. Our scientific worldview has unlocked so many of the secrets of the universe. But what do we say about its beginning? How can we talk about what went before the beginning? How do we even *think* about what there was before there could be a “before”?

**Reader One:** “In the beginning when God created…”

**Reader Two:** God. Ah yes, the question of God—the question beyond the questions our science can ask.

**Reader One:** “When God created the heavens and the earth,the earth was a formless void…”

**Reader Two:** “A formless void.” Formless—but surely not empty. Surely filled with everything that is possible. An infinity of possibilities.

**Reader One:** “God created the heavens and the earth.”

**Reader Two:** This is what science can only wonder about—that from the infinity of possibilities, the multitude of what could be, comes the reality of what is—“the heavens and the earth”: the universe.

**Reader One:** “God created the heavens and the earth.”

**Reader Two:** As you say—“In the beginning.”

(*Reader Two gives lab coat to Doc Brown character.*)

### Hymn

“O God, beyond All Face and Form” (VU 304)
“Into the Unshaped Silence” (VU 305)
“Called by Earth and Sky” (*More Voices* 135)

### Part 2: Creativity

#### Doc Brown’s Museum of Invention #1

**Jennifer:** Doc! Hey, Doc!

**Doc Brown:** Jennifer! Just in time. I need a woman’s eye. What do you think of our new sign?

**Jennifer:** (*looking aloft to read*) “The Emmett Brown Museum of Invention and Scientific Discovery.” Excellent!

**Doc Brown:** You don’t think my name’s too large up there?

**Jennifer:** No way. Without you, Doc, we folks in Hill Valley wouldn’t have a future. This museum of yours is going to be great. It’ll bring in loads of tourists—as long as we don’t get too technical. So I’ve got this idea: Why not make a display on “Household Miracles”?

**Doc Brown:** “Miracles”?

**Jennifer:** Sure. You know, things we use every day. We take them for granted, but they are really amazing inventions. Like—do you know about Velcro?

**Doc Brown:** That sort-of-stick-together-hold-tight fabric?

**Jennifer:** Never think about it, but I use it every time I put on my sneakers. Know where it came from?

**Doc Brown:** No idea.

**Jennifer:** Used to be that you had to use a zipper or buttons. But back in the 50s, there was this Swiss engineer whose dog came back from a walk covered in burrs. It took him so long to pick the burrs off he had time to wonder what made them stick so tight. He looked in the microscope and saw thousands of little tiny hooks that grabbed onto anything nearby. When he duplicated them using nylon—bingo! Velcro.

**Doc Brown:** Great Scott! Jennifer, you’re brilliant.

**Jennifer:** You told me to get creative, so this will be an exhibit about creativity.

**Doc Brown:** Lots of unexpected smarts in you, young lady. You and Marty are going to be a great team. Isn’t it time you tied the knot?

**Jennifer:** Or the Velcro?

#### Reflection on “The Creativity of Creation”

#### Sermon Starters

You might explore examples from the creative arts, indeed local examples that you might present in some way, drawing on the following theme. Every significant work of art represents stretching the arts medium. In painting, for instance, a truly creative artist introduces a novel meaning for the viewer by creatively violating some of the established symbolic norms for visual communication. The violation cannot be complete or the communication fails, but the symbols must be more than what people are used to or the artwork will be boring and hackneyed. As an example, the Group of Seven took landscape painting in a whole new direction by adapting elements from French Impressionism and commercial graphic arts into a style truly befitting the northern landscape. This reveals the essence of the creative moment: New possibilities are discerned among the tried and true. Link this to God’s constant creativity of finding new possibilities when God’s purposes have been temporarily blocked by the “same old same old.”

or

You might explore experiences in the life of your congregation or your own ministry in which obstacles blocked an initial movement toward grace and peace, but through which the Spirit broke in surprising ways. Draw out how this reveals the essential creativity of God. Link this to the great central story of the dying and rising of Jesus as the creative overcoming of the greatest obstacle of all.

or

Use or adapt this reflection from the writer of this service:

Let us reflect on “the creativity of creation.”

Creativity is a virtue that our culture highly prizes. Little Caitlin brings home from preschool a chalk drawing that she proudly displays to her mother, who smiles carefully and inspects it with deliberation. But being unable to decipher what it’s actually a drawing of, mother blesses her daughter with the one remaining accolade she can think of: “Why, darling, that’s so creative!”

Caitlin knows what her drawing depicts. Her imagination has chosen among all the different things that were possible. She has created one of these possibilities and made it real through her drawing.

