

SOJOURNERS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

“A safe place to begin. A safe place to begin again.”

April 25, 2021

In the morning at 10:00am

Fourth Sunday of Easter



SUNDAY

“We are a community of faith called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in the way of Jesus, by including all peoples in all walks and ways of life, in our life of worship and celebration, nurture and growth, love and service.”

~ Covenant of Sojourners Congregation

Prelude

Gathering Music

“For the Beauty of the Earth”

*Words by Follicott Pierpoint, 1864, and Miriam Therese Winter, 1993;
Melody by German teacher and composer Conrad Kocher, 1838*

For the beauty of the earth, for the splendor of the skies,
For the love which from our birth over and around us lies,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour of the day and of the night;
Hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light;
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the good that love inspires, for a world where none exclude,
For a faith that never tires, and for every heart renewed,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements

Call to Worship

Bob Garrity

Liturgist: For those who are suffering from environmental injustice...

All: *Out loud but muted*

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who do not have access to clean water...

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who suffer health impacts from air pollution...

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the environmental racism that endangers and harms BIPOC people...

Lord, hear our prayer.

For our oceans that are overwhelmed by plastic pollution...

Lord, hear our prayer.

For young people and future generations facing the fear of climate catastrophe...

Lord, hear our prayer.

Call to Confession

Liturgist: There is an overwhelming sense among us Dear God that we dare not worship on this Earth Day Sunday, lest we begin with sincere confession. Hear the prayers of your servants, as we confess our sins before You and this host of witnesses,

Prayer of Confession

All: *Out loud but muted*

God of all Creation, we come to you in a moment of personal and corporate confession. We participate in systems that are exploitative and violent and separate humanity from the rest of Creation. By acts of omission and commission we cause harm to others. At times we are guilty of complicity, passivity and denial. At other times we abuse the power and authority entrusted to us. We hear the dual cries of fellow humans, who are already living in the midst of extreme poverty and hunger, and also the cries of all Creation, yearning for refreshment and renewal. We know we bear responsibility for the pain of both, and we know the impact one has on the other. We confess our complicity in the plight of all of your Creation, and beg your forgiveness and mercy. Grant that we may be more faithful stewards, of all creation. Amen

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Liturgist: In loving compassion, we are blessed and made whole, fed and nurtured by God. In loving compassion, we are restored into right relationships with the earth, that God's peace and justice might reign, forever. In loving compassion, we are forgiven and wrapped in the warm embrace of a gracious God. Let us henceforth live in harmony with all creation.

All: *Out loud but muted*

Amen and Thanks be to God!

Collections Cart

Bob Garrity

This is the time the children usually collect donations of food for the food bank from the congregation. The Food Bank and other organizations still need your donations, perhaps even more now than previously. It may be easier right now to contribute financially to the [Blue Ridge Area Food Bank](#).

Time with Children

Karen & Jake Mann

Contemporary Reading

Bob Garrity

"We believe that caring for creation must undergird, and be entwined with, all other dimensions of our churches' ministries. We are convinced that it is no longer acceptable to claim to be 'church' while continuing to perpetuate, or even permit, the abuse of Earth as God's creation."

[[God's Earth is Sacred: an open letter to church and society](#), National Council of Churches, 2005]

Scripture Lesson: John 10:11–18

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 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. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the (The Creator) knows me and I know the (The Creator). And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 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. 17 For this reason (The Creator) loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 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 (The Creator).”

Liturgist: *This is the Word of God, for the People of God!*

All: *(out loud, but muted)*
Thanks be to God.

Special Music **“Community,”**
written by Jane and Tom Hansen

The Sermon / Message *Pastor Morgan*

Pastor: The Lord be with you
Liturgist: **And also with you**
Let us pray.

All: *(out loud, but muted)*

O God, sometimes, we do not know what we do. Modern science tells us that our current ways of living are not environmentally sustainable and we face impending doom, unless we stop and change our ways. But, Dear God, it is so hard for us to change! The use of fossil fuels has kept us warm, lightened our nights, and taken us across the globe!

And yet, the continued use of such fuels can destroy us. Many of our cities and farms are already plagued by increasingly hot, unstable weather and our coast lands and islands are inundated with rising sea waters. There are those who suffer unimaginable famine, due to actions, already set in motion, that cannot be undone.

And then there is the whole of the earth, whose travail and upheaval threatens all that for which we hope. Help us to see beyond this time and the climate crises of this day to the future days of our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Help us to love them now, to see and sense their emergencies now.

Move your people, O God, that we may “do justice and love mercy”, so that we care for those who are already suffering from the first effects of climate change. Move your people, O God, that we act in love for the benefit of all that lives upon the earth, just as your Son Jesus has done for us.

[An adaption of a prayer by, Jeff Neuman-Lee, Ministry Coordinator, Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren Littleton, Colorado]

Invitation to the Offering

Pastor: Like a shepherd tending to those in their care, God has offered us rest, renewal, protection, mercy, love and nourishment. In response, we are invited to give a portion of our time, energy, gifts, and prayers so that others in this world may experience the same.

This is our opportunity to give to the family that nurtures us in new growth. *[We urge you to visit [our webpage](#) and click on the “Donate or Pledge Now” tab, to present your gifts.]*

Dedication

All: *(out loud, but muted)*

Loving God, bless these gifts and all the ways in which we give. May each of our gifts be a part of co-creating and tending to the love, safety, belonging, and dignity You envision for the world. Amen.

Joys and Concerns

Rev. Karen Mann

It is more important than ever to hold one another in prayer. If you are participating in this service at-home, we invite you to light a candle and remember your fellow Sojourners in prayer. If you are watching live from home, we invite you to leave a comment, on the "Chat" screen, with your joys or concerns, now. Please remember that this is a PUBLIC forum and can be seen by anyone.

Pastoral Prayer by Pastor Morgan

Closing Hymn

"To You, O God, All Creatures Sing"

Words by St. Francis of Assisi, 1225, adapted by Miriam Therese Winter, 1993

(Medical Mission Sister and Catholic theologian, b. 1938)

German melody, first published 1623

To you, O God, all creatures sing, and all creation, everything
Sings your praises, Alleluia!
Your burning sun with golden gleam, your silver moon with softer gleam
Sing your praises, Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Your flowing waters, crystal clear, make melodies for you to hear,
Sing your praises, Alleluia!
Your fire, bountiful and bright, remembering your warmth and light,
Sings your praises, Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Now we who are of tender heart, forgiving others, take our part,
Sing your praises, Alleluia!
To you we lift our pain and care, receive the burdens that we bear,
Singing praises, Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Closing Comments by Pastor Morgan

Benediction

As you depart from this place, go with courage and go with trust that the God who created you is also the One who will sustain you and the One who will show you the way. Until we meet again, may you be filled with curiosity, wonder, and openness to God's tender guidance. **Amen.**

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