

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2009 – “Enough for All Creation”

Friday, March 13, 2009

Opening Worship: Enough! Remembering God’s Creation – A Call to Transformative Action

Gathering Meditation: Cosmic Genesis

by Ms. Tevyn East (adapted from Patricia Gordon, “The Universe Story,” with additional material from Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry)

Reader: 13 billion years ago

In a fiery unfurling, space, time, light, and subatomic particles billow forth from potentiality, the originating reality, the ultimate mystery. From a region perhaps smaller than a single atom, flares an explosion so colossal that it continues, to this day, to overpower the combined gravitational force of the entire Universe.

300,000 years pass. In an instant, everywhere, the Universe transforms itself into atoms of hydrogen and helium, organizing itself in a fresh way. The creation of atoms is as stunning as the originating mystery. Nothing had hinted at their emergence.

Hundred of millions of years later, gravitational interactions shock the galactic clouds, condensing into millions of stars, primal stars igniting.

In the unimaginable pressures of primal stars, elements form for the first time: carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, copper, silver, calcium, iron . . . all the elements in existence now. Stars age, becoming supernovas. The primordial fire, destined to support the unfolding of life and consciousness, explodes as supernova, with the brilliance and intensity of a billion stars.

Billions of years pass, gravitational ripples in the clouds left by our Ancestral Star’s supernova birth a second-generation of stars, one of which is our Sun

The disc of gases surrounding the Sun is rich with the elements from our Ancestral Star. These elements collide, centers of concentration develop that violently sweep more matter into themselves. The spherical planets emerge.

Yet, Only Earth is the proper size enabling balance between stability and dynamism. Not too far and not too close to the Sun, temperate Earth has further creative potential..

Our Creative Planet, Earth: molten, radioactive, its crust cooling like skin on a steamy pudding. Its thickening skin heaves, cracks, and slides about, pushing up mountains, and buckling in valleys, only to rearrange them again and again. Meteors continually strike, splatting down to form craters of all sizes. Great rains begin, hissing to Earth and helping it cool. Giant electrical storms, immense lightning bolts sweep the planet for millions of years. Eventually, rivers form and pour themselves into growing seas, filling them with salts and other minerals.

After millions of years, a critical threshold is passed: as a unified organism emerges in the sea. This first multicellular life form is as much a surprise as the emergence of the atom, as much a surprise as the emergence of galaxies. There follows an exuberant outburst of creative forms.

500 million years ago, The Creative Planet experiences the first ice death. The seas cool; the shallow seas withdraw from continental shelves. A spasm of extinction overcomes the Planet's inhabitants. All future life evolves from the same forms that survive at this time.

Life remains exclusively in the oceans for ninety percent of Earth's history. The first heroes to venture onto land are plants. The animals dare not. Above the water, one faces a red, lifeless expanse of baked rocks, rubble, dust, barren as a moonscape. There is no living soil. There is nothing green. Yet the genius of creativity swells within these plants, the first to invade an alien world, the first to stand up to gravity.

Plants sustain the emergence of insect. Evolution continues. Certain fish are lured to shore, gasping for breathe, awkwardly ambling about. Evolution continues. Amphibians learn to lay eggs outside of water, the great age of the Reptiles begins.

Then, Somewhere, there occurs a soundless, violent explosion, lasting millions of years. The old, monotonously green world begins to glow with strange colors. Flowering plants emerge: putting out queer, unheard-of fruits and little intricately carved seed pods. Flowers change the face of the planet. Without them, the world we know--even humans--would never have existed.

65 million years ago, An asteroid flames through the atmosphere, striking what we know as the Yucatan Peninsula with the energy of 100 million megatons. Volcanic eruptions devastate what we know as western India. Dust, smoke and debris envelope the Earth. Prolonged darkness, cold, and acid rain torture Earth's surface. A long period of severe fluctuations in climate and ocean temperature adds to the agony, resulting in the fifth mass extinction of the Creative Planet. Among the many who perish are the dinosaurs.

Descendants of the tiny mammals who had lived in the shadows of the Great Reptiles explode into a richness of species, with their gifts of fur, live birth, and nursing. In the four and a half billion years of the Creative Planet's existence, never has there been the abundance of life species as there are at this time. Perhaps the only word to describe the diverse, dazzling world that gave birth to the human form of life is--paradise.

Call to Worship:

Leader gestures for all to stand.

Leader: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God ...

