

Then God Said  
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**Genesis 1:1-2:4a**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild

animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to 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 wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> 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.' <sup>29</sup> God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup> These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

I mentioned this text just last week, not remembering that it would be today's reading. I said "only God is able to bring life and form from the watery chaos, as God did at the beginning of creation." I said then, too, "Sometimes we're keenly aware that life is uncontrollable; other times we're lulled into thinking we have some measure of control." My hope is that by now, if we have your mailing address, you have received the letter I sent out this week, letting you know that God has loudly been calling me forward into two directions, one into arts ministry and one into community organizing. My last Sunday at First will be July 30, 2017. We are both, this church and myself, living the uncontrollable life.

I had thought I could be content doing all three - being your pastor, living into the arts ministry, and doing the community organizing I've been doing in Illinois. Fifteen years ago I thought the same thing when I was working in corporate during the week and serving

as a youth group advisor on the weekends. By now you might think I'd be familiar with the way God works and works until I can't **not** respond. So it is that, as God called me out of the world of business and into seminary, God is calling me out of the congregation and into something new. I have hopes for what it will look like but I **have** learned that God is at the helm so I'm ready to follow this into whatever it will turn out to be. For now, it looks like working with congregations to guide them through liturgical art projects that are affordable, and accessible to all ages and skill levels.

We, as a church, already knew that we were facing a different future, if not before Jim Pence came in March then certainly after. He knows about this additional variable and is glad to continue in discussion with you about the future. In his recap report he talked about our workshop time together stating, "Responses to [the] questions [of "Who are we, **really**?" "Where are we going, **soon**?" and "Who are our neighbors, **now**?] constitute a kind of 'holy conversation' for congregations seeking to shape their future in response to internal and external circumstances and to their collective understanding of what God is up to in their midst."<sup>1</sup> "What God is up to in our midst" - God is up to something with us both, and my faith reminds me that, whatever it is, God is bringing life and form from the chaos already.

Professor Melinda Quivik, in talking about the creation story we've just read in comparison to other creation stories of the ancient Near East, explains, "YHWH creates with a word, Marduk (a Mesopotamian deity) with a violent rending of the god of chaos."<sup>2</sup> Our God doesn't eliminate chaos to bring forth life but **works with and in** chaos. Quivik continues, reminding us that "The Creator's first pronouncement is that the creation is good. The goodness here is not an aesthetic or ethical proclamation about the nature of light; rather, goodness concerns the use to which it can be put for God's intention."<sup>3</sup> That's the beauty of God - God can put to use darkness and light for God's intention. God puts to use the bits and bobs of our lives for God's intention.

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<sup>1</sup> Walkalong Consulting report from Jim Pence, April 23, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year A, Volume 3*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year A, Volume 3*, p. 30.

And not only does God put our ragged and small offerings to use, through God's Spirit, they are transformed. Look at the ragtag disciples from last week's reading, who had just a short while before been mourning - from them came the blossoming church. In speaking about the reading this Trinity Sunday, Senior Program Director Carole A. Crumley says, "Genesis looks into the heart of darkness and sees something beautiful and hopeful: a creative force, a hovering spirit, and a penetrating light that cannot be overcome."<sup>4</sup> Surely the grieving disciples would have claimed a darkness in their lives but, in that darkness, there was so clearly creativity and the Spirit and light, the light which opens the gospel of John, the light which shines in the darkness, and which the darkness cannot overcome.

The "creative force, a hovering spirit, and a penetrating light"<sup>5</sup> point to that word trinity, that mystery, one of the many mysteries around God which we cannot explain. We cannot know when and how God will work and we cannot know, truly know, the meaning of the mystery that God is one God in three persons. I was first introduced to Agatha Christie in fifth or sixth grade and I fell in love with the whodunnit, the mystery. It was a thrill, and still is, every time I experienced the pleasure of figuring out the answer before the answer was revealed by the author. The mystery of God is not like this. God as trinity is an eternal mystery. In this life there is no "aha" moment of "solving" God. After all, it's not a mistake the hymn goes "Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes..."<sup>6</sup> Yet God is not wholly mystery. We see God in so many ways, best in hindsight but even in the moment, too. Creativity, spirit, light - marks of God among us. Our call, then, on this Trinity Sunday and in the days and weeks to come, is to look for those marks of creativity, spirit, and light, for surely God is putting these days to use. So may it be for you and for me.

Let us pray: Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, show yourself to us, we pray. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year A, Volume 3*, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise, Glory to God*, 8.