



LESSONS AND CAROLS

First Presbyterian Church

Tallahassee, Florida

April 30, 2024

6:00 PM

Welcome

Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke of “the fierce urgency of now.” We use that phrase tonight, as we come together to sing, pray, and listen to scripture, to acknowledge the fierce urgency of now in caring for God’s creation.

Voluntary

Sonata, movement 2

Fernande Decruck

Based on the tune Noel Nouvelet

Opening Prayer

*Opening Hymn 15

All Creatures of Our God and King

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

v. 1 all

v. 2 tenor/bass voices

v. 3 choir

v. 4 all

v. 5 soprano/alto voices

v. 6 all

An asterisk invites the congregation to rise in body or spirit, as you are able. **Bold type indicates congregational responses.*

FIRST LESSON — EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

The United States has emitted over a quarter of all greenhouse gases since the 1750s, while the entire continent of Africa has emitted only about 3%.

Reading

Genesis 1:1-5a, 31

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Anthem

For the Beauty of the Earth

F.S. Pierpoint (alt.)
Arr. John Rutter

*For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies:
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise.*

*For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light:
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise.*

*For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild:
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise.*

*For each perfect gift of thine
To our race so freely given,
Graces human and divine,
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven:
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise.*

There were no witnesses
to what was about to happen.
“Happen” didn’t exist;
Reality was timeless, permanence.
Space didn’t exist.
The distance between two points was immeasurable.
The points themselves could be here or anywhere,
hovering and bouncing. Infinity tangled into itself.
Suddenly, a trembling
a vibration
an ordering began.
Like roiling waves, space shuddered and swelled.
What was near became far. What was now became past.
Space was born with time.
Mention space and we think contents.
Mention time and we think change.
And so it was.
Space bubbled; time unfurled.
Matter coalesced from the joint heaving of space and time,
seeping out of its pores.
But hold on.
This was no ordinary matter, no mundane substance
Like us.
This matter stretched space,
made it inflate like a swelling balloon.
This balloon became our Universe.

**In the urgency of now, we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation
and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.**

*Published online in *Three Creation Poems*, NPR, 13:7 Cosmos and Culture (July 13, 2010). This is the original form of a poem that appears in the author’s book *A Tear at the Edge of Creation: A Radical New Vision for Life in an Imperfect Universe*.

SECOND LESSON — THE CLIMATE

5% of the world's population was responsible for 36% of the greenhouse gasses from 1990-2015. The poorest half of the population was responsible for less than 6%.

Reading

Psalm 19:1-4

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words: their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.

*Hymn 716

God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending

BEACH SPRING

In the urgency of now, we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.

THIRD LESSON — GOD'S PROVIDENCE

According to Centers for Disease Control statistics, Leon County's most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are also those most vulnerable in their capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events, including natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods, disease outbreaks, and human-caused threats such as toxic chemical spills.

Anthem

Now the Green Blade Riseth

J.M.C. Crum
Arr. S. Lindley

*Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain;
Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*In the grave they laid Him, Love whom men had slain,
Thinking that never He would wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Thy touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor and blessing.

Be praised, O Lord, for all your creation and especially for our Brother Sun,
who brings us the day and the light; he is strong and shines magnificently.

O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.

Be praised, O Lord, for Sister Moon,
and for the stars which you have set shining and lovely in the heavens.

Be praised, O Lord, for our Brothers Wind and Air
and every kind of weather by which you, Lord, uphold life in all your creatures.

Be praised, O Lord, for Sister Water,
who is very useful to us, and humble and precious and pure.

Be praised, O Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom you give us light in the darkness: he is bright and lively and strong.

Be praised, O Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother,
who nourishes us and sustains us, bringing forth fruits and vegetables of many kinds and flowers of many colors.

Be praised, O Lord, for those who forgive for love of you;
and for those who bear sickness and weakness in peace and patience — you will grant them a crown.

Be praised, O Lord, for our Sister Death,
whom we must all face.

**We praise and bless you, Lord,
and we give thanks to you,
and we will serve you in all humility.**

**In the urgency of now, we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation
and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.**

FOURTH LESSON — WATER

There are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean.

Drinking water systems that constantly violated the law for years were 40 percent more likely to occur in places with higher percentages of residents who were people of color, according to EPA data.

Reading

Psalm 95:5–7

The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
O come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture
and the sheep of his hand.
O that today you would listen to his voice!

Anthem

As Rivers Flow From a Distant Spring

David Bjorlin
William Beckstrand

*As rivers flow from a distant spring
To quench our thirst and feed the earth,
So let our lives flow from You, our source,
To counter death and nurture birth.*

*As trees rise up from the forest floor,
By roots that feed each limb above,
So let our lives rise in praise to you
From hearts we root in your deep love.*

*As woods make shelter within its shade
For beasts to feed and birds to nest,
So let our lives be a sheltered space,
A refuge for the worn to rest.*

*So let us praise you, Creator God,
For worlds that witness to your care,
That show your presence in every place,
Your glory shining everywhere.*

In the urgency of now, we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.

FIFTH LESSON — EARTH

Every dollar spent on planting and caring for a community tree yields benefits that are two to five times that investment — benefits that include cleaner air, lower energy costs, improved water quality and storm water control, and increased property values.

