

# Creationist 2.0

## *Creating is Receiving*

08 January 2023

### Call to Worship – Psalm 29

God thunders across the waters,  
Brilliant, his voice and his face, streaming brightness—  
God, across the flood waters.

**God's thunder tympanic,**

**God's thunder symphonic.**

**God topples the northern cedars.**

The mountain ranges skip like spring colts,  
The high ridges jump like wild kid goats.

**God's thunder spits fire.**

**God thunders, the wilderness quakes;**

He makes the desert of Kadesh shake.

God's thunder sets the oak trees dancing

A wild dance, whirling; the pelting rain strips their branches.

**We fall to our knees—we call out, "Glory!"**

God makes his people strong.

**God gives his people peace.**

### Beneath the Southern Cross

*Rev Catherine Burton and Rev Malcolm Gordon.*

From the ends of the earth

We will sing; God is here, the kingdom is near

In the Land of the Long White Cloud

Christ to dwell, Immanuel

From north and south, from east and west

Beneath the Southern Cross we rest

Found by One who came for all

In this tale of spacious love we're born

This whenua on which we stand

This holy ground made by God's hand

Marred and scarred yet marked by grace

Held and healed in Christ we find our place

God of nations, at thy feet  
In the bonds of love we meet  
Strangers once, now called as one  
Aotearoa, wake to greet this love

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of the grass and the flowers and the bees  
Ants and spiders, slugs and snails  
Skinks and worms and beetles and birds  
There is a world of wonder passing under our feet, through the trees, around  
the rocks. You see it all, God.  
Bumblebees bumping into flowers with their ungainly bodies  
Rodents sneaking through the dark, searching for food.  
So much life happens without us ever realising what is going on.  
Thank you for the astonishing variety of that life  
Thank you that we get to enjoy it, to marvel at it, to dwell amongst it  
Forgive us for those many times we ignore this life around us,  
Or worse, those times we curse it, wishing it would leave us alone in our  
carefully curated worlds.  
Teach us to see the beauty you have placed around us  
Even in those pesky spider webs and annoyingly buzzing flies  
Teach us to see it all as you see it and be thankful for everything around us.  
We bring our private confessions to the Lord...  
God pardons those who humbly repent and truly believe the gospel.  
Since Jesus died for us, we have peace with God,  
to whom be praise and honour for ever. Amen.

### The Peace

#### Reading                      Matthew 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.  
<sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and  
do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is  
proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And  
when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly  
the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like  
a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son,  
the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

## Reading

Acts 10:34, 44-48

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality,

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup> for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

## Reflection

Giving but no receiving drama. Need wrapped sweets, Bluetooth headphones.

Imagine a world where everyone refused every gift. What would it be like? There would be no gifts under the Christmas tree. Birthdays would be a little drab. Florists would go out of business, and gift shops, obviously. The more I thought about it, the weirder it seemed. A lot of what I like to do is built around giving and if no-one ever received my gifts it would be very hard to reimagine how to do things.

Of course, we could go in a slightly different direction and this time people receive their gifts, but they always complain about them. I don't like oranges, why would I want a citrus tree. I hate this shade of blue, it makes my skin look pale. Tickets to the opera? Yuk! What would it feel like if nothing you gave was ever quite right? I've read of people like that, but thankfully I have never met any. Sometimes you get a gift and it's something you don't like or you will never use but you gracefully accept it and it goes in the regifting pile. Best to make a note of who it was from lest you gift it back to them next year.

So, here's my point. A gift is only ever a gift if it is received. And receiving a gift with poor grace is nearly as bad as not receiving it at all. The receiver is an essential part of the giving chain. Perhaps think about it this way. Imagine Jesus going down to be baptised by John. He goes into the water, they do their thing and he comes up out of the water. God says, “This is my Son, I'm pleased with him,” and the Holy Spirit comes down at which point Jesus says, “No thanks, I'm good, I'm God's Son, I don't need the Holy Spirit.” There are so many levels of weird in that scenario that I doubt any of us can wrap our heads around it.

It's the same with the believers in Cornelius' house. Imagine them standing listening to Peter and the Holy Spirit comes and they all look around and say, 'No thanks, I'm good.' Or imagine the disciples sitting around on the day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit comes and they all look at each other speaking in different languages and say, 'No thanks, I'm good.'

If you're anything like me it's hard to imagine. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to each of us. Turning her down just doesn't seem like the right thing, the smart thing, the best thing to do. Yet, I suspect we do it on a regular basis. I don't want to go casting undeserved nasturtiums here so I will talk about me and you can feel free to apply it to yourself or not as you like. Here are some of the instances of how I think I turn down the Holy Spirit on a regular basis.