All: And not only creation, but we ourselves, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies. (based on Romans 8:19,23)

(Elements prayer adapted from Janet Morley (ed.), *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992)

Leader: O Eternal Wisdom,
who laid the foundations of the earth,
and breathed life into every creature,
creating us in our variety
to cherish your world and seek your face:
we praise you and give you thanks
for your abundant love toward this earth,
violated with our injustice,

and polluted by our sin;

you took upon you our unprotected flesh,
and entered our struggle,
that you might deliver all creation
from its bondage to oppression and decay.

Therefore, with those whose voice is silenced,
with those who call for freedom,
those whose harvest celebration
sings through hardship and labor and love;
and crying with them for that new creation
when the morning stars shall sing together,
and all the children of God shout for joy,
we praise you as we sing:

OPENING SONG + PROCESSION WITH EARTH SYMBOL, ELEMENTS, AND CROSS

After song, Earth symbol is “presented” to the assembly. Leader prays:

Leader: God, our loving creator,
You have made us one with this earth,
to tend it and to bring forth fruit.
Make the work of these days of prayer, education, and advocacy
also bear fruit, so that there may truly be “enough for all creation.”
Send the anointing of your Spirit upon
our gathering,
our prayer,
our networking,
our conversations,
our fellowship
and our actions.
May we so respect and cherish
all that has life from you
that we may share in the labor of all creation
to give birth to your hidden glory,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader waits until earth symbol is in place before proceeding. As the leader speaks the following, the person with the symbol for “soil” or “land” holds it up.

Leader: Earth, air, fire, and water are traditionally
symbols of life.
But our "slavery to sin" has meant
that these elements may equally carry and
contain death.

Soil is held up.

Reader 1: I am life. I offer earth to share between the daughters and sons of God—soil for bearing plants to sustain the planet’s life and yield bread for all people.

Reader 2: I am death. I take earth away from the many and give it to the few. I exploit and over-use it. I waste its bread, while many starve.

Leader: O God, who wore our clay in Christ, we confess we have not shared the land; we have broken our bond with the earth and one another.

Pause for silent prayer (15 sec)

Reader 3: Together we pray ... *(lead people in response)*

**ALL: Forgive us O God: we have chosen death.
We long for healing: we choose your life.**

Soil is put in place. When this person moves back to the side, “wind / air” comes to the center and holds the symbol high.

Reader 1: I offer air to breathe;
for the endless energy of the wind,
for birds to fly and seeds to blow.
Air has no frontiers; we share the breath of life.

Reader 2: I fill the air with poisonous fumes which all must breathe, and which claw away the threads of the universe.

Leader: O God, who breathed life into the world, we confess that we have polluted the air; we cannot sense the harmony of your creation.

Pause for silent prayer (15 sec.)

Reader 3: Together we pray ...

**ALL: Forgive us O God: we have chosen death.
We long for healing: we choose your life.**

Wind symbol is put in place. As this person moves back to the side, “fire” comes forth and other candles are lit.

Reader 1: I offer fire for light and warmth, for purification and power. Fire draws us together in fellowship, around a meal cooked and shared together.

Reader 2: I use fire for my own violent ends.
I burn the forests and choke the air.
I give the rich the earth's energy to waste.
I deny the poor their fuel to cook with.

Leader: O God, pillar of fire and Pentecost flame,
we confess our lack of inner fire
for your justice to be done,
your peace shared on earth.

Pause for silent prayer (15 sec)

Reader 3: Together we pray ...

ALL: Forgive us O God: we have chosen death.
We long for healing: we choose your life.

When fire symbol is put in place, fire pot is also lit. When the person has moved to the side, "water" is poured into larger waiting bowl in a dramatic way.

Reader 1: I offer water to drink and cleanse;
to be the veins and arteries of the land;
I offer strong waves for energy,
and still lakes for calm of spirit.

Reader 2: I pollute water with waste from the mines and
factories, that it may kill the fish, be bitter to
drink, and carry disease.
I withdraw water from the land and make a
desert;
I extend the waters of the sea and drown cities.

Leader: O God, fountain of living waters,
we confess that we are cracked cisterns.
lacking stillness to listen to your word,
and energy to act on it.

Pause for silent prayer (15 sec)

Reader 3: Together we pray ...

ALL: Forgive us O God: we have chosen death.
We long for healing: we choose your life.

Water is put in place, then three with the cross comes to the center and hold it upright.

Leader: God of earth, air, fire, and water,
we surrender to you our broken humanity.
We know we are a people redeemed by your blood,
shed on the cross for us.

The cross! ... product of the four elements
The cross! ... on which you stretched out your arms between heaven and earth
in an everlasting sign of your covenant love.
The cross! ... upon which your suffering, our suffering and the suffering of
our earth are joined.
The cross! ... a Tree of Life whose branches of mercy overshadow and redeem us.
The cross! ... hope of our resurrection and new creation.