Reading

Jeremiah 18:1-11

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you, from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

*Hymn 713

Touch the Earth Lightly

TENDERNESS

Reading

Don’t Bother the Earth Spirit

Joy Harjo

Don’t bother the earth spirit who lives here. She is working on a story. It is the oldest story in the world and it is delicate, changing. If she sees you watching she will invite you in for coffee, give you warm bread, and you will be obligated to stay and listen. But this is no ordinary story. You will have to endure earthquakes, lightning, the deaths of all those you love, the most blinding beauty. It’s a story so compelling you may never want to leave; this is how she traps you. See that stone finger over there? That is the only one who ever escaped.

In the urgency of now, we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.

SIXTH LESSON — ALL LIVING THINGS

The 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted to create a “Presbyterian Tree Fund.” The donations received will be used to grant tree-planting and other carbon sequestration projects. We know that as trees grow, they help stop climate change. They remove carbon dioxide from the air, store carbon, and release oxygen.

Reading

Genesis 1:20–25

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

*Hymn 37

Let All Things Now Living

ASH GROVE

Reading

When I Am Among the Trees

Mary Oliver

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.
I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.
Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.”
The light flows from their branches.
And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.”

In the urgency of now, we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.

SEVENTH LESSON — THINGS HAVE TO CHANGE

Communities of color are disproportionately victimized by environmental hazards and are far more likely to live in areas with heavy pollution. People of color are more likely to die of environmental causes, and more than half of the people who live close to hazardous waste are people of color.

Reading

The Old Man of the Mountains
(for Charles Steger)

Nikki Giovanni

In Autumn there is no question
Why they are called “The Smokies”
Clouds trickle away from the trees
As if the birds in awakening
Fluffed their beds

Or maybe the Old Man of the Mountain
After a good breakfast
Of grits and bacon and fresh-laid hen eggs
Lit his pipe

Some went scrambling along the floor:
The baby skunks, the mice, the squirrels, the little fawns
And even the fish
Start their day:
While possums and the others go off to sleep

I wish I were a Possum
But I have classes to teach

In Autumn the leaves fall
And turn
And ultimately trees will be bare
Awaiting the snows of winter

It’s all so beautiful
And quiet
And we are a part of it
Because someone had vision
To see we must take
Care of ourselves
By our service
To others

Ut Prosim more
Gently defined
is:

That I may enhance your life
And so
We try

In the urgency of now, **we lament our complicity in the destruction of your creation and recommit to nourish the life of the world in our care.**

*Hymn 24

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

HOLY MANNA

Closing Voluntary

Earth and All Stars

Keith Kolander



Participating in the Liturgy

Interim Pastor Anne H.K. Apple

Doctoral Fellow Pierce Withers

Organist Elizabeth Lajeunesse

Choir Director Ethan Murphy

Alto Saxophone Evan Blitzer

Technology Streaming Kelly Ann Kennedy and Zach Broadway

CARING FOR CREATION REQUIRES HONESTY, COURAGE, AND ACTION

Presbyterians for Earth Care (<https://presbyearthcare.org/about-us/>) Please join the PEC. It is “the” most action oriented Presbyterian organization on climate change and environmental issues. It provides up- to-date educational information, worship resources, inspiration and more on climate change and other environmental issues.

A Prayer for the Planet, Policymakers and Collective Action of Earth Day 2024
(Ga_Washington_Office@pcusa.org)

Climate change and the PC(USA) (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/climate-change-resources/>) Actions to address climate crisis.

Panhandle Presbyterian Newsletter (<http://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/>) This newsletter provides a monthly Caring for Creation column with the latest and most update information on climate change and other environmental issues. The May issue is on purchasing an electric vehicle. Past issues are accessible and it is free.

ReThink Energy Florida (<https://www.rethinkenergyflorida.org/>) Join this vitally important state level organization that focuses on transitioning our state to clean renewable energy. They are leaders of the local SEED initiative to bring solar to Tallahassee’s most vulnerable communities.

The City of Tallahassee’s Clean Energy Plan (<https://www.talgov.com/page/cep>) Our community is transitioning to 100% clean renewable energy. Stay informed and become a part of this effort. Put solar on your roof top. Purchase an EV.

Progress Florida Daily Clips To follow Florida environmental news, sign up for this free news service by writing jon@progressflorida.org.

Physicians for Social Responsibility/Florida (<https://psrflorida.org/about/>) and **Florida Clinicians for Climate Action** (floridaclinicians.org) Learn more about what our medical community is doing to address the climate crisis and other environmental issues.

Restrooms are located in this building through the door at the end of each aisle of the sanctuary.

An induction loop system is available in the sanctuary. To use the system, switch your compatible hearing aid to the T–telephone mode or request a wireless headset from an usher.

INTERIM PASTOR.....Reverend Anne H.K. Apple
Parish Associate Rev. Dr. Greta Reed
Doctoral Fellow..... Pierce Withers
Candidate for Ministry, PC(USA) Glenn Hodges
Organist..... Elizabeth Lajeunesse
Choir Director.....Ethan Murphy
Financial Administrator.....Fran Owens
Custodian and Sunday Host.....Becky Brown

MEMBERS OF SESSION 2024–26

Class of 2024

Peggy Wright-Cleveland
Chris Corzine, Clerk
John Hightower
Martha Kutter
Peggy West

Class of 2025

Donna Barber
Carolyn Bradley
Debbie Gibson
Patrick Kennedy
Sue Safford

Class of 2026

Jane Atkinson
Daniel Bruno
Janet Fixel
Norma Meier
Greg Riccardi

First Presbyterian Church
110 North Adams Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
E-mail: office@oldfirstchurch.org



Phone: (850) 222-4504
Fax: (850) 222-2215
www.facebook.com/oldfirstchurch
website: www.oldfirstchurch.org