

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN

May 4, 2025 • Care for Creation, Part One • Second Sunday in Easter

Genesis 1:1-2:3; Leviticus 19:9-10

"Appreciate God's Abundance"

God provides more than we need from the start.

Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If you don't have a particular item, fret not:

- a piece of white cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a basket
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week

For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop

In preparing for Worship, consider the following:

- Thinking broadly, why do you take things for granted?
- What's the best way for people to show YOU appreciation?
- How much of a priority for you is thanking people?
- What do you imagine is the best way to show your appreciation to God for Creation this week?

(10am only) Call to Worship

"Christ Has Arisen!" by Daniel Mattix

Christ has arisen as our King.

Conquering death and sin's vile sting!

With all creation join to sing; Alleluia!...

Liturg:

Christ has died! Christ has risen!

Christ will come again!

Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ!

He has given us new birth into a living hope by raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

Through faith, we are shielded by God's power...

...until our salvation is fully revealed in heaven.

Alleluia!

Amen!

Christ has arisen from the grave,

He rose to triumph and to save!

New life to humankind he gave:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

(10am only) Prelude:

"To God Be the Glory" arr. Cindy Berry

Opening Sentence

Leviticus 19:10 (CEB)

Also do not pick your vineyard clean or gather up all the grapes that have fallen there. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the LORD your God.

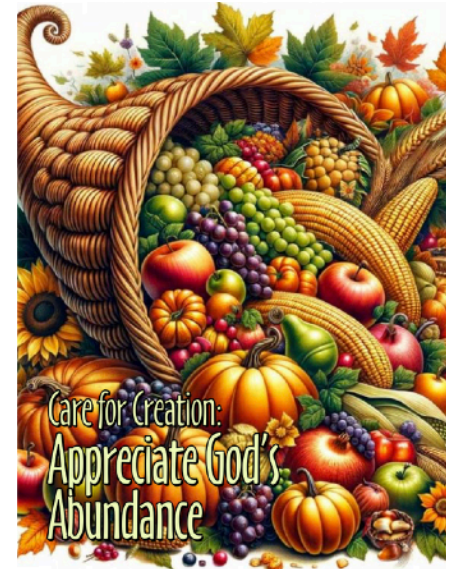
Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than the Sanctuary.

We Welcome Elder Brody Cameron!

While our Pastor is away, we welcome to the pulpit this weekend Elder Brody Cameron! Elder Cameron served on our Session last year and is



rapidly-working toward the end of his Senior Year at Western High School.

Everything's Granted

Sometimes there is nothing worse than feeling someone's taken advantage of you. That feeling that you've been duped or someone just doesn't appreciate you. They've taken you and what you've done for them for granted. So you can probably imagine, then, how God feels when it comes to all of Creation, even our very lives. How often do you make a specific and deliberate effort (even if small) to thank God, to show your appreciation for Creation and for being created? Would anyone be able to tell, looking at your life, that you are grateful to God for all that has been granted? We often use the phrase "taken for granted" in a negative sense. Change that. Realize that every blessing did not have to be given. Every breath, every sight, every meal, every moment, did not HAVE to be: they were all given. Start saying "everything's granted" and thank God accordingly, every day.

Caring for Creation

The truth is as daunting as it is grace-filled: we are *partners* with God in Creation. God has seen fit to give us authority over the majesty, variety, and riches of Creation. The question is *what kind of partner does God want us to be?* We will be exploring Scripture's take on our role in several ways throughout this series. Look for the study materials on our website and Facebook page.

Homecoming 2025: Music Festival

The third Sunday in May is the traditional celebration of the founding of our congregation and our church family reunion! We invite everyone to come ready to reminisce and reconnect. This year, we plan on worshipping together in song! Also, as always, we will have our potluck following the service. Bring Lemonade or Tea and your favorite dish to share and be ready for our group picture. Everyone is welcome to join in, whether or not they're a member or friend or visitor! Let's make this a grand celebration of 270 years!

Honor Your Mothers!

It is hard to overstate how much we need and count on those who mother us. Those folks who

help make sure we're fed and ask us uncomfortable questions. Those who mentor us and those who work ahead of us. Those who want the best for us and those who love taking care of us. While next weekend is an arbitrarily set holiday, the task of honoring those who mother us is not arbitrary. Find ways to show honor year round.

Game Night!

Friday, May 23rd, starting at 7pm, is once again Game Night! Bring your favorite card or board game to share as well as a snack. We will break out at tables throughout the Fellowship Hall (and if need be, the Education Building). Come and join in and let's learn a thing or two about each other!

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "This Is the Day CEL #209

This is the day, that the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it

This the day that Lord has made;

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made.

