# Worship Planning

# Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Second Sunday, Year A: Listen to My Wisdom!

Texts (non-lectionary): Psalm 104:24–34, Job 12:7–12, John 1:1-5

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Call to Worship (excerpts of Psalm 104:24–34 and Job 12:7–12)

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;

the earth is full of your creatures.

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;

the birds of the air, and they will tell you.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide,

creeping things innumerable are there,

living things both small and great.

**Ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;**

**and the fish of the sea will declare to you.**

These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

when you open your hand they are filled with good things.

The hand of the Lord has done this.

In [God’s] hand is the life of every living thing

and the breath of every human being.

#### Opening Prayer

Holy Wisdom, we see the destruction in the world around us,

and hear the cries of our fellow humans and creatures

affected by climate change. We call to you: guide us; teach us;

inspire us; forgive us. And you say, “I have been your guide

and teacher. The whole cosmos bears witness to my wisdom,

and creation itself is the revelation of my love.

Turn to the plants and animals, the sea and the sky.

They will show you my wisdom.”

And so we say, “Open our hearts and minds to all the wisdom of creation as we gather in worship today.” Amen.

#### Hymn of Praise

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

#### Children’s Moment

*In keeping with the Job passage, have something to share that illustrates the wisdom of creation. An aquarium could offer an opportunity to engage in conversation with children about how fish have evolved to thrive in specific environments. Or you might bring a houseplant that has a visible teachable feature, e.g. the propagation of a spider plant with its many little “babies” dangling down or that of a jade plant with the nascent roots on its fragile branches. In the wild, an animal or the wind will tear off and carry away this “offspring” of the plant to grow and propagate in a new spot. You might add that baby spider plants are well-equipped to survive for several days or even weeks to accommodate the fact that they might have to wait long periods before they are “dropped” into suitable moist soil.*

#### Prayer of Confession

#### Creator God, made in your image,

#### we have re-made ourselves in our own image:

valued for our “bottom line” and production.

Forgive us for losing touch with the truth

of our connection with all creation

and the presence of the holy in each of us. Amen.

#### Assurance of Pardon

Know that Christ, present at the dawn of creation,

sustains, calls, inspires, and forgives you,

He empowers you to be a new creation.

In Christ, all things are made new.

Thanks be to God!

#### Sermon Suggestions

*The sermon for this Sunday might begin with the question, Why should we listen to the wisdom of Earth and creation? The Job passage might be connected to the many forms of suffering brought on by climate change, or even more broadly to the brokenness of humanity and the desecration of the environment because of our collective disconnectedness from Earth. Sadly, there are always many examples of how our ecological insanity and addiction to fossil fuels create suffering. Select a story that has been in the news recently to relate to.*

*The Job 12 text is one of the few bright spots in what is arguably the bleakest book in the Bible. [Recount Job’s story of a tragic fall from wealth and comfort to complete loss: covered with boils, Job resorts to scratching himself with a shard of pottery for some relief.]*

*Reflect on how Job’s ancient despair is also spectacularly contemporary. Who are the Jobs in our time, the good people to whom bad things happen? Could the Jobs of our time be the people of Fort Chipewyan, including thee Mikisew Cree and* *Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations on the Athabasca River who have seen their fishing river polluted by toxic effluent—including mercury—from the Athabasca Tar Sands?*

*Could Job be all of humanity in very short order as we face the seemingly inevitable environmental apocalypse? When the bees are no longer pollinating the plants to feed all of the animals, including us, and the waters are rising to the point where we are sitting on a lonely out-cropping beholding what was once prosperous cities, will Job become every human?*

*How can Job’s words of wisdom to his friends become words of wisdom to us as well? How will we go more deeply into this relationship with the plants, the birds, the fish, and the animals? While in times past, and in some cultures to this day* (*those that have escaped complete decimation by Western Empire*), *Job’s wisdom is intuitive, we have lost much of it. However, there are a few pathways leading to a return and recovery of this wisdom.*

*One wisdom path that might be explored is the new creation story. In* The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos (*New York: Harper Collins, 1992*)*, Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme describe the evolutionary and cosmological drama of the unfolding universe as a spiritual wisdom. The new creation story is not opposed to the wisdom of scriptural creation stories, nor to the mythic universe stories that abounded among the cultures of our tribal ancestors and live on in Indigenous cultures around the world to this day. The new cosmology combines the insights of the hard sciences and the social sciences in such a way that we, who like Job face ecological despair, can draw on the wisdom of the plants of earth, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and beasts of the land. The sermon could lift up two layers of insight the authors of* The Universe Story *use to illustrate this:*

