



Season of Creation: Wilderness Sunday

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 24, 2023

9:30 am

We acknowledge that we gather on the traditional homeland of the Council of Three Fires – Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

The assembly stands as they are comfortable.

CONFSSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who so loves the world and all who live in it.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God, Creation, and one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,
we expect nature to serve our needs, and we have damaged it in the process. We trample every wild place and pollute your waters. We abuse your good Earth until it cries out in pain. Forgive us, loving God. Remind us of the covenant you made with the whole Earth. Nourish us so we can restore your awe-inspiring Creation.
Amen.

Christ, the one who was buried into the heart of the Earth and then raised up to new life, forgives you all your sin. Freed from your burdens, be led by the Spirit to do God's healing work in the world.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN: *God the Sculptor of the Mountains*

1 God the sculptor of the mountains, God the miller of the
2 God the nuisance to the Pharaoh, God the cleaver of the
3 God the dresser of the vineyard, God the planter of the
4 God the unexpected infant, God the calm, determined

sand, God the jeweler of the heavens,
sea, God the pillar in the darkness,
wheat, God the reaper of the harvest,
youth, God the table-turning prophet,

God the potter of the land: you are womb of all creation -
God the beacon of the free: you are fount of all dependence -
God the source of all we eat: you are host at every meal -
God the resurrected truth: you are present everywhere -

a - tion, we are form-less; shape us now.
liv - 'rance, we are sight-less; lead us now.
ta - ble, we are hun-gry; feed us now.
mo - ment, we are search-ing; meet us now.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, worship the God of all Creation.

We gather to praise the Creator, the continuous source of all living things.

Come, worship our God who breathes life into being.

**We praise the Creator who fashions the forests,
whose trees clean the air of this world.**

Come, worship our God who forms life out of soil.

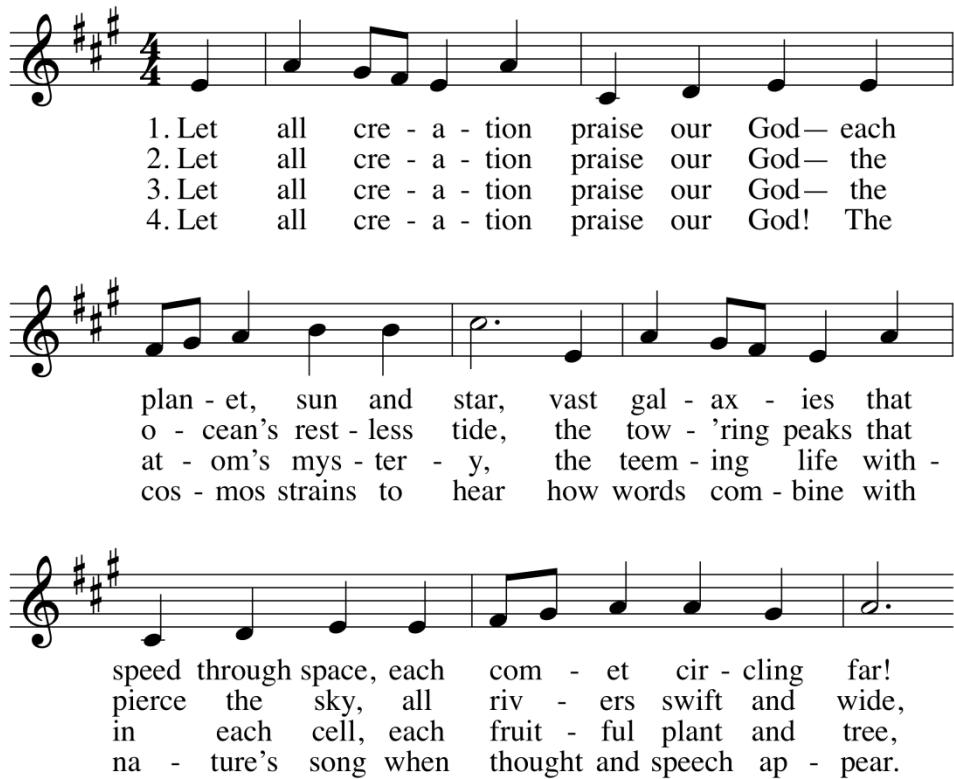
We praise the Creator whose land brings nourishment.

