

Title: Proposal to Celebrate “Season of Creation”

Originating Body: Church in Action Committee of Maritime Conference

Maritime Conference Action: Transmit with concurrence and note as appended

Financial Implications: Costs should not be significant. Resources could be sold at cost

Staffing Implications: N/A

Proposal:

That the 40th General Council (2009):

1. Designate an annual “Season of Creation” to be observed in the Lectionary / Liturgical Year beginning the Sunday after Labour Day and including the Sunday of Thanksgiving.
2. Direct the General Secretary, General Council to gather, disseminate and augment as needed, worship, Christian education, eco-justice / social action, liturgical and other resources from the Canadian context and encourage congregations to make use of these and other educational resources available for use in the Season of Creation.

Background

“The Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

(Psalm 24)

We believe that life and creation are gifts from God that elicit our respect, awe and reverence; that we are one Earth community, one human family and share one destiny; that we recognize God’s call to live in harmony with this total community and to care for it that all may benefit equitably now and in the future; and

The United Church of Canada has developed the policy statement, One Earth Community based on 12 ethical principles including social and economic justice and personal, corporate and governance responsibilities in environment and development issues; and has added to its creed, “called...to live with respect in creation”; and

The life of the Earth community is threatened with destruction - pollution of air, land and water, unprecedented loss of species, and global warming - related to human impact on the earth; and we are at a major turning point at which we can either continue along the path of self-destruction, or turn toward restoration and renewal; and

It is urgent for us to reconnect with the deep roots of our faith. There is growing concern in Christian communities about the ecological crisis, the way human beings are treating God’s Earth, and a growing awareness that an effective way to focus these concerns is through worship

- concentrating our worship on God's creation and our relationship with it including rituals that remind people of the importance and ethic of ecological care and that lead them to act differently in order to practice their faith; and

Several major Christian denominations in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Europe have designated and include a "Season of Creation" in the liturgical year – some for 4 Sundays of September culminating with October 1st (St. Francis of Assisi Day) and some for 8 weeks between October 1st and Advent – which has become a meaningful time of worship and inspiration for action for all ages; and

“Church leaders in the United Kingdom have called upon Christians to use the period from September 1 until October 4 as an opportunity to put the environment at the heart of their worship. The 'Time For God's Creation' initiative, which would run annually, follows a resolution made at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007, which was attended by representatives of Europe's Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches, 'that the period be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change.'”

In the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent and Easter we celebrate the life of Christ. In the season of Pentecost we celebrate the Holy Spirit. Now, in the Season of Creation, we have an opportunity to celebrate God, the Creator. For four Sundays in September we can join with others in celebrating with Christ the wonders of creation. In the liturgy, we follow the lead of the psalm writers and celebrate with creation — with the forests, the rivers and the fields, which praise the Creator in their own way. Bible readings focus especially on the story of Earth, which complements the story of God and the story of humanity in the Scriptures. We commit ourselves to a ministry of healing Earth, with Christ and creation as our partners.

NOTE: from the annual meeting of the Maritime Conference:

The Maritime Conference committed itself to marking a Season of Creation and recognizes the availability of a large number of resources already available. These include, but are not limited to the following: e.g.: from an Australian and U. S. contexts for 2006, 2007, and 2008 for Lectionary Year A, B and C) (www.seasonofcreation.com.)

It was also noted that within the reformed tradition we do not prescribe seasons for pastoral charges. It was noted though, that the Service Book, 1969 and 1976 contained worship material under Season of Creation headings.