

# Celebrating Creation at St. John's

At St. John's United Church of Christ, Red Lion

People are familiar with congregations that observe the **Season of Advent** before **Christmas** to prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. They are also familiar with the observance of the **Season of Lent** before **Easter** to prepare for the sad events of Holy Week and to celebrate the triumph of Easter. However, most people within the Church are not familiar with the Season of Creation!

At St. John's we observe the **Season of Creation** for 4 weeks either in the spring to coincide with Earth Day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>) or in the fall prior to St. Francis of Assisi Day (October 4<sup>th</sup>) **to prepare us to be better stewards of creation!** For the last two years we have celebrated the Season of Creation during the month of August (as there seem to be fewer traditions of the church that overlap this time period) giving the Season of Creation the full attention of our worshippers.

Created in 2004 by the Rev. Norman Habel, in cooperation with the Uniting Church in Melbourne, Australia, the **Season of Creation** was rolled out worldwide in 2005. While many folks have thought the Season of Creation was some sort of "new age" approach to environmentalism in the church... nothing could be further from the truth. The Season of Creation includes a "lectionary like" rotating three-year cycle of Biblical readings and worship resources to guide local churches into a Christian focus upon the God of creation and our roles as the **stewards of the earth**.

St. John's began observing the Season of Creation in 2011.

- For **4 weeks** we re-live the great stories of creation in the Bible.
- On each Sunday we focus on one of the following: land, forests, rivers, wilderness, mountains, ocean, storm, flora/fauna, humanity, sky, earth or the cosmos.
- During the worship liturgy we confess our sin of harm to creation and find Biblical encouragement as to how God is working to renew creation (and inviting us to be partners in the redemption of the earth).
- Each week we use **songs**, **videos**, **visual displays**, **tangible** and **tactile items** (such as leaves, stones, water or soil), as well as **liturgy** and the **sermon** to call our congregation to action on behalf of the earth.
- Throughout this season we utilize the projection system in our sanctuary to share images of nature's beauty, as well as video clips of the destruction and devastation that we have brought upon our planet.
- During the Season of Creation, we frequently have an adult education series, discussions before or after worship or outdoor prayer walks.
- We typically worship outdoors on one of the Sundays during the Season of Creation, for the last two years it has been on the final Sunday as a culmination of our worship and to give public witness.
- Each time we repeat the three-year cycle of topics and readings (we are now on our third rotation) we have more resources to utilize and the congregation seems to fully embrace the Season of Creation as one of our many "meaningful traditions."
- If you are interested in incorporating the Season of Creation into the worship and faith formation of your congregation, but need more information, resources or encouragement, please do not hesitate to contact me, David Tietje at: [revtietje@gmail.com](mailto:revtietje@gmail.com)

Beyond the focus on inspiring worship experiences and thoughtful environmental education – during the Season of Creation we remind ourselves that Christians are to **live as stewards of the earth!**