

Good morning, God's people!

I need to begin with a confession: As we celebrate creation season, I'm experiencing a bit of imposter syndrome. I've never done this season solo. Eco-theology is not my expertise. Even more, my theology skews very human-centric, which I'm working on. So I really wanted to learn how we approach this season. Along the way, 've found myself wondering what you - the congregation - knows about what goes into preparing for this season.

Do you know that, during the Season of Creation, each Sunday has a theme?
Do you know how we decide those themes?

While Creation Season is a special part of St. Peter's story, it is not just "our" thing. The Season of Creation is an actual organization made up of ecumenical faith leaders from around the world that compile and create resources for this season. When I sat down here to map out how we would celebrate God's creation, I was in conversation with leaders in Canada, Scotland, South Africa, Massachusetts! (That ordering was perhaps a bit anti-climactic.)

Each year, this organization comes up with a theme to guide us through the season; a big idea that matches the bigness of creation. This year's theme is Listening to the Voice of Creation. The image is a burning bush, which you'll connect with our first lesson from Exodus.

Today is about establishing ourselves in this theme as we move through the rest of this season. To do that, I'll be drawing from the letter about the theme from the planning committee.¹

But first, I want to address the focus on listening, especially since there are those of us who are deaf or have difficulty hearing. The burning bush was not so much about Moses seeing the bush burning as it was about Moses experiencing God's

¹ <https://seasonofcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SOC-2022-Celebration-Guide-Final-English.pdf>

mysterious presence, a fire that burns but does not consume. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus beckons people to open their hearts to his word, not only their ears. More than listening, it is about perceiving, taking in. Those who cannot hear are a part of this. Our language can be limiting, but God's presence within each person is not.

So how do we listen to the voice of creation?

In Psalm 19, the Psalmist acknowledges that hearing the voice of creation requires a kind of listening that is increasingly rare. Even though most of us know this is true, it is hard to feel like even the joyful psalmist is pointing out one more thing we've gotten wrong. But along with the truth that active listening is rare, there is also the truth that, within Christianity, there is a diverse range of traditions to help us recover our capacity to hear the voice of creation.

One of those traditions is the Book of Creation, and I don't mean Genesis. It is the concept of creation as a book from which knowledge can be read. This theological tradition runs through some of the earliest Christian writings.

St. Augustine wrote, "[Creation] is the divine page that you must listen to; it is the book of the universe that you must observe. The pages of Scripture can only be read by those who know how to read and write, while everyone, even the illiterate, can read the book of the universe."

I love that. The Book of Creation is a part of God's justice.

When we listen, we hear the harmonious balance of biodiverse ecologies. We marvel. We also hear the suffering cries of creation. We lament. In both, creation speaks to us of the Creator. We hear the echoes of the Divine, because all creatures have the same origin and ending in God.

This isn't just a theological belief. It is a radical reorientation to who we are and how we encounter revelation. As Richard Rohr wrote, "We humans are not

autonomous beings; though we are seemingly separate, we are radically one, too, just as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit are one. God is a mystery of relationship, and in its deepest form this relationship is called love. The Trinity is our universal template for the nature of reality and for how to reconcile unity and diversity at every level.”² Such that listening to the voices of our co-creatures should be like perceiving truth, goodness or beauty through the lives of a human friend and family member.

When we listen, what we hear from creation affects us. We seek to express what we have come to understand. We call this contemplation, and it is the grounding for so many of our spiritual practices. Contemplation helps us discern how to live out the transformation we have experienced. As the Choir prays before each service, “Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives.”

Contemplation moves us from despair to hope, from anxiety to action. In big structural ways, in ordinary living, in our communal worship. We lament the individuals, communities, species, and ecosystems who are lost, and those whose livelihoods are threatened by habitat loss and climate change. We center the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. We amplify the voices of communities who are not heard in society. Joining in our vocation to care for our common home.

Much later in Moses’ story, before the people prepare to enter the promised land, he says, who are we to have a God so near?

The Season of Creation is not a theological exercise or just for people whose passion is climate justice. Like all liturgical seasons, Creation Season draws out themes we might otherwise lose focus on, but are relevant beyond this season or topic. It draws near to the lives we are living right now, just as God does. There are three I want to offer today.

² <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/oneing-2016-11-25/>

First, we are in a season of listening. Not just this liturgical season, but the season of life we are living as a faith community. We must find ways to be still and hear God's voice calling to us. Like Moses, we will have follow-up questions. Like John and the Psalmist, we will want to share what we hear, what we come to understand, with the world. But first we must listen. That involves showing up and making time for what is happening at St. Peter's right now.

Second, we have what we need to face what is ahead of us. Reconnecting with the rest of creation isn't something we have to figure out from scratch. The Book of Creation, the Trinity, contemplation. These don't exist to fix a problem. They are inherent to the wholeness that is Christ. So too, through God, we each (and collectively) possess so many gifts that can guide us through difficult times as well as exciting times. But we must choose to use and offer them. To be accountable to the work that must be done. We have to want this, with the confidence that God never leaves us empty-handed.

Finally, we are not alone. In a time when we might feel on the outside or like others don't get what we're going through as a community, this is a reminder that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. Not just with Creation Season. Not just with the problems of this world. Not just with our individual struggles and disappointments. But, in everything, we are a part of God's cosmic good creation. No matter what you are going through, you are not alone.

We are in a season of listening.

We have all that we need to face what is ahead.

We are not alone.

Who are we, St. Peter's, to have a God so near? Let us find out. May it be so.

Amen.