

September 10, 2023
Season of Creation
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Welcome back and welcome to our first Sunday in our Season of Creation

While not technically one of the liturgical seasons in our church year, the Season of Creation has been a companion to many of us in the church for some years now

Those who track such things note that the genesis of this season – and of it falling at this time of the year in our calendar – stems from a proclamation made in 1989 by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I naming September 1st as a Day of Prayer for Creation for the Eastern Orthodox Church

A number of other denominations across the world picked up on this day of prayer in the early 2000's and created a season out of it by bookending the day of prayer with the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi (which falls at the beginning of October)

In 2015, this Season of Creation was even picked up by the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Francis, who wrote his first solo encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, that year on the very topic of care for Creation

What started as local movements of congregations and denominations attempting to set apart time in the year to connect our people with the breadth and depth of God's magnificent creation has turned into a global, ecumenical movement with a website and resources for worship and advocacy

For a number of years, St. Bart's crafted its own Season of Creation – developing a lectionary and guiding our community into deeper relationship with God's Creation

And now, we too, are joining with our global siblings who are coming together this month under the theme “Let justice and peace flow” – taking imagery from the Prophet Amos who cried out: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24)

This theme draws our attention to one of the most precious and one of the most precarious elements of God’s creation – water

The source of all life historically (both from a scientific and biblical standpoint) and the source of new life for Christians in the form of our baptisms – water

We heard in our first reading this morning how our faith ancestors imagined the creation of the world with God’s Spirit sweeping over the face of the waters before God speaks the words of creation: “let there be...”

Water goes on to be such an important theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures – marking geographical features, protecting Hebrew babies, liberating the Israelites in Egypt, erupting from a rock in the wilderness, and I could go on and on about the significance of wells in Genesis

Water continues to show up in the New Testament with more wells, Jesus’ baptism, Jesus walking on water, Jesus healing people at mineral springs, and there’s even a moment when water turns to wine

Water

I know we’re not supposed to assume, but might it be true that many of your own lives have been intertwined with the element of water?

We are all born from the waters of our mothers and from there, whether it be lakes or oceans, rivers or streams my guess is water has weaved its way into your life and intertwined itself with your very existence

Science indeed says that our bodies are about 60% water!¹

We are very blessed that on our drives to and from church on Sunday mornings it's likely we all pass at least one body of water that we can see from the road

Many in Maine are very tied to the water – both for pleasure and for our economy

We might then, feel a certain kinship with this year's theme – a certain level of comfort and joy in recognizing this aspect of God's creation

Thank God for water!

Indeed, thank God for water!

And, one of the ways the Season of Creation has evolved over time is our recognition that God's great Creation is not simply a tableau upon which we are to gaze during this season

But Creation is, like St. Francis' prayers so often remind us, our very siblings in the majesty of all that God has named

Water is not just a certain lovely aspect of the world that surrounds us – though I agree it is beautiful to look upon – water is our sibling and our comrade in realizing God's kin-dom

Water, like so many parts of God's creation, is not simply here for our entertainment it is our very lifeline

The Season of Creation theme of "Let justice and peace flow" is not simply a beautiful image upon which to reflect – it is a call to action, a reminder of our interdependence

¹ <https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/water-you-water-and-human-body#overview>

If I dare say, much like our baptisms.

In the Book of Common Prayer, the baptismal liturgy acknowledges the mighty power of water as told in our scriptures:

“We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life” (BCP pg 306)

It is in these waters that we are plunged in our baptisms – plunged into the calling and responsibility of discipleship

For you see, just a few paragraphs before the one I just quoted from the BCP is a Baptismal Covenant in which the community gathered and those who are to be baptized proclaim their faith in God using the Apostle’s Creed, and commit to a life of faith that includes seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself; striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being (BCP pg 305)

Now, go with me here, I’m going to make a leap but I don’t think it’s a very large one – can I claim that, since all of creation is my sibling and cohort in God’s majesty, by our baptismal covenant are we not to seek and serve Christ in all of *creation* and not just in all persons, loving all that God has made as we love ourselves?

Aren’t we to strive for justice and peace among all of God’s *creation*, and respect the dignity of each facet of God’s great creation?

Are we not called by our baptisms to care for, tend, and repair the very water we were washed in in this sacrament?

Not simply to gaze upon the water with contentment and joy, but to gaze upon it as our sibling in need and to make sure it is tended to, nourished, and protected?

God's creation is alive – as the expression goes: you never step into the same stream twice

Creation is alive as we are alive and we know that it has been crying out to us for attention, for care, for change

Crying out to its siblings in Christ to fulfill our baptismal covenants to show love, to seek justice

“Let justice and peace flow”

Water is both the beautiful image in this year's Season of Creation, and it is the issue at hand

Just as creeks find their way to larger streams and rivers, and streams and rivers find their ways to the mighty oceans – God's creation is calling us to join our individual acts of discipleship, our individual responses to our baptismal covenants, to larger movements of change, reparation, and justice

So this Season of Creation is “both, and”

This Season of Creation is both a time of giving thanks to God for the gift of water, and it is a season to listen to our sibling water calling us ever deeper into relationship, ever deeper into a practice of creation love: creation justice

Washed in the waters of our baptisms, washed in the waters of God's creation, may the Holy Trinity, in whose name we are washed, sustain and

nurture us today and always to fulfill our baptismal covenants and to journey with our sibling water in this Season of Creation.

Amen.