This homely little episode reminds us that creativity is the gift that unlocks possibilities. When you do something creative you bring to the surface what has hitherto been hidden to us. You make unforeseen possibilities actual. What we never thought could be now is.

This is true in all areas of human endeavour—obviously enough in the fine arts, in the applied arts, and in crafts and hobbies, but in the sciences too. All the great discoveries about the physical world have been made by someone who had a great insight and conceived a possibility that had never been foreseen. The great advances in subatomic physics, or in scientific cosmology that studies the beginning of the universe, have been made when original thinkers developed a picture of nature radically different from the previously accepted picture. Every practical invention that has led to the technology that undergirds our present life has sprung from the fertile ground of human imagination. In all these ways the gift of creativity is a mysterious eruption of the new within the tried and true. It is the appearance of the unforeseen whereby the puzzle is solved, the barrier is removed, or the dilemma is dissolved in a grand “Eureka!” moment. Creativity is the fruit of human imagination.

When we ponder the astonishing discoveries of the great minds, like Einstein’s, or when we explore the new theories and concepts that overturn all established thinking in a given area, such creativity seems miraculous. That is the right way to put it. Creativity is something of a miracle because it is a reflection in us of the nature of the God who created us. For God is pure creativity itself.

God is all-creative. No obstacle can stand in God’s way. No matter how far human beings stray from the route that God knows to be the path of life and health for us, God always finds a way to lead us back on line. No matter how wretched are the disasters into which we take ourselves, God finds a way to redeem us. No matter how complete the breakdown in the relationship between us and the Holy One, God always finds a means to rekindle and restore that joyful bond. In every case God’s forgiving and enabling love finds a possibility when everything looks to us impossible. God is the source of a “Yes” that can meet every “No”.

God is infinitely creative. This is seen most intensely through the teaching and living of Jesus of Nazareth, particularly his proclamation that God’s Reign is the great possibility of human flourishing, the sole possibility that can lead out of the deadlock into which the powers of the age trap us. God is infinitely creative, and we experience that infinity in our finite life as the light of Easter breaks through the darkness of Good Friday.

As Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles:

**Reader One:** Acts 2:22–24. “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.”

Because of the infinite love of God, the only thing that was impossible was that Jesus should remain trapped in the darkness of death. The only thing that was impossible was that the light of the world should go out.

**Reader One:** John 1:5. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

#### Doc Brown’s Museum of Invention #2

**Marty:** (*rapidly*) Doc! Hey, Doc!

**Doc Brown:** Marty, slow down. No need to rush. You’ve got all the time in the world.

**Marty:** Then you’ve got to help me, Doc. It’s our Einstein exhibit. I’m putting together a little sidebar about his life. But is it true Einstein wasn’t that great at math? He is the centrepiece of your Museum of Scientific Invention. Do you really want us to say he couldn’t crunch numbers very well?

**Doc Brown:** But of course! Marty, Einstein’s genius lay in his imagination, his intuitions about the physical world. Einstein could ask the “what if” questions no one else had thought of. Back in 1900 everyone was still working with Newton’s concepts of space and time. In the universe according to Newton, space and time were fixed. But Einstein thought: “What if?” What if the speed of light is the only thing that is fixed and constant? What if space and time are variable and relative? What if the faster you go in a spaceship, the slower time would pass?

**Marty:** You mean time can sort of stretch?

**Doc Brown:** Absolutely! Einstein imagined that space and time are not absolute but relative. This was his special theory of relativity. The faster your spaceship goes, the slower your time passes relative to your friends’ time back on earth. Einstein’s breakthrough was a grand act of imagination that revolutionized our picture of the universe. And he did it because he could see something others couldn’t. Where other physicists were stuck, Einstein saw brand new possibilities. He changed the rules of the game.

**Marty:** That’s so hard to get my brain around, Doc.

**Doc Brown:** But it’s true. Ever since Einstein thought up the theory of relativity, physicists have done experiments to prove he was right. Time is stretchy. So when I discovered a way to manipulate it, I built my DeLorean time machine…

**Marty:** And sent me back to my future!

### Part 3: The Light of Creation

#### Hymn

“God, Whose Almighty Word,” verses 1 and 4 (VU 313)

**Reader One:** Genesis 1:3. “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good…”

#### Reflection on “The Freeing of Light”

When we think about the kind of creativity that comes suddenly to the human imagination, we often think of the light bulb going on.

The creative moment is likened to light emerging in the darkness. This is an ancient idea. When the storytellers who created the book of Genesis imagined creation unfolding, the first thing that came to mind was light coming out of the darkness.