*The first is their observation that they see three factors at work in the creation enterprise:* ***differentiation,******autopoesis,*** *and* ***communion****. Without these, the universe would collapse into a smudge; inert dead existence; isolated bits of being.*

*Second, this three-fold root creativity of the universe is also at work in evolution, in the three dynamics that interplay to create the unique species: chance mutation, natural selection, and conscious choice. Think about the chance moment when one of our hominid ancestors decided to stand up: it freed the human hand for all kinds of new purposes. We could begin to carve, shape, and touch in new ways. The moment contained the potential for all the music, art, science, and construction we have today, and all the destruction our hands have wrought. It also freed our mouths from holding things, so that speech and language could develop. Every species can teach us about chance mutation, natural selection, and conscious choice. They are the same qualities that we require now.*

*The new creation story offers a way that is simultaneously as accurately scientific as is possible within the current limit of human knowledge and as profoundly and spiritually truth-bearing as every creation myth of the past. While Swimme’s and Berry’s approach is highly intellectual, it is also intuitive. Putting flesh and bones on their creation story calls us to a conversion to the wisdom of creation.*

*Another wisdom path a sermon might explore is eco-psychology. In* The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation (*New York: Maryknoll, 2009*), *Mark Hathaway and Brazilian Leonardo Boff provide a rich resource on the wisdom of creation, including extensive references to eco-psychology as developed by Theodore Rozak. In* Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder (*Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006*) *Richard Luov describes the many ways children are alienated from and afraid of nature in today’s North America and suggests ways to recover “nature intelligence.” Beginning with our children, we need a revolution in education that would put nature back into our schools and our children back into nature. Ironically it is often Indigenous peoples, long the keepers and teachers of this wisdom, who pay the greatest cost for our collective loss of this knowledge.*

*The divine wisdom celebrated in Psalm 104 and the eternal Logos of John 1:1–5 present in all creation from the beginning are one and the same. Is it not to this wisdom that Job 12 points? One of the few moments of hope in Job is an invitation to combine the wisdom of indigenous knowledge with the insights of a new creation story to restore a deep sense of our age-old oneness with the entire universe.*

#### Hymn of Faith

“Wisdom 7 – Who Comes from God” (*Voices United* 892)

or “Wellspring of Wisdom” (*Voices United* 287)

#### Prayer of Thanksgiving and Supplication

Holy Wisdom, we rejoice in the signs of your power in evolutionary creation and the unfolding cosmos. From the stardust of the galaxies to the plankton of the sea, from the oasis in the desert to the crowded city, all creation is infused with your power. Make us ever mindful of the inspiration that infuses all creation.

Pain-bearer, we hear the cries of creation and of our brothers and sisters, human and every other kind, the world over: climate refugees, species in danger of extinction, victims of war and economic injustice, especially those people and places we name at this time (*people and places*). We remember also those in special need in our own community and families who we name at this time (*names*). Extend the balm of your healing power, we pray.

Life-giver, we pray that your wisdom, revealed in all your works, may inspire us to live in right relation with Earth, our Mother, all her creatures, and the whole human family. May the harmony of creation be a model for our relationships with our neighbours near and far, teaching us that we are not self-sufficient, but only thrive through a constant exchange of energy and elements, love and language in the web of life.

O Great Teacher, we give you thanks for the wisdom of Indigenous peoples, and the unique insights of the many expressions of faith and spiritual practice in the human family. Wherever there has been hatred, oppression, and exploitation bring truth-telling, reconciliation, and respectful communion.

Help us always to pray and act in ways that are in harmony with divine wisdom and to use our talents and resources to serve the good of all.

Amen.

#### Hymn of Departure

“Touch the Earth Lightly” (*Voices* *United* 307)

#### Commissioning for Mission

As you leave this place of worship and prayer,

go into the world drawing on the senses—

sight and hearing, taste, touch, and smell—

mindfully aware of the wisdom of creation

and its power to make you whole. Amen.

#### Benediction

May the blessing of God revealed in all creation,

and of the Holy Spirit who is our wisdom,

and of the Eternal Logos, present from the first moment,

teach, inspire, and renew you in body and spirit,

and keep you in solitary and communal joy. Amen.

#### Suggestions for Visual Display

*Arrange a display of pictures featuring contrasting images—some showing the desecration caused by oil spills, open pit mining, tar sands, and/or industrial farming, and others showing scenes of unspoiled shorelines, boreal forests, grasslands, and mountain scenery. Another possibility is a display of pictures of fish and shorebirds suffering the effects of an oil slick or pets or livestock treated* *inhumanely, contrasted with healthy fish and birds and livestock being well-treated.*