Pause for silent prayer (15 sec)

Reader 3: Together we pray our final response ... *(lead them in the final response below)*

**ALL: Christ, firstfruit of the new creation,
we would rise with you.
We would be born anew.
Send us your Spirit to renew the face of our earth.**

The three lean the cross against the stage in a prearranged place. Then all procession people leave the stage.

Meditation on Genesis 1: (all seated)

(adapted from *The Schocken Bible*, Vol. 1)

Readers remain in place for this reading, seated in the assembly. For this reading, Reader 3 is a narrator and can be either male or female; Readers 1 and 2 play the role of "God" and one voice should be male and one female.

The entire reading is accompanied by the a powerpoint of images of creation.

Reader 3: At the beginning of God's creating
of the heavens and the earth,
when the earth was wild and waste,
darkness over the face of Ocean,
rushing-spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters

(pause a beat)

Reader 2 (*strong and joyful, emphasize each word*): Let there be light!

Reader 3: And there was light.
God saw the light: that it was good.
God separated the light from the darkness.
God called the light: Day! and the darkness God called: Night!
There was setting, there was dawning: *(pause a beat)* one day.

Sung Response

Reader 1 (*strong and joyful, as Reader 2*): Let there be a dome amid the waters, and let it separate waters from waters!

Reader 3: God made the dome
and separated the waters that were below the dome from the
waters that were above the dome.
It was so.
God called the dome: Heaven!
There was setting, there was dawning: (*pause a beat*) second day.

Sung Response

Reader 2: Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place,
and let the dry land be seen!

Reader 3: It was so.
God called the dry land: Earth! and the gathering of the waters
God called: Seas!
God saw that it was good.

Reader 1: Let the earth sprout forth with sprouting-growth,
plants that seed forth seeds, fruit trees that yield fruit, according to their kind, in which is their
seed, upon the earth!
It was so.
The earth brought forth sprouting—growth,
plants that seed forth seeds, after their kind,
trees that yield fruit, in which is their seed, after their kind.
God saw that it was good.
There was setting, there was dawning: (*pause a beat*) third day.

Sung Response

Reader 2: Let there be lights in the dome of the heavens, to separate the
day from the night,
that they may be for signs ---for set-times, for days and years,
and let them be for lights in the dome of the heavens, to provide
light upon the earth!

Reader 3: It was so.
God made the two great lights,
the greater light for ruling the day and the smaller light for ruling
the night,
and the stars.
God placed them in the dome of the heavens
to provide light upon the earth, to rule the day and the night, to
separate the light from the darkness.
God saw that it was good.
There was setting, there was dawning: (*pause a beat*) fourth day

Sung Response

Reader 1: Let the waters swarm with a swarm of living beings, and let fowl fly above the earth, across the dome of the heavens!

Reader 3: God created the great sea-serpents and all living beings that crawl about, with which the waters swarmed, according to their kind, and all winged fowl according to their kind. God saw that it was good.

Reader 2: Bear fruit and be many and fill the waters of the sea, and let the fowl be many on earth!

Reader 3: There was setting, there was dawning: *(pause a beat)* fifth day.

Sung Response

Reader 1: Let the earth bring forth living beings according to their kind, herd-animals, crawling things, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kind!

Reader 3: It was so. God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kind, and the herd-animals according to their kind, and all crawling things of the soil according to their kind. God saw that it was good.

Reader 2: Let us make humankind, in our image, according to our likeness! Let them have power toward the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens, animals, all the earth, and all crawling things that crawl about upon the earth! *(pause a beat)*

Reader 3: God created humankind ...

Reader 2: ... in the image of God ...

Reader 1: ... male and female did God create them. *(pause a beat)*

Reader 2: Bear fruit, and be many, and fill the earth and be in authority over it!

Reader 1: Have authority over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens, and all living things that crawl about upon the earth!

Reader 2: Here, I give you all plants that bear seeds that are upon the face of all the earth,

Reader 1: and all trees in which there is tree fruit that bears seeds, for you shall they be, for eating;

Reader 2: and also for all the living things of the earth, for all the fowl of the heavens, for all that crawls about upon the earth in which

there is living being-
all green plants for eating.

Reader 3: It was so.
Now God saw all that he had made,
and here: it was *exceedingly* good!
There was setting, there was dawning: (*pause a beat*) sixth day.

Sung Response

Reader 3: Thus were finished the heavens and the earth, with all of their
array.
God had finished, on the seventh day the work of making all there is, and then God ceased, on
the seventh day from all this work.
God gave the seventh day a blessing, hallowing it,
for on it, God ceased from all this work, that by creating, God had made.
These are the begettings of the heavens and the earth:
(*pause a beat*)
their being created.