**Reader One:** Genesis 1:4. “And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.”

By a delightful coincidence, that biblical image receives an echo in the picture of the origins of the universe that scientific cosmology has discovered. Part of the unfolding of our universe after the Big Bang was a wondrous, even beautiful, event. Physicists call it by the technical term “photon decoupling,” but we could use a label that is less technical and more poetic: “the freeing of light.”

It happened this way. For the first several hundred thousand years after the Big Bang our universe was intensely hot, so hot that all the little bits of physical matter—all the subatomic particles—were jammed together and constantly collided. It was like a thick soup, opaque and homogeneous. But as the universe cooled, it came to a point where the subatomic particles could move around enough to start forming atoms. All the electrons began to combine with protons and neutrons to create atoms. With all the electrons out of the way, suddenly the photons were left free. The photon is the subatomic particle that produces our experience of light. All the photons were free to travel unimpeded across the expanding reaches of space. The result is that the universe suddenly became transparent to light. Light was set free. If you’d been able to be there to see it, the experience would have been somewhat like what happens when you look out the window when a plane flies out of thick cloud into open air. Light was set free, and ever since then it has been possible to to see the marvels of God’s creation.

(*References: Timothy Ferris,* The Whole Shebang: A State-of-the-Universe(s) Report *(New York: Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, 1997), p. 32; Sean Carroll, “Cosmology Primer: The Early Universe,”* [*http://preposterousuniverse.com/writings/cosmologyprimer/early.html*](http://preposterousuniverse.com/writings/cosmologyprimer/early.html)*.*)

#### Hymn

“A Light Is Gleaming,” refrain only (VU 82)
“Creator God You Gave Us Life” (MV 27)

### Part 4: Universal Light

(*The communion liturgy is offered in alternative forms—to be spoken in the following text version or sung using the musical score of “Universal Light” at* [*www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/creation*](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/creation)*.*)

#### Invitation to the Table

(*You are invited to extemporize here—creatively! One idea you might pursue is that God’s enormous creativity generates possibilities, and this table invites you to explore new possibilities in your relationship with God.*)

#### Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

“Universal Light” (*See the PDF of the musical score for this hymn at* [*www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/creation*](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/creation).)

Jesus says: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me…will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The Lord be with you.
 **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts.
 **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
 **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**
Holy One:
we glorify your name.
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**Before the darkness, dark past dark,
in timeless depth you dwelt,
eternal,
Upon the emptiness you cast
the brilliance of your thought,
all-radiant,
and all of time and space leapt forth,
a universe afire,
all-dancing.
 **Holy One:
 we glorify your name.**
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**
And then, in swift millennia,
your burning holy love,
created
all of the shining swirl of suns;
the life-light of green Earth;
the human.
 **Holy One:
 we glorify your name.**
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**
Upon the dawn of humankind
your Word shone out to call
a people,
with Torah blessed, in covenant,
and sent to lighten all
the nations,
 **Holy One:
 we glorify your name.**
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**
That company of light joins us
to magnify your praise,
all saying,
 **Holy, holy, holy are you,
 God of glory and wonder,
 heaven and earth are full of your light.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blest is the One who comes in your wonderful name.
 Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!**Though clouded are our sinful eyes,
and blinded by the light
from heaven,
the darkness of our circumstance
could never quench your light
of mercy.
And thus upon our wintered grief
your shining Son arose,
life-giving.
“I am the light of all,” he said.
His healing touch endows
new vision.
 **Holy One:
 we glorify your name.**
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**
The Word of life took flesh for us
and we beheld his gift—
God’s glory.

“[T]he Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Corinthians 11:23–25).

 **Holy One:
 we glorify your name.**
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**
That holy gift we venerate,
remembering his love,
cross-proven.
His rising up we celebrate,
with Easter’s shining dawn,
triumphant.
His coming we anticipate
like lightning in the east,
earthshaking!
 **Come, Lord Jesus, come!**
Therefore we shed our shadowed fear,
and come to this bright feast
presenting
our lives in sacrificial love.
Grant your Spirit to us,
igniting
the darkened heart with shining faith
and every mind with new
conviction,
 **Holy One:
 we glorify your name.**
 **Heaven and earth
 shine with your love.**

#### The Prayer of Jesus

(*Breaking, Pouring, Sharing*)

