

## **Week Four**

# Discerning a Call for

# Interconnectedness with Creation

### **Introduction to the Week**

How often have we been challenged with the expression “you can’t see the forest for the trees”? We are too easily caught up in the minute-by-minute attention to detail, and let the bigger picture pass us by. Yet, we are all part of a web of life- one that goes even beyond our natural environment, our ecosystems. There is an awareness of something greater – that unimaginable infinity of God’s Creation. How do we see, value and honour all that we experience in Creation?

We are adept at using our five senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell – to explore God’s Creation. What about our emotions, our spirit, our soul, and that still place in our heart where we make room for God. In every possible way, we are called to be co-creators with God.

This week, turn your heart to an issue or circumstance related to Creation. It may be time to deepen your appreciation and understanding of the complexity and balance found in Creation. Or perhaps it is time to assess in a new way your own impact on Creation. Is there something that requires a decision? Something that has left an unsettled feeling? Something that needs leading from the Spirit?

Choose your focus for discernment practice this week. Write a simple prayer to hold for the week by completing the following:  
*God show me...*

**Scripture Reading for this Week: Matthew 13: 31-35**

He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup>it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet [Isaiah]: “I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”

*The New Revised Standard Version*

## **Week Four** ✦ **Day One**

# Hearts that Listen

Creation is so vast. Yet we are told to listen for the “still small voice of God.” How do we listen and receive those sounds that surround us? Is the chirping of crickets on a summer’s evening annoying, or soothing? Plants and animals listen so closely, and respond to the rhythms in nature. Can we, too, ‘listen’ with all of our being to the beats in Creation, and hear God speaking in our hearts?

**Prayer of Approach** (# 248 Voices United) Verses 1 & 2  
When Long Before Time

### **Praying the Scriptures**

- If possible, go outdoors with your Bible. Read Matthew 13: 31-35. Then take some time to open all your senses, becoming aware of the elements of Creation that draw your attention. Consider the many links in the elements of Creation. Be one with this Creation. Feel the heartbeat of God in all the life around you.
- If you cannot go outside, read the passage, and then imagine yourself in a natural setting that appeals to you. Which elements attract you the most? Rest in this place of your imagination, and let God speak to you.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Jesus used images of nature to teach his followers about God's realm. These common images spoke powerfully to them. How does the image of a large sheltering tree speak to you? How is your heart listening to this image?
2. Is there a line of scripture or a hymn that comes to mind that captures your response to being a part of Creation?
3. In the scripture, Jesus notes the protection given by the tree to the birds of the air. Recall the sound made by a tree filled with birds. Many voices are communicating with one another. In the focus chosen for this week, what voices do you hear?

As you gaze on everything in your world today, look for the "seeds" of life. Take a moment to cherish what those seeds have or may become. Listen as seeds begin to germinate in your heart.

### Benediction and Sending Out

In the beginning, God, your breath gave life to Creation  
Your spirit sweeps over us today. Let us not dismiss it as wind.  
Breathe your spirit into our world and stir us to act.  
Place in our hands mustard seeds to sow.  
Open our hearts, minds and souls to Your presence  
And Your call to us to be co-creators with You.

## **Week Four** ⊕ **Day Two** Hearts that Shed

Shedding is a critical piece of discernment. Yet, it is in our nature to hold on. When we don't let go, it can be difficult to be open to newness. When we don't let go, it is hard to hear God's voice in the clutter of our hearts.... Stretch your arms skyward and look up. Take a deep breath - breathe in clarity, breathe out confusion. Breathe in calmness, breathe out chaos.

