

Madison Mennonite Church
Koinonia Worship

April 25, 2021

GATHERING

Greet one another and add names to the liturgy of those who would like to lead, read, or facilitate. Each blank can be filled by a different person, and all ages are encouraged to participate in leadership! Help non-readers with their lines. Everyone reads the "Many" parts, unmuted for groups reading virtually. Re-mute afterward.

Call to Worship*: Leader _____

Leader: _____ Glory be to the One who brings all life to birth
And to love's embodiment
And to the sacred breath of life,
Primal, present, eternal.

Many: _____ We gather to worship the Life Sustainer
Within us and all around us.

Gathering Song - [Voices Together 181 Creation Is a Song](#) - A wonderful compilation of art from MMC's children and youth, with additional photos by Jon Dyck. Listen or sing along!

Lighting our Candles: Leader _____

Leader: Each week, we light a candle to symbolize Christ's presence with us and the unity we have with our beloved siblings at Madison Mennonite.

Light candles

Leader: Christ, our light, bless our fellowship with your Spirit's presence. We remember other MMC Koinonia Groups and pray that we are all united in love and peace. Amen.

HEARING the WORD: Reader 1 _____; Reader 2 _____

Reader 1: A reading from Genesis 2:4b-8, 15, 18-20

At the time when YHWH made the heavens and the earth, there was still no wild bush on the earth nor had any wild plant sprung up, for YHWH had not yet sent rain to the earth, and there was no human being to till the soil. Instead, a flow of water would well up from the ground and irrigate the soil.

So YHWH fashioned an earth creature out of the clay of the earth, and blew into its nostrils the breath of life. And the earth creature became a living being. YHWH planted a garden to the east, in Eden--"Land of Pleasure"--and placed in it the earth creature that had been made ... so that the earth creature might cultivate and care for the land...

Then YHWH said, "It is not good for the earth creature to be alone. I will make a fitting companion for it." So from the soil, YHWH formed all the various wild beasts and all the birds of the air, and brought them to the earth creature to be named. The earth creature gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals.

Reader 2: A reading from Genesis 1:28

God blessed [humankind] and said, "Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the earth--and be responsible for it! Watch over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things on the earth!"

Tactile engagement: Reader: _____

Invite all ages, but children especially, to pause for a moment. If you are inside, take a moment to move to a window and gaze outside. If you are outside, take a moment to look around you. As you regather in the worship space (physically or with your attention), share something--anything at all--you noticed about the created world (e.g., a cloud's shape, a blooming flower, a tree with no buds on it yet, etc.)

Guiding Reflection: Reader: _____

I am often stunned by the great mercy with which our species has been blessed. It is not a blessing of power, or dominion, or even exceptionality. Rather, it is a blessing of belonging. God created, and we, humans, were placed within Creation. Not above it, not below it, but within it. The blessing we were granted by God was not a blessing of resources – it was a blessing of place. Humankind was offered a place, a place among all the other created ones, a place in which to be God's Creation beside the Created, a place to grow alongside the other Created Ones. It is a blessing of ever-changing, ever-challenging, ever-growing relationship, of never-ending beauty.

Over the years, humans have time and again forgotten that blessing, or taken it for granted, or even soiled it. We came to believe that the promise of stewardship which God asked of Adam and Eve was one of ownership, not of partnership. For too many of us, the Earth has become nothing more than a tool. A useful tool created to serve the needs of humankind, to provide sustenance to our species, to be exploited for the amassing of wealth, or security, or comfort by people.

God did not make any part of Creation self-sufficient. From the very beginning of our existence, we were created to rely on each other. On the soil. On the air. On the water that flows through the soil and the air. On the tiny things that grow in the soil and the water and the air. Humans, alongside all others of God's creation, were created to rely on each of these things for life, but not only for life. We rely on them for hope, and for the pleasure of knowing beauty, and for fleeting glimpses of the Divine.

This bond – the bond forged between the Created Ones – is central to what humankind is. Without it, we are not what we are. As such, humans, and all other created ones, are sacred. Creation, whatever its form, is a gateway to the heart of the Creator. But that gateway is only open to humankind when we choose to stand beside, rather than to own, those Created Ones amongst which God placed us. We see God's heart only when we stand with, and not atop, the others which God made when humans were created.

Last time we met in our K Groups, Mark asked us to find the sacred in everyday places and objects that surround us in our homes. God's Creation, too, is sacred. I pray that my eyes may be opened to see the sacred in the birds that sing in the morning, and in the muddy soil that cakes my shoes when I walk the wet earth, and in the ants that scurry across my not so pristine kitchen counters. May I remember then that I am a part of God's Creation, not its master.

Questions for Group Reflection: Facilitator _____

At its best, worship enables us to strengthen the connections we have to our faith community, to Creation, and to the Divine. Use this time to reflect together, using some or all of the questions below, or spend time in silence or draft your own questions if that is best for your group today.



1. What experiences do you recall that remind you of your kinship with God's creation? How have those experiences shaped you?
2. With what animal or plant do you hold a sacred bond? What places in nature feel sacred to you? How do these bonds help you better understand your place within God's creation?
3. Are God's promises the same for all God's Creation? How does this alter your priorities and values as a human? What is our part in honoring God's promises to that Creation?

At the closing of this time of sharing, pray together:

Facilitator: Source of all Life, we give you thanks for Mother Earth, who teaches us, feeds us, and nudges us to revere every creature, water source, plant, and mineral. May we continue to grow in wisdom and compassion as persons and as a church. Amen.

RESPONDING in PRAYER and FELLOWSHIP

Sharing Joys and Concerns: Leader _____

The Leader invites each person (children included!) to share any joys or concerns they bring to the group. Remind your group that if anyone does not wish to share, they may simply say "pass." After all, including the Leader, have been invited to share, and if no one has something to add after a first round, join in a spirit of prayer (below).

Level 1B adaptation: *If the group is 15 people or larger, invite people to type their name in the chat if they would like to share, as we do on All-Church Sundays. Call on people in that order. If the group is smaller than 15 people, follow the instructions above.*

Praying Together

Leader: Holy God, we offer these prayers to you this day, trusting in your faithfulness.
 We pray for ourselves, for our loved ones near and far. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
 We pray for our community, our nation, and our world. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
 We pray for our watersheds, for the health of the soil, for the gift of air.
(a moment for silent prayer)
 Loving God,
Many: _____ hear our prayers. Amen.

Sharing the Peace of Christ: Leader _____

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.
Many: _____ And also with you.

Continued Fellowship (as time allows)



Sources used:

- *Call to Worship - Annie Heppenstall, *The Book of Uncommon Prayer, 2015*
- Bible reading from the Inclusive Bible.
- Guided Reflection by Todd Shenk

Announcements:

*A reminder to **save the date for the May 19 @ 7pm** congregational conversation, led by the Next Phase Working Group. More info will be shared in early May about this meeting.

*[Sign up here](#) to participate in **anti-racism trainings** and discussions with MMC. Deadline to sign up is May 2.

***Deni is on vacation this week.** For anything related to Deni's job that needs immediate attention, please contact Pastor Valerie.

This Week's Calendar:

Wed., Apr 28 - Youth CE 7pm
Care Call 8:15pm

Thurs., Apr 29 - NPWG 6:30pm
Boggle Group 7pm

Sun., May 2 - All-Church Adult CE 4pm,
Worship 5pm, and Fellowship Time

For links to these virtual gatherings, please see the weekly e-calendar. To add an event, please email Deni - Deni@Madison-Mennonite.org