God provides more than we need from the start.

In this moment, let us remain standing, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship. Let us sing our opening song together...

Opening Song

"This Is My Father's World" (CEL #143)

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

In all our efforts to be recognized or acknowledged we forget to do all of that for the God who made us. That's just wrong. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Creator God, it's not enough to say were created: we should live as though we know it. It's not enough to say we've been blessed: we should live as though we're blessings. It's not enough to say grace before our meals: we should live grace-filled lives. It's not enough to

say we're forgiven: we need to be forgiving people. It's not enough to say you love us: love must become our way of life. And for all of our mistakes, all of our rebellions and rejections, you entrust gifts, talents, ideas, even life itself, to us anyway. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son,

And to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning

It is now and ever shall be

World without end: Amen, amen.

Please be seated...

Reading of Scripture

Say: The Word of God doesn't just inform: it reveals. The Word of God doesn't just tell us the truth, it empowers us to live our true path. The Word of God, by God's own Spirit, teaches us to live. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"
(GTG #232)

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!

Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!

Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!

Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Read: Genesis 1:1-2:3 (CEB)

God creates the Heavens and the Earth.

^{1:1} When God began to create the heavens and the earth—² the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters—³ God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. ⁴ God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning:

the first day.

⁶ God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other."

⁷ God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. ⁸ God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning:
the second day.

⁹ God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. ¹⁰ God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. ¹¹ God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. ¹² The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

¹³ There was evening and there was morning:
the third day.

¹⁴ God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years.

¹⁵ They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened.

¹⁶ God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. ¹⁷ God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

¹⁹ There was evening and there was morning:
the fourth day.

²⁰ God said, "Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky." ²¹ God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. ²² Then God blessed them: "Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

²³ There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. ²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

²⁷ God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. ³⁰ To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. ³¹ God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

^{2:1} The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. ² On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

Read: Leviticus 19:9-10 (CEB)

God creates the Heavens and the Earth.

⁹ When you harvest your land's produce, you must not harvest all the way to the edge of your field; and don't gather up every remaining bit of your harvest. ¹⁰ Also do not pick your vineyard clean or gather up all the grapes that have fallen there. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the LORD your God.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- View "Creation Pillow" video together:
- to be sure to wait for answers to the questions! "*More than Enough*"
- How much does someone need to eat in a day? about 4.5 pounds. How much does someone need to drink in a day? About 3.375 quarts. How much air does someone need? about 2000 gallons.
- But there's WAY more food than that on earth. There's WAY more drink than that on earth. There's WAY more air than that on earth. Why have so much?!
- Because God wants us to have more than we need. That's why we share. It shows we know this is what God is doing.
- So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them how God meets their needs.
- Don't forget to pray!

Anthem: "*Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)*"
arr. Tom Fettke

"Appreciate God's Abundance"

The first Creation story is one of the most enduring narratives in our culture that we often get wrong. At least as far as the details are concerned. We know God spoke things into existence and we might even have some idea of the order of events. We sometimes mix up details from the first story with the second (yes, there are two Creation stories). But as with all of the Scriptures preserved for us, the details of what was saved matter.

Read: Genesis 1:1-2:3 (CEB)

It's worth saying again (in case you missed our discussion about this earlier) that this story stands in stark contrast to the creation narratives of other gods worshipped in the region. Conflict and struggle characterized those efforts. Some analogies with childbirth even. But here there is no conflict, there is no struggle. God speaks and all things simply come to be.

But I will admit something I've never thought about. Elder Brody Cameron observed that the first gift of God for Creation was not light. It was God's own wind, God's Spirit.

Whew. Sit with that for a minute!

EVERYTHING that follows—light, day and night, land masses and oceans, animals and birds and fish, and humanity—everything has the imprint of God's Spirit. It's a profession of faith that has far-reaching implications for our behavior.

Mainly, we have to stop acting like we own the place.

The earth and all therein didn't stop belonging to God just because God shared dominion with us. In fact, as we'll see next week, God chooses to partner with us in how Creation gets handled, but there was no such partnership when it comes to the formation of Creation: that's ALL God. Specifically, anytime we eat or drink, all the places we might hike or play, all the pets we own or zoos we enjoy, all the oil and coal and lithium and copper and diamonds and iron and silicon we harvest, everything still actually belongs to God alone.

That presses the question of what we do with it all. Specifically, what does GOD want us doing with it all? Remember, God said be fruitful and multiply and take charge. We didn't conquer, we didn't earn it all, we didn't even negotiate with God's lawyers on the power of attorney or lease agreement. It was all simply given.

