

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Long Green and Kanés Rds., near Glen Arm, MD

January 1, 2017

Worship 10:00 am Sunday School 11:10 am

Large print hymnals are available see an usher

This room is equipped with a sound loop for the hearing impaired

New Years Day

Announcements

Prelude

*Call to Worship

One: The Living God is with us!

All: And with all creation!

One: Let us awaken our hearts to the presence of God, saying:

All: we praise you for your glory.

One: God before us, behind us, above us, upholding us...

All: we praise you for your glory.

One: God with us, among us, beside us, befriending us...

All: we praise you for your glory.

One: God within us, flowing through us, animating,
harmonizing...

All: we praise you for your glory. Amen.

*Hymn "When morning gilds the skies" 644

*Opening Prayer

Preface: Alive to the Story of Creation

Scripture Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Prayer of Thanksgiving response: **We thank you, living God.**

Sharing a joy, a concern, a word of testimony or praise
(please be brief, and aware of God's listening presence)

Hymn "Spirit of the Living God" 349

Pastoral Prayer

Scripture Psalm 19:1-14

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory (Please sign the attendance pad and pass it on)

Scripture Matthew 6:25-34

Message "*Awe and Wonder*"
(chapter one of *We Make the Road by Walking*)

Engaging the Message (*see questions on insert*)

*Hymn "For the beauty of the earth" 89

*Benediction

*Postlude

*Rise in body or in spirit

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Call to Worship

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All: *And with all creation!*

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saying:

All: *we praise you for your glory.*

One: God before us, behind us, above us, upholding us...

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All: *we praise you for your glory.*

One: God within us, flowing through us, animating,
harmonizing...

All: *we praise you for your glory. Amen.*

from *We Make the Road by Walking*, p.267
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Opening Prayer

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid. Purify and unify the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may more perfectly love you and more worthily magnify your holy Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

adapted by Brian D. McLaren from
the *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 355

Let's sing together,
"For the beauty of the earth"
#89 in our hymnal

Alive to the Story of Creation

You have been invited into a year-long adventure. Some of you have chosen not to join in, which is absolutely fine. Today, however, you will catch a glimpse of this trip we will undertake, for we are using the first chapter of the book, “We Make the Road by Walking,” as our message today – the first week in a 52-week journey.

We may do this again, making the week’s chapter the focus of Sunday worship. Or we may not. At least 2 weeks a month, some of us will gather in the church library to focus on that week’s chapter. The weeks that lie between these gatherings, folks are invited to simply read and ponder that week’s chapter on their own. Some may want to form their own groups, inviting friends to join in the comfort of their own homes. That, likewise, is absolutely fine.

The format will be a bit like this worship: opening with prayer, reading the scriptures, reading the chapter, engaging the questions, ending with prayer. You might wish to look over the questions on your bulletin insert which will guide our time after the message. Since there is no Sunday School planned today after worship, we have time to talk.

Now, one caveat. We are starting this book at a different point than suggested. The author had in mind beginning on Aug. 28 of 2016. We are starting our walk at a later point. This means we will be a bit askew of the plan, which is absolutely fine. A few chapters connect with church holidays, like 16-18, which deal with Christmas. We’ll just enjoy them at a different point. We are making the road by walking at our own pace.

And now, listen to the preface to our journey, from the book:

You are entering a story already in process. All around you, things are happening, unfolding, ending, beginning, dying, being born. Our ancient ancestors tried to discern what was going on. They conveyed their best wisdom to future generations through stories that answered certain key questions:

Why are we here?
What’s wrong with the world?
What’s our role, our task, our purpose?
What is a good life?
Is there meaning and hope?
What dangers should we guard against?
What treasures should we seek?

From the Hopi to the Babylonians, from Aztecs to Australian Aboriginals, from the Vikings in Europe to the Han in China to the Yoruba in Africa to the ancient Hebrews of the Middle East— human tribes have developed, adapted, and told powerful creation narratives to convey their best answers to key questions like these. Of course, their language often sounds strange to us, their assumptions foreign, the details of their culture odd or alien. But if we listen carefully, mixing their ancient wisdom with our own, we can let their stories live on in us. We can learn to be more fully alive in our time, just as they learned in theirs. In that spirit, we turn to the creation narratives of the ancient Hebrews.

