

I will begin by thanking Kimberly Whitney for urging me to subscribe to the Vatican Newsletter. It has been eye-opening to follow the work of the American Pope, Leo XIV. Of relevance to our focus today and for the entire month, the September 1 newsletter highlighted the beginning of the Season of Creation. This from the newsletter article entitled, “Season of Creation begins with worldwide prayer for our common home.”

Marking the 11th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on 1 September, Christians around the world are invited to unite in prayer and action for the protection of creation. The Day also marks the beginning of the annual Season of Creation, which runs until 4 October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

As the world continues to witness the suffering and destruction caused by the climate crisis, ...people of goodwill are invited to take part in this ecumenical initiative.

Promoted and supported by various organisations, including the *Laudato Si* Movement, the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Anglican Communion, the Day of Prayer for Creation goes back almost three decades.

The observance was first established in 1989 by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, who proclaimed 1 September as a Day of Prayer for Creation for the Orthodox

Church. The date marks the beginning of the Orthodox ecclesiastical year and recalls the biblical account of the world's creation.

In 2007, the "Third European Ecumenical Assembly" proposed extending the observance into five weeks, and the World Council of Churches subsequently invited Christian communities around the world to continue the celebration through 4 October.

In 2015, shortly after the publication of his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis established the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Catholic Church, aligning it with the Orthodox observance on 1 September and formally embracing the Season of Creation.

Pope Leo XIV's decree establishing the *Missa pro custodia creationis* ...represents another step in the Catholic Church's commitment to respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, as it supports local Churches in their efforts to care for our common home and promote new paths to achieve integral human ecology.

https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2026-09/season-creation-world-day-prayer-environment-church-ecumenical.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NewsletterVN-EN

I'm sure that when Lyndhurst Community of Faith Church, during our OWN creation, adopted this season we knew that it had these ecumenical roots. I had forgotten that history, and was glad to be reminded. Despite what can be theological

stumbling blocks, we join the wider Church's commitment to respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

For this year's Season of Creation, we are choosing as our theme, *Creator's Canvas* – with the understanding that “Nothing can separate us from God/Creator/Creation. Creator designed a framework for all nature's pieces, including us. Each piece has significance to the whole. Each piece influences the whole. Each piece supports the whole through diversity/unique roles.”

No matter what translation we read, the second verse of Genesis 1 explains that as God turned attention to the formation of our planet, it “was formless and empty.” It was a blank canvas that God would, and continues to, use as a display of incredible imagination and creativity – one that causes us to wonder and be in awe.

The rest of the first Creation story in Genesis, then, unfolds in an orderly fashion – the Creator choosing to compartmentalize objects of creation on a given day. Composed during the chaotic period of exile in Babylon, it was helpful for the Israelite religious leaders to establish an orderly arrangement of how the earth came to be. As time has gone by, and scientific inquiry has matured, we understand that nature itself doesn't quite behave in such an orderly fashion. If the animals of the waters were created on the fifth day, and the “creeping things and wild animals of the earth” on the sixth day – when were the amphibians created? Or, the hippopotamus, who spends as much time in the water as on the land?

We have learned that the Creator's magnificence is much more whimsical than we can ever assign order to. And it never stops!

Around the same time as the exilic priests were committing this idea of an ordered creation to papyrus, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus was positing another view of the world. Heraclitus viewed the world as constantly in flux, always "becoming" but never "being." He expressed this in sayings like "Everything flows" and "No (one) ever steps in the same river twice." Why? Because the river is flowing, moving – in the time it takes for one to step into and out of a river, by the time they step back in the water has moved on and is replaced by more; constantly changing.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclitus>

Every day we get up is a new day. In our position on an orbiting, tilted planet, we see that change with a slightly different angle of the Sun, or in the incremental change in the phase of the moon.

Sometimes we experience change in quite profound ways – some of our congregants have recently experienced the death of a loved one. They will attest that while their life moves on, their environment, their “world” has been altered forever.

We experience the range of emotions around change – sometimes we are sad, sometimes we are relieved, sometimes we are grateful, sometimes disappointed; sometimes we are anxious, sometimes feeling lost, sometimes a new space opens up for us that leads us into a direction we would never have thought of going.

Throughout our Season of Creation we're going to use this tree to help us imagine the "formless void" of God's Creation, but with some framework built around it. Barb found this image online. An anonymous photographer stood in the same spot every day for a period of time (one imagines for the period of a winter), and took a photo of this tree. The artist chose to do so at different times of the day in order to get different light conditions. Of course, with each day being different, the conditions changed. Each day, the photographer would fill some of the gaps of the tree's framework with images they had taken – blue skies, overcast skies, orange skies, a sky mixed with cloud and clear. Over our Season of Creation, we will watch the progression of the framework – as a metaphor to see just how diverse, and filled with color, our lives are and can be.

Today's version of the tree reflects the reading from verse 2 of Genesis 1 – a lifeless void. But is it? Is this tree lifeless? The tree, dormant in winter, is actually full of life. It is in rest, reflecting after a year of leaf production, housing critters, and engaging in the dynamic engineering of photosynthesis, receiving carbon dioxide and releasing it back into the world as fresh oxygen. It rests in order to gear up for a new season of life.

Are the skies collected within the framework of its branches lifeless? It appears so; in the nanosecond it took to click a photo. But as we will see, these frames also reflect a colorful existence that can easily be ignored in the fast pace of our lives.

What about my spirit? Often, I am so busy, the tasks of life sap so much of my energy that my spirit can feel like an empty void. I don't have the energy to stop, look, and listen to find the color of the world.

How is this tree calling us to reassess our own movement through the world?

What about the church? Sometimes it feels like we are this tree – wondering if we have seen our most lively times – anxiously concerned if vibrancy will be known again? The tree, this season, invites us to look beyond what is apparently barren, and notice what is alive ... and full of color. It's an invitation to see the LIFE that is waiting to spring forth ... it is a summons to recognize the stewards that we are; partners with God in what is becoming. For the canvas on which God works is eternal.

I will close with a poem by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer called, *In the Noticing*.

Quiet as a rabbit
nibbling on grass,
obvious as a flicker
knocking on a tree,

surprising as a white feather
landing on my tights,
again and again,
you appear, or more truly,

again and again,

I see what has
always been here—
you in everything,

your absence
throbbing with life.