

“Come to the Water to Pray”

August 22, 2010

A suggested community worship experience sponsored by the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ in response to the crisis of oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico

“We can find happiness in protecting the world around us not only because we cherish it for its awesome beauty, power and mystery, but because we cherish our fellow humans, those who live today and those who will come tomorrow, human beings like ourselves who will increasingly depend on the environment for our happiness and wealth.” -quote from Jacques Cousteau as remembered by his grandson Philippe Cousteau on June 28, 2010 in Washington DC at the TEDxoilspill Conference

GATHERING MUSIC

(During the Gathering Music, people who have been asked to bring pitchers will go to the water's edge and fill them, and then return to their place in the circle of gathered people.)

GATHERING WORDS

Take off your shoes.
Like Moses, take off your shoes.
This is holy ground.

Let your toes wiggle in the fine grains.
Allow your whole self to sink into this moist sand.
This is God's sanctuary.
This is holy ground.

We invite you to worship with all your senses tonight.
Take in a deep breath; invite the sea breezes into your lungs.
This is the very spirit of the Divine.
This is holy ground.
The air is full of flavor.
One can almost taste the salt in the air.
This is sacred seasoning.
This is holy ground.
Listen to the waves as they lap against the shore.
The shells and sand tumble with its force.
Hear the ancient ebb and flow of tides long past.
This is holy ground.
Look off into the horizon.
The Sun will soon be setting, signaling the end of another day in paradise.
That blazing orb of energy. This is holy ground.

Long ago order was brought out of chaos.
This planet arose.
Take off your shoes.
This is holy ground.

(Gathering Words by Rev. Victoria Long inspired by the works of Norman C. Habel)

GATHERING PRAYER

"O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. When we consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, who are we, that you are mindful of us?"

And who are we to take for granted this wonderful creation that you have shared, and we have inherited? Generous Creator, do not turn away in our time of need, but grant us fresh insights and firmer resolve in order that we might recommit ourselves to the care and keeping of this world, with its bountiful seas, breath-taking vistas, and delicately balanced systems. Take away any selfish leanings in our living and place within us a more noble perspective that accepts the high calling of preserving, protecting and passing on, to our children and yours, this sanctuary in which we live.

Pour on us your spirit that we might be equipped for the work ahead. Empower us with your vision that we might have the perseverance required for the personal changes that must be ours. And bless us with your hope, that we might never cease caring, or worse, give up!

"O God how majestic is your name in all the earth."

Amen.

(Prayer based on Psalm 8, written by Keith Haemmelmann)

WHAT WAS GIVEN

(As these words from Genesis 1 are read in echo by a male and a female voice, those who have filled pitchers with water are invited to go to the center of our circle and pour their water into a bowl. People who have brought other symbols – such as sand from your beach area, sea shells, palm fronds, and symbols of playing in/on the water – are invited to place them in the center near the bowl.)

(Adapted from Genesis 1:1-2, 20-24, The Jerusalem Bible)

Woman: In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

Man: In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

Woman: Now the earth was a formless void,

Man: Now the earth was a formless void,

Woman: there was a darkness over the deep,

Man: there was a darkness over the deep,

Woman: with a divine wind sweeping over the waters.

Man: with a divine wind sweeping over the waters.

Woman: God said, 'Let the waters be alive with a swarm of living creatures, and let the birds wing their way above the earth across the vault of heaven.'

Man: God said, 'Let the waters be alive with a swarm of living creatures, and let the birds wing their way above the earth across the vault of heaven.'

Woman: And so it was.

Man: And so it was.

Woman: God created great sea-monsters and all the creatures that glide and teem in the waters in their own species, and winged birds in their own species.

Man: God created great sea-monsters and all the creatures that glide and teem in the waters in their own species, and winged birds in their own species.

Woman: God saw that it was good.

Man: God saw that it was good.

Woman: God blessed them, saying 'Be fruitful,

Man: God blessed them saying, 'Be fruitful,

Woman: multiply,

Man: multiply,

Woman: fill the waters of the seas;

Man: fill the waters of the seas;

Woman: and let the birds multiply on land.

Man: and let the birds multiply on land.

Woman: God said, 'Let the earth produce every kind of living creature in its own species.'

Man: God said, 'Let the earth produce every kind of living creature in its own species.'

Woman: And so it was.

Man: And so it was.

(Adapted from Genesis 1:1-2, 20-24, The Jerusalem Bible)

SPEAKER #1 The focus is on the gifts of Creation

WHAT IS

LITANY OF CONFESSION

L: Will you join me in the litany of confession?

All: **O God of the dolphin, whale, egret and pelican what have we, your people, done with the garden you entrusted to us?**

L: You made the heaven and the earth, you made the sea, and all that is in them. You made us in your likeness.

All: **O God of the tuna, grouper, heron and sanderling what have we, your people, done with the garden you entrusted to us?**

L: You keep faith with us and all of creation. You always do what you say.

All: **O God of the clam, plankton, coral reef and wetlands what have we, your people, done with the garden you entrusted to us?**

L: You execute justice for the oppressed. You give food to the hungry.

All: **O God of the shrimpers, oyster fisherfolk, waitresses and hospitality workers what have we, your people, done with the garden you entrusted to us?**

L: You set the prisoners free. You open the eyes of the blind.

All: **O God of the oceanographer, politician, environmental activist and oil worker what have we, your people, done with the garden you entrusted to us?**

L: You lift up those who are downtrodden. You uphold the orphan and the widow. You protect the stranger.

All: **O God of all creation, tonight with the sand between our toes, inspire us to preserve and protect your creation. Inspire us to pass on a cleaner earth to our children and their children after them.**

(Written by Phil Garrison based on Psalm 146 and "The Wind, One Brilliant Day" - Antonio Machado)

SINGING TOGETHER

Tune – Melita (also known as Navy Hymn)

*O Gracious Maker, from your hand, have come to us both sea and land.
You fill our oceans, far and wide, place trees throughout the countryside,
You scatter clouds across the sky,
Make fish to swim, and birds to cry.*

*But all too often we've ignored, the trust you've placed in us dear Lord;
We fail to handle earth with care, we leave a stain most ev'rywhere,
We spill your oil and tar the land,
We darken river, marsh and sand.*

*Give us the courage that we need, to conquer selfishness and greed.
Help us to change our wasteful ways, so earth might see far better days.
Teach us to know what's right, what's wrong,
So ev'ry voice might raise a song!*

*(This hymn text was written in response to the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico which occurred in 2010. It is dedicated to the many women and men who work to save our environment.
John H. Danner, July, 2010)*

SPEAKER #2 The focus here is confessional on how we have been dependent on oil.

SYMBOLIC ACTION

(The speaker will walk to the center, to the bowl of water in the center of our circle and pour oil into the water. Others will spread trash from a waste container around the and among the symbols that were placed near the bowl during the reading from Genesis.)

SILENCE

(Everyone is asked to be silent now for two minutes and three seconds - one second for every day from April 20 up until this night.)

What will be

SPEAKER #3 – Words of hope

PRAYER TO LEAD US INTO THE NIGHT

CLOSING SONG