Come, worship our God who receives our lament in the wilderness.
We praise the Creator whose Son brings healing to all Creation.
Come, worship our God who sends waters flowing with life.
**We praise the Creator whose baptism unites us to be one
in the Body of Christ with all Creation.**

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE



1. Let all cre - a - tion praise our God— each
2. Let all cre - a - tion praise our God— the
3. Let all cre - a - tion praise our God— the
4. Let all cre - a - tion praise our God! The

plan - et, sun and star, vast gal - ax - ies that
o - cean's rest - less tide, the tow - 'ring peaks that
at - om's mys - ter - y, the teem - ing life with -
cos - mos strains to hear how words com - bine with

speed through space, each com - et cir - cling far!
pierce the sky, all riv - ers swift and wide,
in each cell, each fruit - ful plant and tree,
na - ture's song when thought and speech ap - pear.



Let soar - ing clouds take up the song, the
the des - erts burn - ing in the sun, the
all prowl - ing beasts and gen - tle pets, the
Let hu - man - kind em - ploy God's gifts, with



wind and rain and snow, the sea - sons in their
for - ests deep in shade— let all the earth in
birds on spread-ing wing— let all that lives on
earth and stars re - joice, and lead their word-less



faith - ful course, bright dawn and sun - set glow!
cho - rus sing, "These won - ders God has made!"
land, in sea to their cre - a - tor sing!
hymns of praise, the whole cre - a - tion's voice!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

A brief pause.

Merciful God, you made the wilderness teeming with living creatures, thriving plants, and spacious habitats. Free us from our destructive ambitions. Stir us to respect and protect your wild places, caring for all that you have made, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture, reading, preaching, and song.

Let us listen for the word of the Lord.

Our ears and our hearts are open.

FIRST LESSON: Joel 1:1-2, 17-20

A reading from Joel.

¹ The LORD's word that came to Joel, Pethuel's son:

² Hear this, elders;
pay attention, everyone in the land!

Has anything like this ever happened in your days,
or in the days of your ancestors?

¹⁷ The grain shrivels under the shovels;
the barns are empty.

The granaries are in ruin
because the grain has dried up.

¹⁸ How the animals groan!
Herds of cattle are in distress
because there is no pasture for them;
even the flocks of sheep pant.

¹⁹ To you, LORD, I cry,
for fire has completely destroyed
the pastures of the wilderness;
and flames have burned
all the trees of the field.

²⁰ Even the field's wild animals cry to you
because the streams have dried up;
the fire has completely destroyed
the meadows of the wilderness.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 65:1-13

Read responsively

¹ God of Zion, to you even silence is praise.
Promises made to you are kept—
² **you listen to prayer—**
and all living things come to you.

³ When wrongdoings become too much for me,
you forgive our sins.

⁴ **How happy is the one you choose to bring close,**
the one who lives in your courtyards!
We are filled full by the goodness of your house,
by the holiness of your temple.

⁵ In righteousness you answer us,
by your awesome deeds,
God of our salvation—
you, who are the security
of all the far edges of the earth,
even the distant seas.

⁶ **You establish the mountains by your strength;**
you are dressed in raw power.

⁷ You calm the roaring seas;
calm the roaring waves,
calm the noise of the nations.

⁸ **Those who dwell on the far edges**
stand in awe of your acts.
You make the gateways
of morning and evening sing for joy.

⁹ You visit the earth and make it abundant,
enriching it greatly
by God's stream, full of water.
You provide people with grain
because that is what you've decided.

¹⁰ **Drenching the earth's furrows,**
leveling its ridges,
you soften it with rain showers;
you bless its growth.

¹¹ You crown the year with your goodness;
your paths overflow with rich food.

¹² **Even the desert pastures drip with it,
and the hills are dressed in pure joy.**

¹³ The meadowlands are covered with flocks,
the valleys decked out in grain—

they shout for joy;
they break out in song!

SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:18-27

A reading from Romans.

¹⁸ I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God's sons and daughters. ²⁰ Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. ²² We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. ²³ And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. ²⁴ We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. ²⁷ The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God's will.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands as they are comfortable.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah; hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah;
He - le - lu - yan, he - le - lu - yan; he - le, he - le - lu - yan;
hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah; hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah.
he - le - lu - yan, he - le - lu - yan; he - le, he - le - lu - yan.

HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 3:13-4:2

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³ At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River so that John would baptize him. ¹⁴ John tried to stop him and said, “I need to be baptized by you, yet you come to me?”

¹⁵ Jesus answered, “Allow me to be baptized now. This is necessary to fulfill all righteousness.”

So John agreed to baptize Jesus. ¹⁶ When Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up out of the water. Heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on him. ¹⁷ A voice from heaven said, “This is my Son whom I dearly love; I find happiness in him.”

¹ Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. ² After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

YOUTH TIME

SERMON

The assembly stands as they are comfortable.

