

Touch the Earth Lightly

Session 1: Creation

Materials Needed:

- Recycled blue, green, and white bottle caps, coffee lids, sour cream and cottage cheese lids, etc.
- Spray paint: Blue, Dark Blue, Light Green, Dark Green, Turquoise
- 4' x 6' foam core
- Large container of Elmer's glue
- 6" x 6" origami paper in various colors
- Instructions for Origami paper folding
- Copies of the Hymns or have them ready to project

Preparation Ahead of time:

- Trace a picture of a globe on the foam core marking the colors in proper locations
- Cut up Worship Bulletins into 6" x 6" squares and recycle them to fold the origami peace cranes

Gathering Activity: Folding Origami Peace Cranes

- Fold origami peace cranes– then string them together to be installed in the sanctuary – as you are folding say a prayer for the planet, endangered species, etc.
- Collect pictures of creation taken on cellphones as people are gathering (or ahead of time). Examples: sunset, animals, insects, trees, flowers. Have someone receive these during the session to display a slide show/PowerPoint presentation at the very end of the session

Opening Prayer

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: Please repeat this prayer and these motions after me.

May God be in my mind (using your right hand, touch middle of forehead)

May Jesus be in my heart (using your right hand, touch middle of chest)

May the Holy Spirit be by my side (using your right hand first touch the left shoulder, then the right shoulder.)

Amen!

Hymn

[Touch the Earth Lightly](#)

Call to Worship/Opening Sentences/Devotion

For the Beauty of the Earth Daily Devotions Exploring Creation – Watercolors by Kathrin Burleson – Forward Movement @2018

Genesis 1:3-5

Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.



And There Was Evening – Kathrin Burleson



And the Lesser Light to Rule the Night

Reflect on these two images

What aspects of creation come to mind when you look at these two images?

Read the note from the artist below:

Artist's Note: Visual art is all about contrasts. If you want a line to look bold and really stand out, you surround it with faint, delicate work. Want green to look really green? Place it by the color red. Light? Surround it with dark colors. Like just about everything else, this can be a metaphor for life. We can't help but compare ourselves and our lives of others, sometimes believing that we're on the lower end of the spectrum, and it can be depressing. It's also a dead end. We may find it helpful to remember that just about everything is relative. Maybe the only thing that isn't relative is God's enduring love. Next to that, everything pales in comparison.

What contrasts do you see in each image?

What contrasts do you see between the two images?

What are some contrasts that you see or think of in creation and the world around us?

Opening Sentences

Leader: Planet Earth, spinning silently through space:
People: **Celebrate your beauty and your grace,
your special place in our solar system.**

Leader: Planet Earth, gleaming green and blue:
People: **Rejoice in your ocean currents,
As they dance and swirl with hope.**

Leader: Planet Earth, pulsing with life:
People: **Join in praise with all your fauna and flora
as they sing their songs to the Lord.**

Leader: Planet Earth, enveloped in the breath of God:
People: **Bless all your creatures this day
with the life-giving breath of God.**

Leader: Planet Earth, our precious, fragile home:
People: **Celebrate, with all your children,
God's presence in our planet home.**

Leader: We celebrate the song of our planet!
People: **Sing, planet Earth, sing!**

Opening Song – *For the Beauty of the Earth*

Scripture: John 1:1-5 – Adapted from *The Dramatized New Testament* – Michael Perry

The Word of Life

(Cast: Voice 1, Voice 2)

Voice 1 – In the beginning was the Word,

Voice 2 – and the Word was with God,

Voice 1 – and the Word was God.

Voice 2 – He was in the beginning with God.

Voice 1 – All things came into being through him,

Voice 2 – and without him not one thing came into being.

Voice 1 – What has come into being in him was life,

Voice 2 – and the life was the light of all people.

Voice 1 – The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Reflection/Proclamation/Story

Earth Day Video 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CED8o7mKI>

(stop at Time 2:48)

- What did you like about this video?
- What parts made you happy?

Reflection/Proclamation/Story

Select a poem to read and use multiple voices.

The Creation - James Weldon Johnson - 1871-1938

And God stepped out on space,
And he looked around and said:
I'm lonely—
I'll make me a world.

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,
And God rolled the light around in his hands
Until he made the sun;
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said: That's good!

Then God himself stepped down—
And the sun was on his right hand,
And the moon was on his left;
The stars were clustered about his head,
And the earth was under his feet.
And God walked, and where he trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then he stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And he spat out the seven seas—
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed—
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled—
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,

The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around his shoulder.

Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop his hand,
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that he had made.
He looked at his sun,
And he looked at his moon,
And he looked at his little stars;
He looked on his world
With all its living things,
And God said: I'm lonely still.

