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Genesis 1:1-2:4a Spoken into Creation
Greenland Hills United Methodist Church

Genesis 1:1-2:4a Revised Standard Version

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In June we will be looking at some stories from Genesis as we think about God's creative connection that brings harmony out of chaos. This time of quarantine has been an opportunity for us to think about how we want to be instead of simply returning to the old normal. It has given us an opportunity to think about how we spend our time and if that matches our priorities. It has given us a chance to step back and to think about how we want to be in this one precious gift of life that we have been given.

Last week at Pentecost, we celebrated that God used God's own creative spirit to bring life and power into the new church. This month we are going to look all the way back to Genesis to see the ways that God's creative power has called people to follow and serve. From creation until today God works creatively to redeem all of humanity. God wants to reconnect what is divided. God's vision of our world is one where people are connected to one another and to God. That vision will be realized, even if God has to use some very creative methods to do so.

So, today we back up to the beginning. Let's go to the beginning of order, the beginning of ordered time and the beginning of human-divine partnership. This creation story, and there is another creation story in the next chapter of Genesis, they both highlight the creative power of our holy God. We find that just as in Pentecost last week, it is through speech that God creates. God's voice creates and invites us to create as well.

Words have power. In the beginning when God created, the Spirit of God blows over the watery space calling forth life. God's voice orders the heavens and the earth and creates everything. God's voice is in relationship with what is becoming, "Let there be," "Let us make." God says human beings are created in our, meaning God's, image. That cosmic we includes Spirit and Word and God and but also every being in heaven and soon to be on the earth. God's words are relational. God is in partnership with the creation and God is not the only one with creative power. We have creative power too.

It is beautiful poetry, and a beautiful dance between us and God. Science tells us the how and the Bible tells us the why. It is a story about God bringing harmony out of chaos. It is a story that had been around for generations, shared around the fire. Telling the story of how God creates harmony out of chaos felt necessary to our spiritual ancestors. There are times in our history when chaos seems to reign supreme. Times when it feels like there is so much unspeaking suffering and death. Times when we struggle to find hope. It is during these turbulent times that we need to story of creation to remind us that God brings harmony out of chaos.

Today is Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost, the Sunday when we celebrate that relationships are at God's very core as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, the Trinity. We heard over and over in Genesis 1 that God said "it was good." Monday night the news reports had protestors cornered on the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge and it seemed impossibly hopeless. I prayed and then I remembered how just a few hours earlier I had seen the most beautiful sunset. It was good. Did you notice that God didn't say, and humans, they are the pinnacle, they are the best? God called it all good. The creation story in Genesis 1 shows that from the tiniest insect to solar systems beyond our imagining there isn't one category of humanity that is better than all the rest. God calls it all good.

God offers three blessings in Genesis 1: to the creatures of the air and water – so all animal creatures; to humanity; and to the sabbath day which is the first day without chaos, the first day of harmony. Humans are one receiver of the divine blessing, but not the only one. The story of creation and God's call for us to care for creation is not just about us. Does the way that we live in the world show that God's blessing is on all and not just on us?

Like you, I have been doing lots of listening and reading this week. Jasper Peters is a Methodist pastor in Denver and he shared about the fallacy of racial reconciliation. He said we can't return to an ideal where black people and white people are one because there has never been that time. There has never been a moment when we were all holds hands singing Kumbaya. We have to do the work of creating peace. I am so grateful for all of the people committing themselves to anti-racism but this isn't a quick fix. Systemic change is long and hard and complex. We want to see the establishment of a just world where racial inequalities have been

abolished. We are all praying and we want to know how we can make a difference, as individuals but also as a church. Will you pray with me that God will help us to be creative about what we can do as the family of faith of Greenland Hills UMC?

The creation story makes us think of our precious world and we know that poor people suffer most from famine, drought and disease. We have to confront the sin of racism, white supremacy, and police brutality in real and tangible ways. We also have to work to seek answers to inequities that lead to hunger, substandard housing, and lack of health care.

We have to listen to the voices of so many who are hurting and grieving. We have to acknowledge our privilege, take responsibility for its past and the impact that privilege has on the present. We have to commit to together create a future steeped in justice. We all want healing in America. Healing happens with repentance, when we acknowledge and have remorse for the wrongs that have been done. We have to change our thinking and change our heart, and then our behavior will change.

God charges us to be in a relationship with one another just as God is in relationship with God's self and in relationship with us. We are made for life together. We are called to be a community that gets to work to support the well-being of our neighbor, to advocate, to seek justice, and to love mercy. We are called to do our own work and work for the sake of one another because we are not our own. We belong to each other and to God.

God's perception of creation is good. Maybe that is what God's Spirit gives us, the perception to see God's goodness in the world. When life is chaos and less than ideal, I can't see the goodness of God by myself. I need God's Spirit to show me. Hope is always hardest to find when you need it the most. There is so much chaos right now. The economy, the coronavirus, protests, police violence, and people rioting. God in creation brings harmony out of chaos and that is where we find hope. In the midst of this incredible chaos, help me see goodness, God.

This creation story is about God's creative activity. God is the center of this story, not us. God shows us that dominion looks like subduing chaos and creating harmony so that all creatures have a place and all creatures have a home. It is the eternal human struggle to do right by others and to do right by the earth, to act and live in love. Love is God's other name and that love invites us to follow. Imagine how our world could be different if we reflected even a tiny fraction of that love for all of God's creation. May it be so, Amen.