

**Message and Scripture**  
**8 September 2024**

**Scripture: Genesis 1:26-31 Message Adapted**

<sup>26-28</sup> God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature  
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,  
the birds in the air, the cattle,  
And, yes, Earth itself,  
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.”  
God created human beings;  
[God] created them godlike,  
Reflecting God’s nature.  
[God] created them male and female.  
God blessed them:  
“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!  
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,  
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.”  
<sup>29-30</sup> Then God said, “I’ve given you  
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth  
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,  
given them to you for food.  
To all animals and all birds,  
everything that moves and breathes,  
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.”  
And there it was.  
<sup>31</sup> God looked over everything [God] had made;  
it was so good, so very good!  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Six.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Message: Community of All Creation**

This is a beautiful place to live. It is where many come to vacation. We have lakes, the largest freshwater lakes in the world – they actually act as inland freshwater seas. We have wilderness areas teeming with both flora and fauna. We have seasons – four of them, with some of the prettiest autumn colors, winter sports, springs that are filled with flowers and green – summers that are never overheated for very long. Upstate New York is a wonderful place to live.

And I say this having lived in some other parts of our country – Virginia, and Texas. They both have their charms, but they were not home. I’ve been to or through almost all our 50 states. I’ve visited many of our national parks and historical sites. They each have their charms and their own beauty. And I’ve visited some iconic places in the world: Paris, London, Athens, Venice, even Kathmandu, but none of them are home. But they are part of God’s creation, which makes them and the entire planet and yes, even space under our stewardship as human beings. God has entrusted creation into our care. That is what it says in the Genesis story we read this morning. The translation we read this morning says, “Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.” (Genesis 1:28)

Our social principles first section after the preface and preamble is titled the Community of All Creation. This section of our social principles affirms our task to be good stewards of God's creation, and it reminds us that, "unsustainable human activities have placed the entirety of God's creation in peril." (p. 9) As United Methodists, we believe what scientists tell us about climate change. As United Methodists we work together to find ways to heal our planet.

Several decades ago, the hole in the ozone layer was constantly in the news. We found it, found out about it, and figured out what was causing it. Remember when hairspray and so many other things came in those old aerosol canisters? The entire world signed a treaty – I believe it was the first of its kind – to stop using the particular chemicals that were causing the damage to our atmosphere – and it worked. The ozone layer started to heal itself and now we don't worry so much about it. As much as I may have liked my brand of hair spray from the eighties, I like having the ozone layer more. This is good stewardship of our earth.

Another example of good stewardship is from one of our own NCNT camps, Skye Lake down near Binghamton. Skye lake now has – I think – four windmills on its – our – property. It has transitioned to renewable energy and the 'rents' received from the energy company has given it a solid financial underpinning. And, of course, it is wonderful to live once again in this area where recycling and composting is a standard practice – even in churches.

Our social principles don't stop with good stewardship of the earth. In fact, again and again our principles remind us that people, human beings, are always part of our care. The paragraph on green energy ends with this statement, "Inevitably, transitioning from an overreliance on fossil fuels will have adverse impacts on individuals and communities whose livelihoods are still heavily dependent on the production, sale and distribution of these commodities. To the greatest extent possible, plans for developing and deploying alternative sources of energy should minimize negative financial impacts by investing in strategies that support people in successfully transitioning to new employment..." (p. 10) Our social principles also go on to looking beyond the borders of the US with our care for people by acknowledging that the "negative impacts resulting from the degradation of the natural world have fallen disproportionately on marginalized communities..." (p. 10) We call this environmental racism.

We should care that Mount Everest is covered by the trash of moneyed first world thrill seekers who have left their footprints on the highest mountain in the world for the impoverished Nepalis to attempt to clean up after them.

So, what do we do? Again, I am so glad to be in this part of the earth. We have an abundance of clean drinking water. Let's not take that for granted. Stay involved in the politics of the Great Lakes water management. We have care over one of the largest if not the largest sources of fresh water on the planet. It would be a horror if we allowed this natural resource to be squandered by people wanting green lawns in the deserts of the west. Stay involved in the management of the Adirondack Park. It is a huge natural asset. One of the largest places east of the Mississippi left undeveloped. Do we want to see big business buying up the resources and destroying the wilderness areas? Stay involved in the local politics to keep this from happening. Let the politicians know that the integrity of the park is important to you as a voter.

We are situated in the midst of farmland. Many of the farms around us are still family owned. We should support them through buying locally. Through being involved in food co-ops that teach us to eat what is in season and to try new foods that are local. We should support farmers' markets. We are so lucky to have such vibrant markets and festivals so close to us. Who doesn't love going to the maple festivals, strawberry festivals, etc. Feel good about that. Feel good about being good stewards of God's creation. Feel good about taking care of our planet. And share that our church is for the earth and all creation because when God finished creating God called it, called us, good, very good.