

Call to Worship

The Lord our God is revealed to us in many ways—
through God's creative love in nature and people.

With reverent awe we come to worship our Glorious God.

The truths about our God are spoken so fluently—
through our God's creative Word and Presence.

With joy and delight we gather to worship our God.

The reality of God's creative Spirit can be experienced each day—
in changed lives, and in sustained and renewed creation.

Praise be to the God who speaks to us in so many ways.

We respond by offering our thoughts in worship and praise.

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Hymn

O Lord my God! / How great thou art

332

1. O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed,

Refrain

*then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! how great thou art!
Then sings my soul! My Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! how great thou art*

2. When though the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze,
3. And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin,

Refrain

4. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

Refrain

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Living God,
you are the artist of the changing skies
and architect of the steadfast earth,
Loving Christ,
you were born to walk life's journey with us
and show us God's purposes.
Spirit of life,
you are always moving in us and among us,
offering us wisdom for every choice.
Creator, Christ and Spirit,
we honour you in our prayers and our praise.
In this time of worship, show us how we can serve you,
for we seek your guidance and your grace now and always

**God of time and eternity,
we confess that we have long memories,
especially for moments we resent or regret.
Each week we seek your forgiveness for our mistakes,
but we confess we do not forgive others so faithfully.
Sometimes we seek opportunity to even the score.
Confront us with your mercy, O God,
and open our hearts to its cleansing power
in this time of worship and each day. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

From now on, the Apostle Paul declared,
we regard no one from a human point of view.
If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.
Through Christ God has reconciled us,
and given us a ministry of reconciliation.
Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start,
this day and every day!

The psalmist writes, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14) So may it be that the words spoken in the message and the mediation of all our hearts be a gift to you and to each of us. In Christ, Amen.

Scripture Reading Psalm 19

A reading based on Psalm 19 By [Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence](#)

Message All Nature Sings

Professor Chris Schoon writes,

Tiffany. Sherman. Webster. Albion. Devil's Punchbowl. Over the last 8 years, these and several of the other 100+ waterfalls in Hamilton, ON, have become my friends. Admittedly, I feel a bit weird describing these locations as friends, as if my social relationships now include inanimate objects. But quite honestly, I know these waterfalls better – and likely have more pictures from my time with them - than I do with 90% of the people I'm connected to via my social media accounts.

Tiffany and Sherman – and the Bruce Trail that runs between them – have become places of pondering for me. During one stretch when both my church work and my academic work felt overwhelming, I recall sitting near the basin of Tiffany. Looking up from the notebook in which I had furiously been pouring out my complaints to God and scribbling together random to-do lists, I noticed the weather-worn rocks in the creek bed.

Most of those rocks have likely been in that space for centuries, if not millennia. Their once-sharp corners smoothed by currents of water and wind. And yet, somehow in their deteriorated state, they still reminded me of God's faithfulness to a thousand generations. They spoke to me of a peace that endures. They taught me about a God who generously welcomes the broken and discarded as part of his creation's beauty. I sat in awe as those rocks cried out.¹

In the same vein the psalmist writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of God's hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge." (v2).

Here in Northwestern Ontario, we are so fortunate to live in this area, with the catch phrase, Superior by Nature. We are living in the midst of some of the most beautiful natural wilderness on the planet. Lakes, woods, waterfalls, streams, trails, and so much more is right here at our doorstep. Our city of Thunder Bay is not so large that we cannot see the stars or moon at night. We have a front row seat to nature at its best and at its most powerful.

It is about creation of the whole planet and the space beyond that the psalmist writes about God's handiwork. What is interesting is God's people have always recognized that creation points to God but creation is not to be worshipped as God. Other ancient cultures saw the stars, sun, and moon as deities unto themselves. This was not so of

¹ [Chris Schoon. Pausing to Ponder | Reformed Worship](#) Accessed September 14, 2024.

the Hebrew people. What these celestial objects pointed to was God. It was a way to understand God's provision, help, power, presence and love.

In our own time, through science and space exploration, we know that these things are made of gas and matter. It can take away the wonder of it all if we look at things from only a scientific perspective and it also disregards the emotional reaction many have when watching the sun rise or the sun set. Laying on our backs to watch the clouds move against the hue of a blue sky with the green leaves of trees dancing with the slightest of breezes. The power of ocean waves and the pounding of a mighty waterfall.

Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, writes about God as an artist or the author of a book and that science tells us what things are made of but does not point to the creator. A piece of art is meant to evoke something within us. Or writing, regardless of whether it is good or bad, still points to something beyond itself, is meant to make us feel something. The analysis of the paint in the art or the canvas itself, or the computer used to write a script and use of grammar does not tell us about the creator's heart. It is the artwork itself, the movie script, poem, or story that points toward the creator of the piece.

As we speak of the stars, one might harken to the painting by Van Gogh called *Starry Night*. It has sparked the imagination of so many. It elicits a response; it points its creator. Without the creator, Van Gogh there would be no painting, the use of materials would not be up for discussion, the way the brush strokes were done or the use of light and dark would not mean anything.

