

Worship Service

B Y R A G A N C O U R T N E Y

Prelude:

“2.73”¹

Ann Gebuhr

Call to Worship:

“Silent Prelude”

In cold, dark empty
Silence
Nothingness slowly evolved into Nothingness.
No time to pass,
Nothing marked the passing of anything.
Nothing measured the cold, the dark, the silence, the emptiness.
Eternity? A mere pillow on which God rested His head.
Chaos? The black velvet that covered His bed.
Then in that vast unknowable void without form,
Before the Foundations of Time,
God shook the covers;
And the Spirit of God moved, hovered, and brooded.
And the Spirit of God said: “Let there be light!”
And there was.
And God saw the light was good.
He named the light Day, and He named Day’s shadow Night.
Day was good.
Night was good.
God is good.

Ragan Courtney

Hymn of Praise:

“Stars and Planets Flung in Orbit”²

Stars and planets flung in orbit, galaxies that whirl through space,
Powers hid within the atom, cells that form an infant’s face:
These, O God, in silence praise you; by your wisdom they are made.

Skies adorned with sunset splendor, silent peaks in calm repose,
Golden fields awaiting harvest, foaming surf and fragrant rose:
Earth, its bounty clothed with beauty, echoes all creation’s praise.

Life in wondrous, wild profusion, seed and fruit, each flower and tree,
Beast and fish and swarming insect, soaring bird, rejoicing, free:
These, your creatures, join in chorus, praising you in wordless song.

Humankind, earth’s deepest mystery, born of dust but touched
by grace,
Torn apart by tongue and color, yet a single, striving race:
We, in whom you trace your image, add our words to nature’s song.

Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr.

Suggested tunes: LAUDA ANIMA or REGENTS SQUARE

*Prayer of Praise.*³

Leader: Alleluia! We give thanks to Yahweh, for you are good.

People: Your love is everlasting!

Leader: We give thanks to you the God of gods.

People: Your love is everlasting!

Leader: You alone perform great marvels.

People: Your love is everlasting!

Leader: Your wisdom made the heavens.

People: Your love is everlasting!

Leader: You set the earth on the waters.

People: Your love is everlasting!

Leader: You made the great lights,

The sun to rule the day

And the moon and stars to govern the night.

People: Your love is everlasting!

Leader: It was you, who created our inmost selves,

And put us in our mother’s womb.

People: For all of these mysteries we thank you;

Leader: For the wonder of self,

People: For the wonder of your works.

All: For your love is everlasting! Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 1:24-28, 31

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beast of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And 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 rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."...And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Hymn of Reflection:

"I Sing the Mighty Power of God"

New Testament Reading: John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Hymn:

“Morning Has Broken”

Prayer of the People:

People: Dear Creator God, we call to you from this beautiful little planet that you extravagantly made. We come from a galaxy that has over 400 thousand, million stars in it. We call from a universe that has as many galaxies as our galaxy has stars. You are so mighty and we are so small. How do we reach your ear with our moaning and crying, or our praise? How can we ever convey to you the love and reverence that we have for you? Your ways are not our ways, but you said that we are made in your image. And you said that you gave us this small planet over which we are to have dominion. We, then, are created to show our dominion over the earth in careful, creative ways.

Lord, we confess that we have not been good stewards of what was entrusted to us. We have squandered the resources of this planet; we have hoarded mere material things; we have built bigger barns; we have filled our bellies until they are too full, yet we allow others to die of malnutrition. Most of the things that you made and called good, we have polluted, perverted, or destroyed. We ask for forgiveness. We beg for mercy, knowing that we are here by your grace. We ask that you open our eyes to what you would have us do and be, as we strive to be more like whom you are, as revealed to us by Jesus, your Son. In his name we pray. Amen.

Choral Offering:

“Glorious in Holiness”⁴

Ragan Courtney and Buryl Red

Sung Response:

“Doxology”

*Sermon**Hymn of Response:*

“The God Who Set the Stars in Space”⁵

The God who set the stars in space and gave the planets birth
created for our dwelling place a green and fruitful earth;
a world with wealth and beauty crowned of sky and sea and land,
where life should flourish and abound beneath its Maker’s hand.

A world of order and delight God gave for us to tend,
to hold as precious in his sight, to nurture and defend;
but yet on ocean, earth and air the marks of sin are seen,
with all that God created fair polluted and unclean.

O God, by whose redeeming grace the lost may be restored,
who stooped to save our fallen race in Christ, creation’s Lord,
through him whose cross is life and peace to cleanse a heart defiled
may human greed and conflict cease and all be reconciled.

Renew the wastes of earth again, redeem, restore, repair;
with us, your children, still maintain your covenant of care.
May we, who move from dust to dust and on your grace depend,
no longer, Lord, betray our trust but prove creation’s friend.

Our God, who set the stars in space and gave the planets birth,
look down from heav’n, your dwelling place,
and heal the wounds of earth;
till pain, decay, and bondage done, when death itself has died,
creation’s songs shall rise as one and God be glorified!

Timothy Dudley-Smith

suggested tune: ELLACOMBE

Benediction:

Pastor: And now, O God, as we leave this place where we have considered your handiwork and have been moved to worship you, go with us to the other part of our world outside these doors. As we go, we take faith, hope, and charity to those who need these gifts.

We go out to be stewards of all that you have entrusted to us. We go out to work for justice so that we may have peace, not the world's peace but your peace. We ask for that peace to rest upon us now. Amen.

NOTES

[†]"2.73" by Ann Gebuhr can be obtained by writing to Dr. Ann Gebuhr, 7502 Fondren Road, Houston, Texas 77074.

² Text © 1989 The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Permission to reproduce this text must be obtained from Hope Publishing Co., 800-323-1049.

³ Adapted from Psalm 136 and 139, The New Jerusalem Bible. Biblical text copyright © 1985 by Doubleday, a division of Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, Random House, Inc.

⁴ © 1990 Lorenz Publishing Co., Dayton, OH 45401. Available (print on demand) by calling 800-444-1144.

⁵ Text © 2000 Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Permission to reproduce this text must be obtained from Hope Publishing Co., 800-323-1049.



RAGAN COURTNEY
is Co-Pastor with his wife, Cynthia Clawson, at Tarrytown Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.