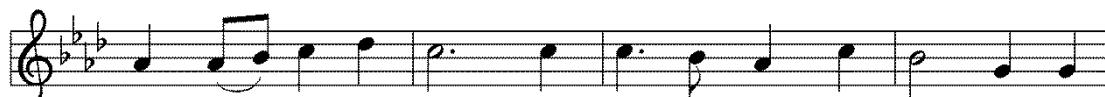
HYMN OF THE DAY: *When Pain of the World Surrounds Us*



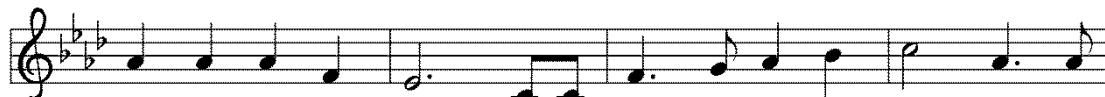
1 When pain of the world sur - rounds us with dark - ness and de -
2 We see with . . fear and trem - bling our ach - ing world in
3 The church is a ho - ly ves - sel the liv - ing wa - ters
4 We praise you . . for our jour - ney and your a - bun - dant



need, con - fess - ing to each oth - er our
fill to nour - ish all the peo - ple, God's
grace, your sav - ing word that guid - ed a



false hopes ev - 'ry - where, when lives are starved for mean - ing and waste-ful - ness and greed. May we with stead - fast car - ing the pur - pose to ful - fill. May we with hum - ble cour - age be strug - gling hu - man race. O God, with all cre - a - tion, your



des - ti - ny is bare, we are called to fol - low Je - sus and
hun-gry chil - dren feed. We are called to fol - low Je - sus and
o - pen to God's will. We are called to fol - low Je - sus and
fu - ture we em - brace. We are called to fol - low Je - sus and



let God's heal - ing flow through us.
let God's jus - tice flow through us.
let God's Spir - it flow through us.
let God's chang - es flow through us.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**We believe in God, who creates all things,
who embraces all things, who celebrates all things,
who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.**

**We believe in God as the source of all life,
who baptizes this planet with living water.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one, the poor one,
the malnourished one, the climate refugee,
who loves and cares for this world
and who suffers with it.**

**And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life,
who came to reconcile and renew this world
and everything in it.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God,
who moves with God
and who moves among and with us today.**

We believe in everlasting life in God.

**And we believe in the hope that one day
God will put an end to death and all destructive forces.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

A brief silence.

God who is gracious and merciful, teach your church to invite and welcome all. Lead us to be grateful for the blessing of community. Challenge your church to choose equity and compassion over judgment. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God who sends the wind and the sun, you know every worm and bush by name. Help us remember that even the humblest parts of creation are precious to you. Show us how best to care for the earth and its creatures, protecting wilderness places. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God who is ready to relent from punishing, impart your compassionate wisdom to legislators, judges, members of the military, and law enforcement. Give them courage to serve their communities in times of uncertainty, stress, or exhaustion. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God who saves, direct your people who are tempted by evil ways. Protect your children from calamity and disaster. Strengthen all who are incarcerated. Encourage all who are in despair or pain of any kind especially those who we name aloud or in the quiet of our hearts (pause). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God who is slow to anger, may we boast about the goodness of Jesus with the confidence of Paul in prison. Inspire us to find abundance in whatever vocation we are called to in the world and in service to our congregation. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God who abounds in steadfast love, we give thanks for the saints called to the kingdom of heaven. United with them in spirit, hold us firm as we labor in this life and look to the life to come. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Christ.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And also with you.

We share a sign of the peace of Christ with others.

OFFERING

Your offering continues to support the mission and ministry of Abiding Presence. The offering plate will be passed down each pew to receive today's offering. Arrangements can also be made for electronic giving through the church office or through your financial institution. We are grateful for your generosity.

OFFERTORY*Adult Choir*

The assembly stands as they are comfortable.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

A brief silence.

**Loving Creator,
all Creation comes from you – forests, lands and prairies, wild places, rivers and
streams. As we bring our offerings to you, we ask that you bless them so that
your kingdom comes on Earth as it is in heaven; in the name of Jesus Christ our
Lord.**

Amen.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Sculptor of the Earth,
we praise you for the way your fingers traced the rivers
across the land and lifted up the mountains.

Painter of the landscapes,
we praise you for how your brushstrokes bring color to
our forests and vitality to our wilderness spaces.

Breath of life,
we praise you for the gift of your wind that sustains our very living,
and which brings all flora and fauna dancing into being.

In great joy you sent to the canvas of the cosmos your Son, Jesus Christ,
to bring restoration and healing to all that is broken.