McLaughlin writes, "...the methods of science and a strictly scientific consideration of the starry heavens cannot show that they declare the glory of God. The Divine glory is not that sort of thing... [the] claim is like that of someone who, having done a thorough chemical analysis of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, claims that the great painting shows no evidence of art, and is mere canvas and paint."² He goes on to say, "Another reason we cannot see nature as a work of art is because of the split between the scientific and artistic communities. We do not see nature as a work of art because artists do not portray scientific discoveries artistically, and scientists do not often write artfully."³

The psalmist, in a sense, mediates between science and art, the act of creation. We know that our world and the space around it is created, the psalmist understood that as well. The psalmist also recognizes that creation is art, beauty, meaningful beyond its structure and components.

The psalm, in writing, moves then from creation to God's Word. Again, we are so likely to hear things like the law, decrees, precepts, commandment, fear, and ordinances as stifling creativity and life. As making rules rather than granting freedom. Yet that is not at

² The Heavens Declare the Glory of God. February 29, 2016 by [Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, PhD](#)
[The Heavens Declare the Glory of God - Homiletic & Pastoral Review \(hprweb.com\)](#)

Accessed September 14, 2024

³ Ibid.

all the purpose of God's Word. The Word of the Lord is about life-giving ways of being in the world. Ways that connect us to God, to each other, and to creation. The Word of the Lord, as the psalmist so aptly says to us, the Word of the Lord revives the soul, makes wise the simple, brings rejoicing to the heart, enlightens the eyes. It is to be desired more than gold; it is sweeter than honey.

All of this is wonderful, but what does that do for us today. So creation is beautiful, God's handiwork. How does that make a difference when one is struggling, hurting, broken? What difference does it make in my rejoicing? It tells us that regardless of what is going on in our lives that there is something bigger, something beautiful, something and someone to be praised, knowing that creation points toward and pour forth speech of wholeness. It points to a creator, an artist, a writer in creation and in our lives who is passionate about us and our relationship with each other, with God, and with creation itself.

We can go into God's handiwork and be made whole through the healing power of God's creation by spending time under the night sky and looking up at the moon and the stars, listening to the night animals. We can go spend time at a brook, stream, river, lake, ocean, or waterfall and be healed by its motion, whether it be a trickling tranquillity or a reminder of power. We can sit in the woods, a meadow, or in our yards and be at peace. We can look at a diamond, better than a diamond set between emeralds and know that God's word is more exquisite than that. It's better than strawberries in spring, better than red, ripe strawberries.

We are encouraged at the end of the psalm to rely on God who is our rock and our redeemer. To hope and trust that in being in relationship with God and with creation, that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts would be acceptable to God who is ever present and loves us and will guide us.

The Word of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork. Be at peace, knowing that the God of science and of creation, of beauty and wonder goes with you. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of creation, God of love,

We pray for the church, the nations, and all people seeking God's mercy and care,
We pray for the church in every place, that wherever people gather in your name,
you make us able to listen to each other with open hearts.

Give your people unity, O God, and replace divisiveness with reconciliation.

We pray for all who serve the church
as musicians, greeters, pastors, leaders,
teachers, as worker bees and cooks,
as repairers and cleaners, and in all other ministries.

We pray for Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Buddhists,

people of indigenous religions everywhere,
that their paths may lead—with ours—to greater understanding
of the goodness of faith in its many languages and forms.

We thank you for this amazing earth, for clean water, rich soils,
abundant sunshine, and all the foods that you have made
for our health and enjoyment.

Give all people the gratitude to share,
especially with those who do not have such riches
and who today are hungry.

We pray for the leaders of our nation and
for the leaders asserting power in other nations,
for nations in trouble at this time and for peacemakers and diplomats
as they work to shape a reformed people.

We pray for all who suffer from the horrors of war and famine,
for children who do not know the reason for their pain
and have no power to change their lot,
and for the animals and plants damaged by human conflicts.

We pray for those suffering from all forms of injustice, brokenness,
or illness, especially all who have asked for the prayers of this congregation
and for those whose well-being we hold in our hearts,
named now silently.

God of eternity, certain days remind us of tragedy and death,
but we know that all days are redeemed and held in your grace.
We remember those who have died on this day,
those who will die today, and all whose lives have enriched ours.
Keep alive in us the hope of the resurrection.

Into your hands we place those for whom we pray,
trusting in your mercy through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord
who taught us to pray.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2 © 2015 Westminster John Knox Press

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Invitation to the offering

God has given us the un and made us stewards of all creation. God has given us our lives and our very being. We give to God from what God has given us.

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Hymn

This is my Father's world

328

1. This is my Father's world,
and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought;
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas
God's hands the wonders wrought.
2. This is my Maker's world;
the birds their carols raise;
the morning light, the lily white,
declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Maker's world;
God shines in all that's fair;
in the rustling grass God's footsteps pass,
God speaks to me everywhere.
3. This is my Saviour's world;
oh let me not forget
that though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Saviour's world;
the battle is not done;
Jesus, who died, shall be satisfied,
and earth and heaven be one.

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Benediction

The heavens tell of your glory, O God.
May our lives tell the story of your grace!
The earth proclaims your creative power, mighty one.
May our actions proclaim your amazing love!

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Elements: September 15, 2024](#)

Go to love and serve the Lord
in the name of the Creating God,
the love and Christ
and the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.