Then God sat down—
On the side of a hill where he could think;
By a deep, wide river he sat down;
With his head in his hands,
God thought and thought,
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;
This great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in his own image; Then into it
he blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

From *God's Trombones* by James Weldon Johnson. Copyright © 1927 The Viking Press, Inc., renewed 1955 by Grace Nail Johnson. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.

Messenger – Mary Oliver

My work is loving the world.
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird—
equal seekers of sweetness.
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.
Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me
keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,
which is mostly standing still and learning to be
astonished.
The phoebe, the delphinium.
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the ingredients are here,
which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart
and these body-clothes,
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,
telling them all, over and over, how it is
that we live forever.

What Can I Say – Mary Oliver

What can I say that I have not said before?
So I'll say it again.
The leaf has a song in it.
Stone is the face of patience.
Inside the river there is an unfinished story
and you are somewhere in it
and it will never end until all ends.

Take your busy heart to the art museum and the
chamber of commerce
but take it also to the forest.
The song you heard singing in the leaf when you
were a child
is singing still.
I am of years lived, so far, seventy-four,
and the leaf is singing still.

God in Creation - Susan Palo Cherwien

Praise to the God in creation;
Praise to the God of the first Great Light,
to the God of Genesis,

the God of beginnings:

God infused the universe with love at its beginning.

God imparted the fire of the Spirit to the church at its beginning.

God implanted in our baptismal burial the promise of
new beginnings.

Genesis is the core of hope.

Genesis is the core of daring.

Genesis is the core of praise.

Focus Activity

-Create a globe from recycled caps and lids

On a large piece of foam core is an outline of the globe. From recycled bottle caps, sour cream tops, etc. spray paint the caps and fill in the colors on the globe. Like paint by number.

-Attach bottle caps to the foam core design by using glue to secure the bottle caps in place

Song: *Touch the Earth Lightly*

Stanza 1

*Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.*

Charge

Become an Earth Care Congregation – Explore the options depending on what your faith tradition is

- The Christian Reformed Church Climate Witness Project (justice.crcna.org/about-0)
- Lutherans Restoring Creation (lutheransrestoringcreation.org)
- Presbyterians for Earth Care (presbyearthcare.org)
- United Church of Christ Creation Justice Churches (www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justicelocal-church-ministries/justice/faithful-action-ministries/environmentaljustice/creation_justice_churches)
- Creation Justice Ministries (formerly the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program) (www.creationjustice.org)

Sending

Leader: Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,
honoring the planet God has created to be our home.

People: We will follow our crucified Lord,

**listening for cries of injustice from Earth
and groaning with creation.**

**We will follow the risen Christ
to become partners in healing our planet.**

**We will care for creation,
nurturing our planet and celebrating life.**

Closing Blessing

In the name of Jesus —

Let us Love...**with Open Hearts!** (Touch heart)

Let us Learn...**with Open Minds!** (Hands on each side of head)

Let us Serve...**with Open Arms!** (Both arms stretched out)

Closing Song

Show creation photography taken by members of the congregation during the singing of
All Things Bright and Beautiful.

Additional Resources

Devotion – Rachel Jones

We are here together, you, and me. We're beginning this year together, pondering the beginning of all beginnings. It is kind of a big moment, this doorway space before there was such a thing as a doorway or space or moments.

I grow cross-eyes at the concept of infinitude—of utter emptiness, but not really empty because to be empty means there was something that could have filled it. There may not even be a container for emptiness to reside. See why I go cross-eyed and wobbly? This is the time for me to remember: God calls me to be still and let God be God. The concept of infinitude is real as roses but actually understanding it is beyond me.

There have been moments of creation in my life that have left my face in pain from smiling so broadly, my throat raw from laughter, my eyes running with happy tears. I marvel at how much bigger and broader God's smile must have been at the moment of creation, how God must have laughed with deep joy and profound contentment at calling the chaos into order and watching light form, watching stars wink awake, watching as something to watch takes shape. In this time before time, you and I might feel despair over the emptiness; skepticism about how things will gather, form, and fly; reluctance to keep adding things like planets or plants or animals or people. And still, God knows better, and keeps on making all things—all of the things—with love and intention and hope. This is literally more than we can ask or imagine.

Stay and sit here, in this beginning stillness, just for a minute, here in the midst of this first day. God is doing something new, something amazing—and in this very present moment, that thing is not the whole of existence or the universe or physics or string theory—it is you.

Breath of Life – Lauren Wright Pittman





– Lauren Wright Pittman

Jubilee



Flourish – Lauren Wright Pittman