



Season of Creation

July 30, 2023 + Trees & Plants Sunday

An asterisk * invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read aloud responses found in **bold**.

We welcome you to First Lutheran Church!

we GATHER here on Earth

A Land

Acknowledgment is “a ritual intended solely to show gratitude to the land and acknowledge the original and Indigenous peoples from whom the land was stolen.” For some, this might be an uncomfortable practice at first, but during our Season of Creation, you are invited into this ritual with an open heart.

We sing a hymn with imagery from the four seasons. How might our behavior change if we remember that we are connected to Christ the “holy Vine” and “living Tree” that includes the plants and trees of the world?

Prelude — “For the Beauty of the Earth”

Setting by Ed Hogan
FLC Wind Ensemble

***Words of Welcome and Land Acknowledgment**

In the name of the Creator, the fountain of life, the name of Christ, the pulse of life, and the name of the Spirit, the breath of life. Amen.

We, the people of First Lutheran Church, acknowledge and honor the Dakota peoples, upon whose ancestral homelands we gather for worship this morning, as well as all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to care for this place - this land - and call it their home.

***Gathering Hymn** — no. 447

“O Blessed Spring”

***Confession & Forgiveness** — See Green Supplement

***Canticle of Praise** — See Green Supplement

“Praise to You, O Great Creator”

***Prayer of the Day**

May God be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray.

God, our Creator, whose glory fills our planet, **help us to discern your vibrant presence among us, especially in the mysteries of the trees and plants. Help us empathize with your forest creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice when all living things are given the care and concern they deserve. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and renews all things in creation. Amen.**

Stewardship Sharing Story

Judy Fienen

we LISTEN and RESPOND

A Reading from Genesis — Genesis 2:4b-15

Word of life. Word of growth. **Thanks be to our Creator God.**

Children’s Time — Paraphrase of Psalm 1

“Rooted Deep”

from *Psalm Book: Prayers and Poems for Kids*; Brenda McHugh & Pastor Chris

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles — Acts 17:22–28

Word of life. Word of growth. **Thanks be to our Creator God.**

***Gospel Acclamation** — *See Green Supplement* “Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil”

***Gospel** — Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Before the lesson: The Gospel of Matthew, the 13th chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

After the lesson: The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Pastor Chris Culuris

***Hymn** — from *Glory to God*

“What Is the World Like”

What do you think the world is like “when God’s will is done?” How does it look when we take the time to care deeply for all of Creation?

1. What is the world like when God's will is done? Mus - tard seeds grow more than
2. What is the world like when God's will is done? No more is neigh - bor just
3. What is the world like when God's will is done? Neigh - bors are as - ters and
4. These are the stor - ies that Je - sus im - parts, filled with the Spir - it who

we can con - ceive: roots thread the__ soil; branch - es reach for the sun.
al - ly or friend; peace thrives in__ plac - es where once there was none.
se - dges and trees: All serve a__ pur - pose, con - nec - ted as one;
joins us as one. Born throughour voic - es, our hands, and our hearts,

This is how God__ moves us__ each to be - lieve.
This is how God__ works when__ ri - val - ries end.
vi - tal for all__ life, cre - a - ted to be.
this is a new__ world where__ God's will is done.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us confess our faith using the words of this affirmation:

We believe that God creates all things, renews all things and celebrates all things. We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God’s presence, a home for us to share with our kin.

We believe that God became flesh and blood, a human being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross, for all human beings and for all creation.

We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.

We believe the Holy Spirit renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits with us for the rebirth of creation. We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.

*Prayers of Intercession

We begin our time of prayer by singing this refrain and will sing it after each petition after the phrase "Hear us, O Creator."

Hope of all cre - a - tion, Heal - er of re -
la - tions, We lift our prayer to you. We
lift our prayer to you.

Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

Gracious God, we pray for the well-being of creation. Safeguard the environment, clean polluted rivers and lakes, preserve the mighty tree and the tiny mustard seed, and send advocates for sustainable practices. Hear us, O Creator.

Compassionate God, we pray for the nations. Instill in all who govern the ability to discern between good and evil, free those who are oppressed, and protect those facing danger. Promote peace across the world and in our towns and neighborhoods. We pray for all in any need. Protect those fleeing from war, shelter any who are in poverty, clothe the naked, soothe all who grieve, and heal the sick. Hear us, O Creator.

Holy God, we pray for this congregation, both those gathered today and those absent from our assembly. Grant safety to travelers and refreshment and safety for children attending summer camps or community programs. Give direction to any experiencing life transitions. We give thanks for your saints who now rest from their labors. Inspire us by their witness to treasure the gospel, and continually nourish us with your grace. Hear us, O Creator.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Today in our Season of Creation we reflect on our "God of creatures and trees." How might we "transform our way of living" to help plants to thrive?