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

- 1 - In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.
- 2 - And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.
- 1 - And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

- 2 - And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.
- 1 - And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.
- 2 - And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

1 - Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

2 - So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

1 - God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 - Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

I invite you, as a response to these beginning words of the Bible on this first day (and first Sunday) of a brand, new year, to allow yourself to be filled with simple gratitude. To make this physical, I invite you to hold your hands out with your palms open and upward to the One who is the source of our life. Let's pray with eyes wide open. We will pray a sentence, to which you can respond:

We thank you, living God.

Shall we begin?

Let us give thanks to the living God for all the gifts that we enjoy, saying,

We thank you, living God.

For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea:

We thank you, Living God.

For all that is gracious in the lives of men and women, revealing the image of Christ:

We thank you, Living God.

For our daily food and drink, our homes and families, and our friends:

We thank you, Living God.

For minds to think, hearts to love, and hands to serve:

We thank you, Living God.

For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play:

We thank you, Living God.

For challenges which call forth new strength, for failures which teach greater humility, and for encouragement to persevere when life is hard:

We thank you, Living God.

For all who have gone before us, for all who walk beside us, and for all children, who are precious to us and to you:

We thank you, Living God.

And for the great wisdom and hope that you reveal to us through Jesus, our leader, example, teacher, liberator, and friend:

We thank you, Living God.

from *We Make the Road by Walking*, p.268
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Sharing a joy, a concern,
a word of testimony or praise

Hymn #349

“Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me (2x)

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.”

Pastoral Prayer

(spoken in the moment)

Psalm 19:1-14

- 1 - The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 - Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.
- 1 - There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- 2 - In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.
- 1 - The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
- 2 - the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;
- 1 - the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
- 2 - the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;
- 1 - the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;
- 2 - the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- 1 - More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

- 2 - Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- 1 - But who can detect their errors?
- 2 - Clear me from hidden faults.
- 1 - Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me.
- 2 - Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.
- 1 - Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

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Returning our Tithes and Offerings

Our gracious and generous Creator, you have blessed us with abundance: This beautiful earth and all we enjoy, health and strength, family and friends; work and rest; home and belongings. We are blessed indeed. To support this community and provide for those who serve us, to help those in need and extend our mission, in proportion to what we have earned and saved, in gratitude we now joyfully give. Amen.

from *We Make the Road by Walking*, p.273
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Ushers?

Matthew 6:25-34

- 1 - “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,
- 2 - what you will eat
- 1 - or what you will drink,
- 2 - or about your body,
- 1 - what you will wear.
- 2 - Is not life more than food,
- 1 - and the body more than clothing?
- 2 - Look at the birds of the air;
- 1 - they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,
- 2 - and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
- 1 - Are you not of more value than they?
- 2 - And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?
- 1 - And why do you worry about clothing?
- 2 - Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
- 1 - they neither toil nor spin,
- 2 - yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.
- 1 - But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
- 2 - which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,
- 1 - will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

- 2 - Therefore do not worry, saying,
- 1 - ‘What will we eat?’
- 2 - or ‘What will we drink?’
- 1 - or ‘What will we wear?’
- 2 - For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things;
- 1 - and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- 2 - But strive first for the kingdom of God
- 1 - and his righteousness,
- 2 - and all these things will be given to you as well.
- 1 - “So do not worry about tomorrow,
- 2 - for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.
- 1 - Today’s trouble is enough for today
- 2 - The Word of God.

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Engaging the Message

1. What one thought or idea from today's message especially intrigued, provoked, disturbed, challenged, encouraged, warmed, warned, helped, or surprised you?
2. Share a story about a time when you most felt the humble awe and joyful wonder described in this chapter.
3. What is the most beautiful place you have ever seen? What was so special about it?
4. For children: What is your favorite animal? Why do you like it so much?
5. Activate: This week, choose one facet of creation that you love - birds, trees, weather, soil, water, light, children, sex, aging, sleep. Observe it, think about it, learn about it every chance you can, with this question in mind: if that element of creation were your only Bible, what would it tell you about God?
6. Meditate: Observe a few moments of silence. Let a silent prayer of gratitude arise from within you.

from *We Make the Road by Walking*, p.6
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Benediction

Repeat after me as our benediction:

We are a circle
of learners and seekers
alive in God's story of creation.
We are disciples
who follow our leader
alive in the adventure of Jesus.
We are uprising
in a new way of living
transformed by the Spirit of God.
Let us go forth in joy and peace
to love and serve God and our neighbors.
Amen.

from *We Make the Road by Walking*, p.277
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