

## *God is present, always!*

### *Genesis 2:4b-25*

As I said earlier, we are talking about origin stories. Some of you may or may not know that there is more than one creation story in the Bible. In fact, there are three. The first one happens in Genesis 1, which is in the Old Testament, or the Hebrew scriptures. In that particular one, we hear the story of how God created the world in six days and on the seventh day, God rested and looked around at all of Creation and said, "It is good." We heard the second one today, which talks about the human Adam and Eve. Why do you think there is a second story of Creation? Why does God create Adam and Eve at different times in the story?

Some scholars believe that the sole purpose of separating the creation of these humans into two parts was to emphasize that humans are not meant to exist in isolation. We are truly meant to be in relationship with one another. God wants us to relate to one another and to help one another be in partnership. So we heard today – and hopefully, you've been listening carefully – in *A New Creed*, which you've said during the baptism, expresses it in this way:

"We are not alone. We live in God's world. We believe in God has created and is creating."

So God does stop and God needs helpers as the Creation continues to happen. We are truly co-creators with God. We are in relationship with God *and* in relationship with each other.

In our most recent creedal statement, our Statement of Faith of the United Church of Canada, entitled *A Song of Faith* we express our same call into relationship in this way, when we say:

"In and with God, we can direct our lives toward right relationship with each other and with God. We can discover our place as one strand in the web of life. We grow in wisdom and compassion, and we can recognize all people as kin. (So basically like family.) We accept our mortality and finitude, not as a curse, but as a challenge to make our lives and choices matter. Made in the image of God, we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God."

We are called to live together with God in our lives, right from the very beginning. The first encounters that humans had with God was this origin story, both the first and the second one, where the water, as you see here, flowed in four directions. Adam is a person of the earth. If we were to literally translate the Hebrew word "Adam", it actually comes from "Ad-ma", which means "ground". In fact, "red person of the ground". Red being blood, which obviously keeps us alive. God was there at

the moment when humans were created, and then God breathed life into them. The relationship with God was always there. So really, the origin story of Adam and Eve was that they knew nothing else. God was always with them, present with them in that moment. We were all created in a spirit of innocence, possibility and hope. And humans begin in a place of great abundance all around us.

But with this also came responsibility. If we listened to the scripture reading that Jericho shared with us today, it talks about how God didn't quite plant everything and make the waters cover the earth because no one would be there to till it. Once God had created humans, God also created all of Creation, and it is our responsibility to not only care for each other, but all of God's nature, Creation – everything that is around us.

How do we do that? This is a time of year where we enter into a new covenant with God. This is our new start, our fresh start. For some of you who are going to school, you have a fresh start with a new teacher and a new classroom. For some of us, we might be trying something new in the fall. For parents, maybe you're back at the, "Oh, I can start again. My kids are in school, so I've got the new opportunity to get into habits. Or, maybe spend some time with myself and try to calm things down." Maybe, just maybe. Whatever it is, we are taking the time to promise to God that we are the people of God. We do that through baptism, but we also do that through the Blessing of the Backpacks, which we will get to in a little while.

So if we are in relationship with God, the next question comes down to: how are we going to relate to one another? How would God want us to treat each other? I'm going to open this up to all of you, especially to the children. How does God want us to treat each other? Any ideas?

- Love.
- Respect.
- Kindness.
- Understanding.
- Acceptance, listening.
- Making and then eating cinnamon buns.
- Complimenting them.
- Music.
- Comforting people when they are feeling sad or lonely.

These are perfect ideas, and it is exactly what we, as a community of faith, have agreed to. We have a document – some of you may have seen it around the church – and it's called "Holy Manners". Have you ever heard of table manners? What are you *not* supposed to do at the table?

- Put your elbows on the table.
- Burp out loud.
- Don't throw cucumbers or other food at other people's faces.

Yes, those are very good points. Those are table manners. We call this Holy Manners, and in our Holy Manners we say we are going to respect each other. We are going to act with humility. We are not going to walk around saying, "Look at me! I'm the best thing in the world." We are going to be a little more humble than that. We are going to have patience. This is the one I always have to work on; I hope others are with me on that one. With open-mindedness, compassion, and to treat one another with kindness.

This is what we are agreeing to today as we get to our blessing: we are going to try and do our best to follow all of those things. Instead of turning away from God, we are turning towards God and one another and seeing God in each and every person who is here today. Over the next little while, our challenge as a community of faith will be to figure out together, how we are now going to care for each other and all of Creation and the world? How is God calling all of us to do that, together? There are going to be conversations and workshops, and I hope that you will consider joining some of them.