

## “Creation’s Artistry”

Rev. David Gregory

June 20, 2021

Pentecost 5



*Bee Bliss*

Wendy Andrews

### Readings

Excerpts from *The Wisdom of Solomon 6-8*  
as quoted in *Celtic Treasure* by John Philip Newell

Wisdom is radiant like the whiteness of the moon  
and more beautiful than the glistening stars.  
She is found by those who seek her  
and makes herself known to those who long for her.  
She can be found sitting at the gateways of life  
in every moment and on every path.  
She is a breath of the power of God and a pure flow of heaven’s glory.  
She is a reflection of eternal light and an image of God’s goodness.  
Wisdom was in the beginning with God.  
She is creation’s artist and the fashioner of everything that exists.

### “Our True Heritage”

a poem from the book *Call Me By My True Names: The Collected Poetry of Thich Nhat Hanh*

The cosmos is filled with precious gems.  
I want to offer a handful of them to you this morning.  
Each moment you are alive is a gem,  
shining through and containing earth and sky,  
water and clouds.

It needs you to breathe gently  
for the miracles to be displayed.  
Suddenly you hear the birds singing,  
the pines chanting,  
see the flowers blooming,  
the blue sky,  
the white clouds,  
the smile and the marvelous look  
of your beloved.

You, the richest person on Earth,  
who have been going around begging for a living,  
stop being the destitute child.  
Come back and claim your heritage.  
We should enjoy our happiness  
and offer it to everyone.  
Cherish this very moment.  
Let go of the stream of distress  
and embrace life fully in your arms.

What a wonderful and happy day this is. It is a remarkable day of convergence and alignment; a nexus of many important observances. This weekend we celebrate the summer solstice, the day of longest light. Our readings today have pointed us to the radiance of this moment, the sun shining at its highest spot in the sky as if to say, “You made it!” Behind us is a difficult and tragic year, but we’re here! Together we say AMEN! We are tempered by our wounds and losses, grieving the times, the experiences, and the people we have lost, but we are present together physically and virtually, nonetheless.

We are ecclesia, a church, a congregation, a community, a body with many members—now from coast to coast—where we can weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice, lift up the downcast, tend the sick, feed the hungry, and stand up for all who are oppressed that they may find justice, and that this justice will bring peace to all.

Today is also Father’s Day, a time to celebrate the dads who are with us and remember the ones who are not. It can be a tricky celebration, depending on how our fathers have been with us or not, how our relationships were or weren’t, but we recognize those who have given us life, acknowledging them in light and shadow, celebrating all of the gifts that have been given. And to all the dads, granddads, and stepdads among us, and to all the people who have been like dads to us, together we say HAPPY FATHER’S DAY!

We are also in the midst of our annual Pride celebration, and though once again there is no parade, we do remember and celebrate the sacrifices of many LGBTQ activists, who along with family, friends, and allies of many generations devoted themselves to the cause of justice. Their activism changed my life, and it allowed Tripp and me to become legally married in the state of New York seven years ago tomorrow, a marriage that one year later would be recognized in all fifty states. So this time of year always deepens our gratitude for the great strides we’ve taken as a culture, while at the same time we remind ourselves of the huge work that is yet to be done. But together we say LOVE IS LOVE!

Also today we celebrate our newest national holiday, Juneteenth National Independence Day, also known as Jubilee Day, Black Independence Day, or Emancipation Day, commemorating June 19, 1865, the day emancipation became enforced in Texas, the last state to practice the institutional enslavement of African Americans. This commemoration has been going on in some form every year since that time, but this year it’s different, with our president signing the new holiday into law just a couple of days ago. Together we say, HALLELUJAH!

If ALL of this were not enough, this will be a day we will always remember as the first Sunday we regathered in our sanctuary, in our first hybrid service, welcoming you physically and virtually to this room in our first demonstration of a new CCC, a gathering of changed people into a changed church. Not only have we changed as people, but our spaces have been refurbished, and they are beautiful. To Tina and Kat who worked for a very long time on this transformation; to Barbara and Jolyn, and all of our Governing Board and to all who gave of themselves and of their treasure to make this happen, together we say THANK YOU!!! and YIPPEE!!!

The last time we gathered in this room was 468 days ago. It was March 8, 2020. I had turned 63 the day before, and Frank Valone demonstrated the proper way to wash our hands while you sang “Happy Birthday” to me—twice—which we all learned takes as long to do as it does to properly wash our hands.

In the last 468 days we have lost a number of longtime members of our congregation, including Bob Riboli, Stephanie Gray, Melba Palmer, and most recently Tom Luther. We send our love for them into the brightness of this longest light, remembering them with fondness and love, with gratitude for the unique gifts that each of them offered in this place. Our lives are infinitely richer for them having been here, living the questions with us hand in hand. In their memory we pause in silence.

And now we stand on this great mountain of grace, made of all that has come before us, and with the love of all who have transitioned from us, and we turn humbly to the present moment to say, *What now?* It is not unlike that very Pentecostal moment, when the first-century disciples finally got together in a room and waited—waited until there came the sound of a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues like fire, life-giving, life-altering fire, that changed every last corner of their lives, empowering them to actually do the things they had been taught. It was their initiation into the sea of love, in which everyone would treat everyone else the way they wished to be treated, and the realm of heaven was not only near, it was in fact here! In fact today, it's here! And though there is much to be thought about, planned for, and strategized, and though we do not yet know exactly what we're going to be in this new world, whatever it is, there is a wisdom available to us that is radiant like the moon, glistening like the stars, bright like the summer sun. Together we are going to do great things, because we can.

All of you should know that the Governing Board of this church, along with the minister, the staff, and the creative team, have made it our practice to first and foremost be seekers of wisdom. We used to think we knew what to do next, that our vision for this church was a matter of making a plan and sticking to it. Well, guess what. God has a sense of humor. Jesus said of the temple that not one stone would remain upon another, and it eventually literally became true. He might well have meant, "Your systems are going to be upended; the fallow ground is going to be plowed up to receive some new kinds of seed; some things are going to happen that you never planned for. Get used to that."

God isn't who we thought God was. Oh, we know all about Elohim or Jehovah, but God is also Sophia, wisdom, who is found "sitting at the gateways of life in every moment and on every path." According to Solomon, "she is creation's artist and the fashioner of everything that exists." And as creation's artist, she has a new palette for Community Congregational Church.

In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, the cosmos needs us to "breathe gently for the miracles to be displayed." We are called to "stop being the destitute child and to claim our heritage." Today, in this very room and on Zoom, we can "enjoy our happiness and offer it to everyone." We can "let go of the stream of distress and embrace life fully in [our] arms." We can revel in the arms of our mother Sophia and know that all shall be well. This is our moment. I cannot tell you how good it is to be back.