### **Prayer of Approach** (#260 Voices United) Verse 2

God Who Gives to Life Its Goodness

### **Praying the Scriptures**

- Read Matthew 13: 31-35 slowly and prayerfully.
- Imagine you are the seed planted deep in the ground, comfortable and happy. Feel yourself teeming with life. Feel yourself pressing hard against the edges of your shell. Imagine how it feels to know you have to let go of this shell in order to grow and become all you can be. Feel the burst of excitement as the shell breaks and you poke your newness out into the dark rich earth. Once outside the shell, how does it feel? Are there feelings of doubt? Was it a mistake to give up the comfort of the safe shell? Slowly push yourself forward through the dirt, upwards, and feel cool waters refreshing you. What is compelling you to move upward? Is it God's voice? What happens when you reach daylight? Can you feel the warm reassurance that all will be well? Do you hear God telling you to keep going; that there

is even more you can do and be? As you grow and see what you have become, reflect on whether it was right or wrong to shed your shell...

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. The seed must come out from and leave behind its protective cover, in order to grow into a new state. When has growth been hindered in your life by a reluctance to shed, or let go?
2. When have you shed, or laid aside, a strongly held opinion and belief, and been open and trusting in God? How did that turn out?
3. As you consider this week's discernment focus, what can be allowed to die in order to make way for new birth?

Release what needs to be shed, come to Holy intelligence - what I really want is what God wants for me. With joy and freedom, move forward.

### **Benediction and Sending Out**

You will go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and hills  
will burst into song before you,  
and all the trees of the field  
will clap their hands.

(Isaiah 55: 12)

## **Week Four** ⊕ **Day Three** Hearts that Root

We root our yearning or issue in scripture, story, music and art. We look to our beginnings to put context around our issue. We remember certain occasions, people and settings that inform this story and we seek to “root” our present issue in our history, our experiences and our memories.

**Prayer of Approach** (# 248 Voices United) Verses 4&5  
When Long Before Time

### **Praying the Scriptures**

- Read Matthew 13: 31-35 slowly and prayerfully, allowing the words to wash over you.
- What image comes to your mind? Sketch or doodle it with a pencil. Give yourself freedom or permission to be creative! It doesn't need to be perfect!
- Read the passage again.
- Look at your drawing. Does it still feel right? What would you change? Enhance your drawing, or redraw it, or add colour.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Look again at your sketch. Are there other places in your journey where this image or these colours have been present and meaningful?  
Were there life lessons learned then that need to be remembered?
2. When have you felt like the mustard seed? When have you felt like the great tree? When have you felt like the yeast that spreads through the dough? What do these images lead you to understand about your role in Creation?

“A forest is an acorn.”  
*(Proverb of unknown origin)*

As you go through your day, consider the forests, or the phenomenal growth that has taken place in order to surround you with the blessings that fill your life. What seeds provided the roots for the growth?

### Benediction and Sending Out

Rooted in God's love,  
Allow your roots to stretch deeply into the soil  
And allow your branches to reach to the sky.  
Know the Christian story so you can  
Move forward,  
with all you need to live,  
into God's calling for your life.  
Amen.

## Week Four ⊕ Day Four

# Hearts that Wildly Design

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Remember that question? Remember your answer? Remember when you could dream without limits? Remember when you dreamed big and thought you could be and do anything you imagined?

Can you still do that? Now apply that limitless imagination to the incredible potential for Creation. How could you be a part of bringing that potential to fruition? Where could you spread tiny seeds that could sprout and grow into trees? How could you sprinkle yeast into dough, waiting to become bread? What’s stopping you from doing that today? All your dreams may not come true, but isn’t it better to shoot for the moon and miss, than aim for the manure pile and hit it?

**Prayer of Approach** (#703 Voices United) Verses 1 & 2  
In the Bulb There is a Flower

### **Praying the Scriptures**

- Matthew 13: 31-35. Don’t read it, remember the story, and tell it to yourself in your own words.
- Reflect on what the mustard seed accomplished – and what you can do when you believe anything is possible.
- Respond to your creative instincts now! Write a poem or journal your reflections; paint or draw; sing; dance. Express in some way your potential, your dream, the Creation within you.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that turns into the “largest of garden plants”. This is a simple word picture of the wild design that happens naturally in Creation, where miraculous changes can occur over time. Is there another animal or plant that you find miraculous? Think of how its life begins, the changes that it faces, and what it can become.
2. What are the wild turns that have taken you from where you began (as a small seed of yourself) to where you are now? How might God have been with you in the changes that you experienced? Can you dream wildly about all the great things that may still unfold for you?
3. In this week’s focus for discernment, what outrageous, amazing possibilities exist for co-creating with God a realm of infinitely better opportunity and challenge?