Response to the Word

Gospel Reading: John 10:1-18

Reader: A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus said to the crowds:

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’

Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them,

‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.

I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

Reader: The Gospel of Salvation! **All: Praise to you, Jesus Christ!**

Intercessions with sung response (led by prayer leader)

Leader:

For the one Church of God, broken, but striving for unity and wholeness, that the whole Christian community and our own local communities may learn to honor all creation and become for the world a welcoming beacon of ecological justice, and a church that cares for all those on society's margins, we humbly ask:

Sung Response

Leader:

For those in our churches and communities that struggle to respond to the Gospel call of justice for migrants and immigrants, and who harbor doubts or fears about the need to care for our earth, that the Eternal Shaper of Hearts, Minds, and Spirits may touch them - and us - with a new openness to respond to these needs and the ability to listen deeply to one another with integrity, we humbly ask:

Sung Response.

Leader:

For leaders in government, business, and among the faiths of humankind; for President Obama and our members of Congress; for unknown and unsung leaders in local places who daily toil in the vineyard of social transformation; that the Spirit of Wisdom will rush upon them and help them to always be attentive and responsive to policies that heal relationships, restore justice, and rescue the planet, we humbly ask:

Sung Response

Leader:

For those in our world who suffer the devastation of global climate change; for the uprooted, the homeless, the flooded-out, the drought-stricken; especially for our brothers and sisters suffering the fires in Australia; climate refugees from the Pacific Islands; and those suffering from drought in the Midwest and southwestern parts of this nation; that they know the presence of God in the midst of their struggles and that we respond to their needs in dedicated, Christian service, as God invites us, we humbly ask:

Sung Response

Leader:

For our migrant brothers and sisters – those who feel they are always on the move; for them and their families as they endure hardship, separation from loved ones because of long work hours or inhuman immigration policies; for all those who languish in poverty; those who have been laid off and others who are being crushed by the economic recession; that the God of Hope might be present to them, especially in the work of advocates, social workers, and a caring Christian community, we humbly ask:

Sung Response

Leader:

For all of us, gathered in this place, that these days of education and advocacy might bear much fruit, and that our activities and conversations help to re-weave the broken strands of our planet's web of life and our society's structures of care for the poor, we humbly ask:

Sung Response

Leader:

For all the dead; for persons near to us who have passed over to God; to persons far away who inspired us and whose memories still fire our passion; for the loss to earth of species destroyed through human-caused extinction; that we may live in the hope that we will be united with them in the promised new heavens and new earth, we humbly ask:

Sung Response

Leader:

For those intentions that we leave unspoken or unformed in the silence of our heart(*pause for silent prayer*)
..... we humbly ask:

Sung Response

(Following is adapted from "Central American Lord's Prayer" in Janet Morley (ed.), *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992)

Leader **with All:** Let us pray together ...

**Our Father, Our Mother
who is in us here on earth,
holy is your name
in the hungry
who share their bread and their song.**

**Your Kingdom come,
which is a generous land
that flows with milk and honey.**

**Let us do your will,
standing up when all are sitting down,**

and raising our voice when all are silent.

**You are giving us our daily bread
in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn.**

**Forgive us
for keeping silent in the face of injustice,
and for burying our dreams,
for not sharing bread and wine,
love and the land,
among us, now.**

**Don't let us fall into the temptation
of shutting the door through fear;
of resigning ourselves to hunger and injustice;
of taking up the same arms as the enemy.
But deliver us from evil.**

**Give us the perseverance and the solidarity
to look for love,
even if the path has not yet been trodden,
even if we fall;
so we shall have known your kingdom
which is being built for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Final Prayer and Blessing

Leader: As we prepare to take leave of one another this evening,
to enjoy each other's presence,
to converse,
to sleep,

we do so looking toward tomorrow as we prepare to embrace
the challenges and opportunities our time together offers us.

Let us then ask God's blessing:

Leader stretches out a hand(s) in blessing:

Leader: May God bless us with strength to seek justice.

All: Amen!

Leader: May God bless us with wisdom to care for the earth.

All: Amen!

Leader: May God bless us with love to bring forth new life.

All: Amen!

Leader: We ask this in the name of God, the maker of the universe,
of Jesus, who reconciled all creation in the blood of his cross,
and of the Holy Spirit, who still hovers over chaos and calls forth creation.

All: Amen!

Leader: To be at peace with God and creation, we must also be at peace with one
another. Let our final act this night be sharing peace with one another and calling down God's peace on
our world in song. Let us take time to share God's peace!

All share a sign of peace.

Closing Song

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