Well, there's a broad frame for us to think about all of that and a REALLY specific lens through which we should be thinking about our Creation-management.

First, the broad frame: Creation is abundant. In other words, there's a LOT. Much more than we could ever need or consume in a lifetime. There is more water, more fruit, more milk, more grains, more livestock, more land, more sunlight, more air, than a world of even more than 8.2 billion people can possibly consume. And add to that all of those

resources replenish (except the land, of course, but we'll come back to that).

Walter Bruggemann is a renowned Old Testament theologian who talks extensively about the "lie of scarcity." It's a way of talking about how following this lie has led to cruelty and rank immorality. As a test case, he talks about Pharaoh and the idea that Egypt had to enslave the Israelites (rather than share) not because there wasn't enough to go around, but because they were afraid that chosen life and culture wouldn't last, that their power and authority were fragile and needed protection. Pharaoh told himself that there wasn't enough to go around. So he could justify killing all the firstborn in the name population control and maintaining the pecking order.

But Creation itself stands as a witness against all of that. The only real authority we have is from God. And that authority is life itself. It is living, abundantly. And Creation also teaches us that there is always more than enough.

Listen, I get it: natural disasters, famines, droughts, we can't control those things. When they come they can be devastating. And nothing said here is meant to minimize those experiences. But I observe that when those events happen, even a hurricane ravaging the Western North Carolina mountains, the power of compassionate giving can even overpower natural disasters. There truly is more than enough.

The problem is we *choose* when to not share. And that goes against the grain and express direction of none other than God.

Online Read: Leviticus 19:9-10 (CEB)

One of the reasons I like to spend a lot of time in the Old Testament is because that's the Bible Jesus and the disciples had to use. There was no New Testament except the one written with their lives. When they quoted Scripture, when they thought about God's will, the only Bible was the Old Testament. And the more time I spend there, the more I find these gems of God's holy will breaking through the cultural morass that tries hard to arrest God's Creation momentum.

The Leviticus passage is beautiful in its simplicity. When the crops are ready to harvest, leave some for the poor and immigrant. There is only one justifications given for this directive: "I am Yahweh your God." It's about as divine a "because I said so" as you can get. But if you read further, God roots the morality of this in the fact that God liberated them from Egypt. In other words, it's a direct challenge and calling out of the whole scarcity school of thought. Don't act like Pharaoh. It's not exactly subtle.

But that's why the amount of food and drink we throw away, the resources we waste, the hoarding we commit, our willingness to tolerate poverty and homelessness, to commit genocides and slavery and exploitation is appalling and *evil*. *None of it* has to be. *None of it ever* had to be. We *choose* for those things to exist.

It is a sign of how far away from the original narrative, from our divine roots, we have fallen when we lose sight of how very interconnected we all are and the responsibility we share to...well...share. To share land and space and resources with each other. To help manage Creation's ongoing task to be fruitful and multiply, according to the owner's wishes. Thus conservation is not a trendy, left-wing issue. It's a part of our divine mandate from none other than God to see to it that life goes on. And there's no excuse for only making do: there's more than enough. There's no excuse for just getting by. God provides more than we need from the start. If there isn't enough, then there's a chance that our starting place is wrong.

Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Song of Reflection

"For the Beauty of the Earth" (GTG #14)

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

Offertory

"This Is My Father's World" arr. Mark Hayes

Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.**

Alleluia, Alleluia!

**Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.**

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Blessing (online only)

**Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us.
And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt,
Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we
receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we
are meant to be emerge. In the great name of
Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.**

Prayer of the People

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...
- *"Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks"* (GTG #240)
**Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia! Give praise to His name (2 X)**
- Creator God, It's so easy to say that it all started with you. It's easy to acknowledge that our blessings continue because of you. Somehow it's hard to trust you nevertheless. We might say you are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, we still forget all that's in-between. Lord, help us trust in your abundance. Help us believe you instead of the lies of scarcity. Thank you for providing more than we can possible need.
- We're taking on a tough topic, God: caring for your Creation. Help us not forget to include ourselves in that. Help us not forget to include our neighbors in that. Help us not forget that your acts of Creation are ongoing. You don't only provide. You also revise, remake, remind, respond, revive, reveal and remove. Help us make room for all of your creative activity with us.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come

to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)

- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(In-person) *"Count Your Blessings"* (CEL #786)

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

God provides more than we need from the start.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: *"Praise, Praise, Praise the Lord!"*

(GTG #390)

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

Praise God's holy name, alleluia! Praise God's holy name! Alleluia!

Praise God's holy name, alleluia! Praise God's holy name! Alleluia!

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

(10am only) Postlude

"Jesus Saves" arr. Cindy Berry