

A message from 2016 Creation Care Sunday

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Sometime in the middle of the night this past week I remembered that our updated family photo was due for the new church pictorial directory. As I lay in bed one night, thinking about this, another thought popped into my head: "I wonder if the Family Ministry Committee wants me to write a little directory introduction, like I've done in the past, for the first page of the directory. If they do, what shall I write about?"

(Anyone else familiar with this 'lying in bed, trying to sleep with endless thoughts going through your head' phenomena?")....

....So as I thought about the images, our images, our photos, in the church pictorial directory I thought that perhaps I could write about being made in the image of God.

The first chapter of Genesis says, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

I've often wondered what that means – that we are "created in God's image."

- Does that mean that God has two eyes, two ears, a mouth and a nose?
- Does that mean that God has two arms and two legs? Skin and hair?
- Or does it have nothing to do with physical appearance, physical image.
- Maybe it has to do with emotional image, intellectual image, mental image, relational image. There are so many things that it could mean.

One of the theories over the years that I have heard and that I really like has to do with creating and creation itself. In the 25 verses in Genesis, chapter one, before God created humans, God was busy creating the world.

- God created the heavens and the earth.
- God created light and called the light Day and the darkness night.
- God created Sky, dry land, Seas, vegetation, sun, moon and stars.
- God created living creatures of every kind – those that fly, those that swim in the waters and those that live on land and creep upon the ground.

So if that is what God is doing before God created humans "in the image of God" – perhaps the image that we are to reflect is the care of creation. Maybe God is calling us to be co-creators with God. Perhaps that's what it means to be created in the image of God.

The very first thing God says to humans, after blessing them is "Be fruitful and multiply. Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

This is our very first call to care for creation.

Now, you might have noticed, that even though today is Creation Care Sunday, I decided to keep the assigned lectionary scripture readings. I did this because all of them mention water, and water is such a huge part of creation.

- In the reading from Acts Paul sails on the water to Philippi and meets Lydia outside the gate by the river.
 - In the reading from Revelation we hear of the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the lamb.
 - And then finally in our Gospel reading we are told about a pool of water where people go to be healed.
- Water is such a vital part of creation. We all know the importance of oceans and water for our world. 71% of our planet is covered by oceans. And a staggering 80% of all the life on Earth is to be found hidden beneath the waves. Without the global ocean there would be no life on Earth.
- I'm sure you also know the damage that humans have done to the world's water supply.
- We hear about the polar ice caps melting and causing land to disappear.
 - We read news of how many of the coral reefs, which are equivalent to the rain forest on land, have been bleached and killed by toxins and other pollutants.

- We hear news of countless sea birds dying because they swallow so much plastic that is flowing in the seas.
- We hear of overfishing, pollution, droughts, too much salt in drinking water, corporations buying water rights.
- Not to mention the water related disaster in Flint, Michigan.

The situation seems like too much to even begin to take in. The thought that we might be uncreating the earth can send us into despair, terrify us, and paralyze us. It's so overwhelming. It's intense. It's just too much.

And then we hear the voice of Jesus from across the waters saying,
Peace! Be still!

Don't be afraid. Trust in me.

And we are reminded that we are not in this alone.

Yes, God has called us to care for creation, but God didn't leave us in this alone. God is with us. Supporting us. Guiding us. Empowering us. Inspiring us. Partnering with us.

In the face of bleak news about damage to our life giving waters and ecosystems, God invites us to:
set aside our despair, our fear and our paralysis;

and to embrace our role as co-creators with God, to restore our partnership and community with all of creation.

In the midst of the stormy waters, Jesus' hand reaches out to us, saying: "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid. I walk with you." Amen.