On the night before he died,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink,
saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people
for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup, we proclaim the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

O Holy God,
reveal the Word made flesh through the mending of the woodlands
and prairies, of the rocky peaks and valley streams.
Renew our awareness of our place in the web of Creation.
Send us with a yearning hunger to advocate for a
healthier planet.

All glory is your, blessed Trinity, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier,
now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Please use the version of the Lord's Prayer that is most prayerful for you, including languages other than English.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen**

**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 COMMUNION

Jesus invited you to this table. Come, eat, and live.

DISTRIBUTION

The presiding minister will offer the elements to those who are worshipping on the livestream. For those in the church sanctuary, communion is distributed by procession. You are invited to walk up the center aisle in two lines to receive the bread from the presiding minister, who will give it to you as the words 'the Body of Christ given for you' are spoken. Gluten free wafers are also available. Move to the communion assistant and receive the tray containing a cup of wine (in the outer rings of the tray) or a cup of grape juice (the inner ring of the tray.) Choose a cup as the words, 'the Blood of Christ shed for you' are spoken. Drink the contents of the cup and place your empty glass in the bowl provided. If you wish to remain at the altar to pray you may do so by stepping to the side outside the distribution area. Return to your pew by the side aisle. Those who are not receiving the sacrament may come forward for a blessing.

COMMUNION HYMN: *For the Beauty of the Earth*



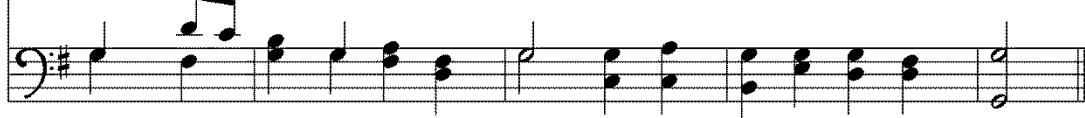
1 For the beau - ty of the earth, for the beau - ty of the skies,
 2 For the won - der of each hour of the day and of the night,
 3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's de - light,
 4 For the joy of hu - man love, broth - er, sis - ter, par - ent, child,
 5 For each per - fect gift of thine, peace on earth and joy in heav'n;



for the love which from our birth o - ver and a - round us lies:
 hill and vale and tree and flow'r, sun and moon and stars of light:
 for the mys - tic har - mo - ny link - ing sense to sound and sight:
 friends on earth and friends a - bove; for all gen - tle thoughts and mild:
 for thy - self, best gift di - vine, to our world so free - ly giv'n:



Refrain
Christ, our God, to thee we raise this our sac - ri - fice of praise.



The assembly stands as they are comfortable.

BLESSING

The bread of the Earth and the fruit of the vine strengthen you and keep you in God's grace.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray,

Brief silence.

God, you never give up on your beautiful yet damaged Creation.

Though Jesus was broken on the cross, in the resurrection
the Risen Lord encounters us with new life.

Send us, who have received his body and blood, as signs of your
redeeming power that restores our relationship with all Creation and
unites us with the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission into the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands as they are comfortable.

BLESSING

Almighty God,
who breathes life into you and all living things,
who heals all the world,
and who sustains all Creation,
give you peace and purpose,
in the name of the Father, and the + Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: *Creating God, Your Fingers Trace*

1 Cre - at - ing God, your fin - gers trace the bold de -
 2 Sus - tain - ing God, your hands up - hold earth's mys - tries
 3 Re - deem - ing God, your arms em - brace all now de -
 4 In - dwell - ing God, your gos - pel claims one fam - 'ly

signs of far - thest space; let sun and moon and stars and
 known or yet un - told; let wa - ter's frag - ile blend with
 spised for creed or race; let peace, de - scend - ing like a
 with a bil - lion names; let ev - ry life be touched by

light and what lies hid - den praise your might.
 air, en - a - bling life, pro - claim your care.
 dove, make known on earth your heal - ing love.
 grace un - til we praise you face to face.

DISMISSAL

Open hearts, open minds, called to serve God's world in challenging times.

Go in peace. Care for Creation.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Flowers at the altar this Sunday are donated by:

Kristina and Jeffrey Richards

**Celebrating the marriage of Victoria Richards and Thisara Wijesundera on
September 22, 2023.**

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Purpose Statement

Open hearts, open minds, called to serve God's world in challenging times.

Statement of Welcome

Abiding Presence Lutheran Church is a Christian community of faith, worship and service grounded in the use of word and sacrament and we welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace.

We welcome all because God welcomes all regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or relationship status.

We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us.

Our unity is in Christ.



1550 Walton Blvd
Rochester Hills, MI 48309
248-651-6550
www.abidingpresence.org