When I get a sense that I should visit or call someone and ignore it or put it off, only to find that person would have very much valued a little of my time right then. When I rush into my day without pausing to listen for what the Spirit might have to say to me about how I might best spend my day. When I speak without listening first. When I pray a prayer without thinking about who I am praying to. When I get a sense of God wanting to say something to someone through me and choose not to speak. When I do what I like rather than what the Holy Spirit would like me to do. I'm sure you get my drift here.

There is a bit of a movement around the world that I don't have a lot of time for, but it has some points that are worth considering. You may have heard of the mindfulness movement. Personally, I think a lot of it is overblown silliness, but there is a strong case for the idea that pausing to be aware of ourselves and aware of where and how we are has value. I would like to add pausing to be aware of the Holy Spirit. I think that when we pause to be aware, drawing together what is happening in our hearts, what is happening in our world and what is happening in the Spirit we begin to receive something special.

It's more than simply having some good ideas or even seeing something from a new perspective. We begin to find a way to live in the world that is in tune with God, with ourselves and with everything around us. I don't mean that we suddenly find everything works out as we think it should. Life doesn't suddenly become easy. We don't suddenly become expert in the ways of the world or of what God is doing. We do begin to discover a rhythm that lets us walk in time with all of life. I'm going to go out on a limb here and suggest that there aren't very many of us who have worked out how to do this. I know I only manage it very occasionally, and then only for a little while.

The point I want to make is that for any of this to happen we need to learn to receive from God. To receive the Holy Spirit. To receive the soft comfort of God's love and mercy. To receive God's gentle discipline when we make a mess of things. To receive God's love, in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. In the end, we can only share the goodness of God's love if we have received it ourselves.

When God created Adam and Eve, and through them the rest of humanity it was so they could receive God's love and then share it with the world they lived in. When God created you and me, we were created to receive God's love and then share it with the world we live in. We do that best when we receive that creative act of love with grace, then share that love in creative acts of our own.

### We Pray

Giving God. How often have we grieved your heart by refusing to receive the gift of your love, the gift of your Holy Spirit, the gift of life well lived in your world. We are so often ungrateful for the gifts you long to shower on us. Teach us to be graceful receivers and willing sharers of what we have received so that everything about our world can be made more by our being in it. Through Jesus, who gave himself that we might receive new life, we pray. Amen.

### Thank you for every new good morning

*Martin Gotthard Schneider*

Thank you for every new good morning

Thank you for every fresh new day

Thank you that I may cast my burdens

Wholly on to you

Thank you for every friend I have, Lord

Thank you for everyone I know

Thank you when I can feel forgiveness

To my greatest foe

Thank you for leisure and employment

Thank you for every heartfelt joy

Thank you for all that makes me happy

And for melody

Thank you for grace to know your gospel  
Thank you for all your Spirit's power  
Thank you for your unfailing love  
Which reaches far and near

Thank you for full and free salvation  
Thank for grace to hold it fast  
Thank you, O Lord, I want to thank you  
That I'm free to thank

## Offering

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/>

God of the water that cleans us, the land that feeds us, and the air that allows us to breathe your Spirit in and out of us; you claim us in our baptism, but too few of us even remember our own baptism. And if we remember (or imagine) our baptism, we too rarely grasp its meaning and power. As we present our tithes and offerings in worship and witness Christ's baptism once again, may we remember that in water we were, like Christ, commissioned to go: to teach, preach, heal, and even to take up a cross. In Christ, we pray. Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves

For the people of Ukraine and even parts of Russia, suffering through a deadly winter under the actions of tyrants and fools, we bring our prayers

As we look to you, the author and perfecter of our faith

**May our words be reflected in our actions**

For those living in New Zealand who struggle to make ends meet every day, frowned on by those more privileged, excluded by lack of resources, we bring our prayers

As we look to you, the author and perfecter of our faith

**May our words be reflected in our actions**

For those we know and love who have yet to receive the joy of a relationship with Jesus, we bring our prayers

As we look to you, the author and perfecter of our faith

**May our words be reflected in our actions**

For ourselves with all our hopes and fears, we bring our prayers

All these things we pray through Jesus who taught us to pray...

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who is in heaven, holy is your name  
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.  
Amen

## O what a gift

*Pat Uhl Howard*

O what a gift, what a wonderful gift;  
Who can tell the wonders of the Lord?  
Let us open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts;  
It is Christ the Lord, it is He!

In the stillness of the night,  
When the world was asleep,  
The Lord made His message known.  
It was then that His word came down from on high,  
From the Father's royal throne;  
Christ our Lord and our King!

He came to his people, the chosen race,  
That his Father's will would be known;  
Lion of Judah, Light of the World,  
Our Redeemer came to his own:  
Christ our Lord and our King!

Now look around you and open your eyes;  
Remember the Spirit is here.  
Here within his Church, his people are one.  
Look, the Lord is near:  
Christ our Lord and our King!

## Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Love of God,  
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.

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