#### Prayer after Communion

The shadows on the edges of
our lives are cast away!
Give glory!
 **Give glory!**
We are reborn, delivered by
the coming of the Christ.
Give glory!
 **Give glory!**
 **Honour, praise, thanksgiving to you,
 God, eternally radiant.
 Incarnate Word, in us may you shine,
 enlighten all of our living.
 You are the Love that reigns as the Spirit of joy.
 All glory, all glory, all glory, God ever Holy!**

### Part 5: Responding Creatively

#### Anthem

“All Things Bright and Beautiful” (arr. John Rutter)

#### We Make Our Offering

#### Offertory

#### Offertory Hymn

“In Loving Partnership We Come,” verse 4 (VU 603)

#### We Dedicate Our Offering

(*Alternative location of a Children’s Moment: Have the children present and possibly introduce the results of the task given to them earlier during the usual Sunday school or program of your congregation. Their task has been to draw or paint or create a dance that represents God joyfully at work making the world. Lead into the idea that when God made the world, God worked hard, but it was so much fun that it felt like play.*)

#### A New Creed (VU p. 918)

#### Passing of the Peace

#### Prayers of the People

### Part 6: Embracing God’s Creation

#### Doc Brown’s Museum of Invention #3

**Doc Brown:** Well, what do you think, Marty? Now we’ve gone through all the exhibits in our museum. Do you think it’s suitable exposition of the wonders of human creativity?

**Marty:** Sure. But Doc, I’m having trouble getting the last exhibit right.

**Doc Brown:** What? The final display?

**Marty:** Right: “The Invention of the Universe.” I mean, it’s a good idea and everything. People see all the exhibits about all kinds of wonderful inventions, then we finish off…

**Doc Brown:** …We finish off with a showstopper. A display that shows the greatest invention of all! The creation of the world!

**Marty:** But that’s what I don’t get, Doc. I can’t find the right words. See, I’ve been reading up all the books on the Big Bang…

**Doc Brown:** …That’s right, Marty. The universe started from something unimaginably small and unimaginably dense and unimaginably hot.

**Marty:** But if I say the universe began from something as weird as that, people are going to want to know how it happened. What happened before the Big Bang?

**Doc Brown:** Impossible! Marty! We can’t talk about anything “before” the Big Bang! We can’t think about anything “before” the Big Bang. There wasn’t any “before.” “Before” means one thing preceding another thing in time! This is one of the greatest mysteries about the universe. The universe didn’t begin in time. Time began with the universe. Time is part of the universe. That’s why I was able to manipulate it with my time machine.

**Marty:** So, what words can I use to describe the start of everything?

**Doc Brown:** How about “In the beginning”?

**Marty:** I think I read about that in Sunday school.

**Doc Brown:** Sunday school! Great Scott, Marty! What time is it?

**Marty:** I’ve got to be careful answering that question with you, Doc!

**Doc Brown:** No, I’m not being theoretical. I mean—what time is it right now?

**Marty:** 9:30.

**Doc Brown:** What day of the week?

**Marty:** Sunday. Sunday morning.

**Doc Brown:** Aughhhhhh! I promised Clara I’d take our sons, Jules and Verne, to church.

**Marty:** Church? Doc, I always took you for a total man of science!

**Doc Brown:** Marty, in all my travels in the DeLorean, through all of time and space, one thing I’ve learned: True scientists never close their eyes to anything. After all, “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” That's *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 5. See you later, Marty. Time to fly, McFly!

(*Doc Brown places the lab coat on the communion table.*)

#### Closing Dialogue

**Reader One:** Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep…”

**Worship Leader:** “Then God said, ‘Let there be…’” And there was! From out of everything that might have been, God chooses what shall be—and it is.

**Reader One:** And God saw that it was good.

**Worship Leader:** Good because it was of God. And good it still is, the whole creation, even when lost—for God seeks its future; even when broken—for God finds a way to mend; even when in bondage—for God redeems.

**Reader One:** “And God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image…’”

**Worship Leader:** And so we are indeed made in the likeness of our Creator, touched with the spark of the Spirit of our ever-creative God. And we go forth now to embrace God’s good creation, because…

**Reader One:** God created.

**Reader One and Worship Leader:** (*together*) “In the beginning.”

(*Reader One replaces the Bible on the communion table.*)

#### Hymn

“I Am the Light of the World,” refrain, verse 4, refrain (VU 87)
“A Light Is Gleaming” (*if not used earlier*) (VU 82)
“It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker” (MV 30)

#### Postlude

*Rod Sykes is a Team Minister at St. Andrew’s United in Calgary, with a long-standing interest in the intersection of scientific cosmology with the theology of creation.*