Offering

Music During Offering

Offering Canticle — *See Green Supplement* "God of Stars and Distant Planets"

*Offering Prayer

God of field and forest, sea and sky, you are the giver of all good things. Sustain us with these gifts of your creation, and multiply your graciousness in us, that the world may be fed with your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

we SHARE the meal

*The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

***An Earth Eucharistic Prayer**

O God triune, how majestic is your name in all the earth.
Over the eons your merciful might evolved our home, a fragile tree of life.
Here by your wisdom are both life and death, growth and decay,
the nest and the hunt, sunshine and storm.
Sustained by these wonders, we creatures of dust join in the ancient song:
The earth is full of your glory: **The earth is full of your glory.**

We praise you for the heart of Jesus, so filled with your love for this earth.
In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered around this table, we your children unite in this song:
The earth is full of your glory: **The earth is full of your glory. Amen and amen!**

***The Lord's Prayer**

We pray as Christ - our example of love for all of creation - taught us:
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

***Invitation to Communion**

Come, for all things are now ready. Come to the table with all your kin and share with all in need: the gift of healing for those in pain, the gift of forgiveness for those in sin, the gift of assurance for those in fear, and the gift of hope for those in tears.
May we, who share these gifts, share Christ with one another and all our kin.

Distribution of Holy Communion

All are welcome to this meal - there are no prerequisites or exceptions! We will observe continuous communion this morning and sing a familiar tune of praise and concern for living things!

Hymn — from *Songs for Celebrating with Creation* “O For a Thousand Trees”
sung to the tune AZMON

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. O for a thousand trees to sing
And join with us this day,
With ferns and frogs and butterflies:
A forest hymn of praise. | With trees and creatures we rejoice
When Earth is born again. |
| 2. Come celebrate with all the land,
Let species rare begin,
With geese and owls and herons blue:
A choir of country kin. | 4. Let ev'ry stream and river flow
In song toward the sea;
With whale, and seal and albatross
We thank God we are free! |
| 3. How can we hear creation groan,
The forests cry in pain? | 5. O for a thousand trees to sing
And join with us this day,
With ferns and frogs and butterflies:
A forest hymn of praise. |

***Prayer After Communion**

Now may the power of Christ's body and blood reach deep into our hearts, our minds, and our bodies to heal our wounds, to calm our fears, and through us to bring healing to Earth. In Jesus' name. Amen

we DEPART to serve Creation

Announcements

We are called to remember the importance and worth of the vital trees and plants of the Earth. The time is now "to do our best, as we've been blessed, to care for trees" and all living things.

***Sending Hymn**

*"O God, You Made the Trees"
sung to the tune TERRA PATRIS*

1. O God, you made the trees!
The oak and Douglas fir,
the maple, beech, and sweetgum reach
their branches heavenward.
The willow, growing wide —
the redwood, tall and strong —
and cedar trees! Yes, all of these
sing out creation's song.

2. You made each living thing
to give and to receive.
As roots grow down into the ground,
they twist and interweave.
A canopy of green
restores and cools the air.
Great branches shade the earth you made,
and dance — as if in prayer.

3. How often we forget
the forests and their worth!
We lay cement on places meant
to be the lungs of earth.
For profit and for gain,
we build and build some more;
We cut down woods in neighborhoods
of people who are poor.

4. O God, you made the trees —
the apple and the pine.
You made them all and still you call:
"Take care of what is mine!"
May we receive your gift
and give ourselves anew
to do our best, as we've been blessed,
to care for trees for you.

***Sending Litany**

Christ calls you to be his disciples, to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation.

**We will remember the forest! We will groan with creation! We will sing with
the trees and plants!**

Will you care for creation?

We will care for creation! We will nurture the flora! We will celebrate life!

***Blessing and Dismissal**

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the
knowledge of God's presence in Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you.

Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving Earth!

We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth!

***Postlude — "TERRA PATRIS"**

Setting by Ed Hogan
FLC Wind Ensemble

Acknowledgements

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Worship Assistants

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Greeter: Joan Olson
Reader: Aileen Bipes
Ushers: Tom Thorkelson

Communion Preparers: Grace Timm, Nancy Thorkelson
Communion Servers: John Bipes, Aileen Bipes
Bread Bakers: Cheryl Kautt

Announcements

- FLC is working on a new directory and we have set up photo opportunities for our members. Appointments are available September 26-29 from 2:00-8:30 p.m. and September 30 from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. You can sign up for an appointment online at <https://ucdir.com/schedule/login.php> (log in using Church Code: *mn348* Password: *photos*). Committee members will be available in the gathering space after service on Sundays starting today to assist with scheduling.
- Save the date for August 6, when we will be hosting a Swedish Fiddle Choir during worship, fellowship time, and for an afternoon concert! We are providing GAC lunch bags for our 15 guests. These cost about \$10 per lunch. If you can donate toward one meal for a choir member, please talk with Karen or designate a donation to "Fiddle Choir Lunch" in an envelope. Let's show them our wonderful hospitality!
- Flowers for the altar are given today by John and Aileen Bipes for the joy of summer.
- Worship assistants are needed! Please check the sign-up sheet in the Gathering Space and commit to helping in one of the many roles that make our worship services possible.

Prayers

We lift up prayers for those on our long-term list: Elgene Lund, Chuck Petry, Bob Cady, Joan Williams, Betty Gustafson, Erika Schuldt, Ursula McRostie, Karen Wendroth, Allen Storkson, Gene Roemhildt, Karen Smithers, Paul Aasen, Shirley Storkson, Claire Cardwell, Alana Gage, Ella Twaddle, Tim Schwartz, Shawn Conover, and Sarah Smith.

- We pray for Steve, Lynn, and Isaac Kidder as they mourn the loss of Isaac's girlfriend, Alana, to cancer.