“Today is a day for celebration. Today is a day to be joyful. It is a day to accomplish great things. It is a day to learn, to love, and to live the richness that is your life.” (Author unknown)  
Watch for wild designs!

**Benediction and Sending Out** Voices United # 703 verse 3  
In the Bulb There is a Flower

## Week Four ⊕ Day Five

### Hearts that Vision

Wild designs and dreams are the stuff of burning passion. And from the Refiner's fire comes something else – the bright warm glowing of coal. While the open flame is too hot to handle, we can draw very near the glowing coals. We can feel their energy and heat. We can use that energy to sustain ourselves (and to cook a few marshmallows!) To move from “burning” wild designs to “glowing” vision, we need not only the Refiner's fire, but God's touch.

#### **Prayer of Approach** (# 209 VU)

Fire of God, undying flame,  
Spirit who in splendour came,  
let your heat my soul refine,  
till it glows with love divine.

Breath of God, that swept in power  
in the pentecostal hour,  
holy breath, be now in me  
source of vital energy.

Love of God, your grace profound  
knows not either age or bound:  
come, my heart's own guest to be,  
dwell for evermore in me.

#### **Praying the Scriptures**

- Read Matthew 13: 33: He told them another parable: *“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”*
- Use your imagination to reflect on the yeast and flour becoming bread. What senses are called into play by these elements: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste? Feel deep within you the Spirit moving and swelling.
- Make bread or slowly enjoy a slice of bread while contemplating this parable!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Recall the sense of warmth, comfort and satisfaction that goes along with a beautiful and delicious freshly baked loaf of bread. Use this image as a touchstone to help you discern which of the many possibilities dreamed of yesterday could produce the best yield.
2. The metaphor Jesus uses is an example of his common touch. Seek the common touch now in the issue or yearning followed this week. Looking back over the “wild designs” fashioned yesterday, what stands out?  
Focus on that element which stands out, and seek in it the common, the possible, and the simple response. Jot it down on paper as a single word or phrase.
3. Envision now how “in our humble, listening Spirit, we [or you] would live to God’s delight.”

“As geese fly in flocks  
and seeds become trees,  
so we grow in  
communities of faith  
continually becoming  
what God already sees.”  
*(Proverb)*

Let your glowing visions  
take flight!

### **Benediction and Sending Out**

May our lives reflect the radiance of God’s new and glorious dawn.

## **Week Four** ⊕ **Day Six** Hearts that Wait and Rest

Throughout this week of discernment, God has been readying our hearts to hear God's voice. Today we wait and listen. This is a time to hold our week's work of discernment as we prepare to act on what we have heard.

Spend the day being gentle with yourself, waiting upon God. When your thoughts start to grapple with the choices, try to let go of them. You may wish to use the following prayer to assist you: "Your will (or yearning), God: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

### **For Reflection:**

Let us then labour for an inward stillness,  
An inward stillness and an inward healing;  
That perfect silence where the lips and the heart  
Are still, and we no longer entertain  
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,  
But God alone speaks in us, and we wait  
In singleness of heart, that we may know God's will,  
and in the silence of our spirits,  
That we may do God's will, and do that only."  
~Longfellow

### **Closing at the end of the Week:**

How has the journey in this week of prayer, and the passage from Matthew, helped you in the issue which has been on your mind? Has God nudged you toward a place where you can now complete this prayer?

"For such a time as this,  
God, you call me to..."

### **Blessing:**

"May the grace of God attend me, and the love of God surround me, and the Holy Spirit keep me, now and forever. Amen.

