

MINISTER'S MINUTE

Fifth Sunday of Lent: Earth Hour

Morning Prayer

Loving God, you created the blanket of stars above us from the tiniest spider to the largest elephant.

We think about the places that we are in, the places that you have created for us to move in and out of.

We think about the relationships and experiences that have made it possible for us to be brought into this moment of prayer.

We thank you God for all of us and for the networks both in nature and in ourselves that we are part of.

We are perfectly created and loved even in the midst of wonder and worry. Help us to notice the Spirit around us that has been shaped by kindness and caring.

We take moments to remember the making of community and family.

We reflect about the holy wisdom that has called us into being

Let us give gratitude to God who liberates us and calls us back into the perfect creation that we are part of.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.



Earth Hour unites people internationally at 8:30–9:30 p.m. local time on the fourth or fifth Saturday of March. Its purpose is to celebrate creation while committing to compassionate action for its well-being. Find out more about Earth Hour, which is organized by the World Wildlife Fund.

This Sunday we are yet again not together in body, but we are united in spirit. We must be diligent in caring for our home environments. We must wash surfaces, disinfect, cardboard must be wiped down, clothes washed, bags must be used, gloves must be used and disposed of. We are caring for our environment so much more than we usually do, but because if we don't, it will directly affect us in a very destructive way.

In terms of care of the environment and Earth Hour, you may already see what I'm getting at. I'm trying to point out how interesting it is that our actions reflect that our environment directly impacts our health. Under different circumstances humans as a species may not notice the wider environment on a daily basis. Surfaces, boxes, containers, may have a different place in our minds on an ordinary day. I know that there are folks who are constantly searching for ways to improve the environment, by keeping natural surfaces like road ditches clean, or by filtering

Sunday Scripture

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The valley of dry bones.

Psalm 130 (VU pp. 852-853)

Out of the depths I cry to God.

Romans 8:6-11

The Spirit is life, not death.

John 11:1-45

The raising of Lazarus.

Task: Consider what you can do to celebrate Earth Hour every day!

- Use Candlelight or natural light!
- Visit your favourite nature place
- Start an environmental initiative in your family, like planting seeds, compost, no plastic days,
- Movies & Documentaries that make you think: Wall-e, Avatar, Bambi, FernGully: The Last Rainforest, Planet Earth, Erin Brockovich, Day After Tomorrow...& more!
- Share a daily practice of love for God's creation that you might want to foster or strengthen in the months and days to come.

water so that toxins don't enter the water. Yet, the majority of us do not choose our actions based on how it affects the water, the air, the energy and stress we put on all living things. I am guilty of this too. Perhaps now we are even more anxious because this care of environment is not a normal practice!

This whole past week I have been hearing about all the robins and birds that people are seeing. (I for one am constantly woken up at 3AM by the sounds of rapid chirping and trilling. It doesn't help that the sound of my alarm is also birds singing. It seems I have programmed myself to wake at the sound of birds. You can see how difficult this might become.) The next thing we will see are little robins and pieces of little bright blue eggs in nests. We will begin to see tulips emerging and the buds on the trees will start to form into leaves. This for me is the coming of hope in a real way. It is an Easter pathway so to speak, reminding us that at the end of every season is a beginning of another.

One way we can keep finding inner peace is by finding wisdom in the scriptures. We have learned the contents of Paul's letter to the Romans by his words saying that we are in the realm of the spirit. Paul is saying that if the Spirit dwells in you it has the power to change your mindset to nurture peace. Right now a lot of people are struggling and dying, so the scriptures may not sit firmly yet, but there is truth in being able to offer peace through faith. Peaceful presence, peaceful words and peaceful actions all come from an inner strength, voice or mindset. We may not always have that strength on our own, so it makes it more important to pray for others. Be mindful of yourself and your peace. What do you long for right now to have peace? Pray about it. Write about it. Tell someone about it. The scriptures speak to us telling us that there is always hope in God. There are peace full moments by embracing the mindset that we are driven by the same force that drove Jesus and his followers, the Spirit of God. Perhaps we're not necessarily able to bring about miracles, but we have something to help us through this time. Even with burdens, naming them, and saying it aloud sometimes releases a bit of the burden just by 'putting it out there' into God's world.

I believe that one benefit of this time of distance from each other will be reconnecting with nature and in turn finding at least moments of inner peace. I believe there is a reason that moving through parks and riversides or even our backyards makes us

happy and feel good. With the coming of spring we are itching to get outside, to get in the garden, to prune and dig, to clean up the yard, to hike, camp and enjoy the outdoors. More and more I hear how people are noticing nature. This tells me that we know our connection to nature is valid. It is a gift that reminds us that we cannot be apart from nature, we are connected to it very much because it is created by God.

A useful quote explaining stewardship is found in Psalm 24:1: "The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it". Essentially, this tells us to look after the Earth as it is the responsibility of a Christian steward. During the first week of the social distancing business I saw a couple walking and picking up garbage. It made me happy. It was great to see. As stewards of the earth Lent is a perfect time to reconcile any loose ends so to speak. Maybe you could try that compost you wanted to start, that vegetable garden, star gazing and satellite watching, watching the sunset at night, making friends with a robin or a squirrel, shutting off screens and playing 'I spy'. I saw a news piece showing Toronto neighbourhoods where coyotes and deer are roaming as if it's free for all. In other parts of the world creation is creeping onto the sidewalks and roads usually populated with people and cars. Even though this is not uncommon in rural areas, it is uncommon for spaces with urban populations. It reminds me that we are indeed still being offered signs from God, and the Spirit that **we are not alone**.

As we continue to move forward in time, from Lent to Palm Sunday next week, it is my hope, in this time of anxiously waiting for good news that we can reconnect with God's creation. Let's find the good news just outside our windows to start off each day! These basic reminders of clean air, clean water and clean ground can be peace giving and grounding in a time of the unknown. Our connection to our environment is both spiritually filling and physically beneficial!

There are many people to help yes in these trying times. So while we work on responding to that need, perhaps we can help put our wider environment in a better place too. Having a weekly "Earth Hour" may help to refocus us on the things we do have control over, our ability to be stewards, gardeners, pruners, cleaners and helpers to our planet. As well as this we might consider adding the creatures you are thankful for into your prayers. Believing that we were given the gift of this earth will refocus us on God too. Let's take care of earth!

Peace be with you, Rev. Emma

Sunday Fun: Can you find Gwen the Wonder Dog?

