

CREATION GROANS

AWAKE

We invite you to take part in this **Loving-Kindness Meditation** as preparation for our devotion, Creation Groans.

There is a school of theology known as eco-theology that stresses the vital relationship we share with the natural world. This insight has origins in all the world's religions. An account of creation in Genesis tells us that *"the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being."* (2:7, NRSV)

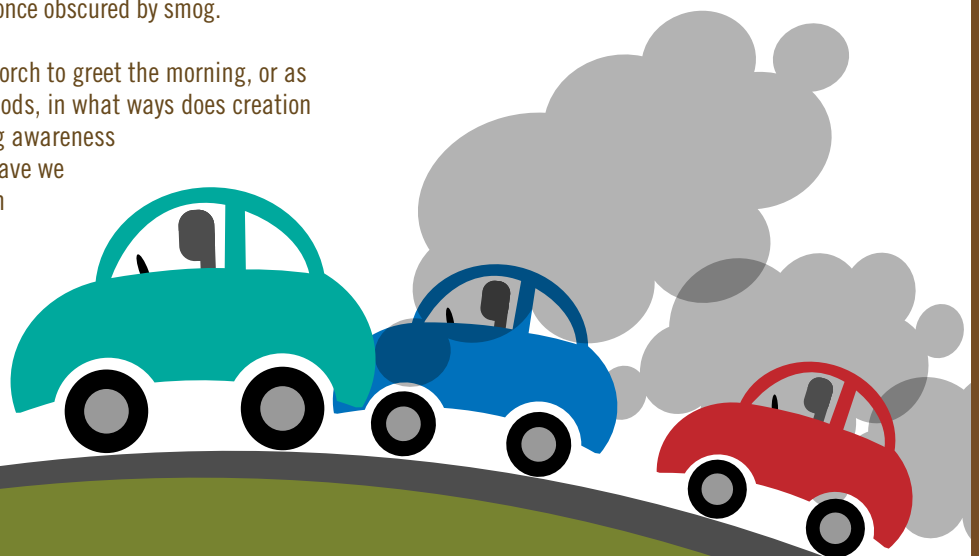
Think of it, when we are born and take our first breath we awake into the world as earth-derived creatures. Creation shares in our joy and our pain, and we have the same capacity to awaken to the joy and pain of nature. The Apostle Paul puts it this way:

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:22-23, NRSV)

AWARE

Because the spread of COVID-19 has increased everyone's sense of uncertainty and apprehension, we're keenly aware of how interconnected we are—to each other and the natural world that offers us sustenance, beauty and comfort. As we relax our pace while sheltering in place, the earth that has been groaning under tons of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide—gases that come from auto and industry emissions—is now breathing a sigh of relief. Skies are clearing over countless cities that were once obscured by smog.

As you step onto your balcony or back porch to greet the morning, or as you take time for a quiet walk in the woods, in what ways does creation communicate to you a gentle but strong awareness of mutual dependence? In what ways have we made creation groan? In what ways can we help creation heal?



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ALIVE

We live in an industrialized world that exploits creation as passive and subject to our will. We got this idea from an inaccurate reading of the first creation story in Genesis that ends by telling humans to “have dominion” over the earth (1:28). And yet the second creation story in Genesis places humans in the garden to till and cultivate it, which means to serve the earth (2:4-8).

In what ways do you sense, in this time of frailty, that we can rebound with wholeness and aliveness in God’s good world by being faithful stewards of creation?

ABIDE

Many guiding visions of the world’s religions came about through natural surroundings and phenomena: Moses was called to liberate the Hebrew children at the burning bush; Jesus began his earthly ministry by spending forty days in the wilderness; Muhammad had a vision at a cave that resulted in the writing of the Koran; The Buddha was enlightened as he sat under the Bodhi tree.

During these stressful times of social distancing, we can draw close to nature and abide in its peace, wisdom and power.

ARISE

Arise and go with these words of scripture that unite creature with creation (Psalm 139:13-15)

*For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.*

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

- Practice the Loving-Kindness meditation daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here

