



# ***Praying***

## **The Brentwood Declaration**

In the rapidly secularizing urban centre of Greater Vancouver, Brentwood Presbyterian Church is a community being nourished to flourish in the triune Creator's forgiving and reconciling love in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). As part of our commitment to be ambassadors of that mercy and grace, we aspire to give a clear account of the hope that heals through God's hospitality.

Through 2017, participants in the congregation's missioning composed a declaration that tells the story of God's active presence in and for the creation entrusted to our care. That declaration is the framework for this booklet of 7 prayers composed around the 7 sections of the declaration which is used every Sunday in our worshipping. The prayers were originally written by, Brian Fraser, who has been ministering with us for 11 years now, and have been revised with input from members and participants at Brentwood.

In formatting this booklet, we have left room for your own ponderings and prayers. If there are formulations in the declaration that challenge your understanding of the faith, we'd love to hear from you and engage in a dialogue about detecting and describing the divine Presence's at work in and through us all. Contact us at [brentwoodpcc@gmail.com](mailto:brentwoodpcc@gmail.com).

We hope this praying discipline will nourish you to flourish in the triune Creator's missioning of redeeming the whole of creation. Find out more about how Brentwood is contributing to that at [www.brentwoodpcc.com](http://www.brentwoodpcc.com).

Thank you for participating by praying and pondering in compassionate companionship with us. We trust this discipline, practiced in community with us wherever you may be, is a blessing to all of us and all of our relations.

The image for this page is *Swing into the Sanctuary* by Laura Zerebeski and is the logo for Brentwood. and used with permission. You can find more of her art at [www.laurazee.com](http://www.laurazee.com).

## About the wording you will encounter

In his provocative book on improvisation in the church, *The Innovative Church* (2020), Scott Cormode speaks of the importance of “planting language” (pp.70-72) in nourishing flourishing missional cultures in Christian communities. Much of the phraseology you will find in these prayers originated with me, Brian Fraser. It has been formed and reformed in my conversations with participants in God’s missioning at Brentwood and beyond. If it jars or disturbs you, then I pray you can see your responses as provocations from the triune Creator to consider more deeply and broadly the mental models we have become habituated to in our faith and witness. We may well end up disagreeing for the time being, but let’s do it with mutual respect and a teachable spirit.

The most obvious new languaging is my address to God in each prayer – “dear Family.” I’m still trying to figure out why it resonates so deeply with me. It has to do with being an only adopted child, with the triune mystery of a community that is God, with the nourishment to flourish that happens at the table. I find my permission to play with words in this way in the ancient Hebrew tradition of not naming God at all and in the Protestant traditions of Christianity that emphasize Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit has much to teach us that deepens and expands our appreciation for God’s forgiving and reconciling redemption of the world in Jesus Christ. I hope you will find the same permission in working with these prayers composed around the declaration.



The image for this page is *Preparing for the Meal* by Carolyn McDonald and is used with permission. You can find out more at [www.artavita.com/artists/10313-carolyn-mcdonald](http://www.artavita.com/artists/10313-carolyn-mcdonald).

Here is the version of the Brentwood Declaration currently in use, with added headings that I have used in composing the prayers that follow.

#### **Creation**

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth  
and declared them to be very good.  
God then created humanity, male and female,  
to cultivate blessing throughout the world.*

#### **Rebellion**

*Rejecting the limits of their power,  
our ancestors rebelled against God's vision of goodness.  
By continuing to rebel against God's constraints,  
we compound the pain of toil, tyranny, trauma, and death.*

#### **Reconciling Forgiveness**

*But God never gave up.  
In a definitive act of reconciling forgiveness,  
God became incarnate among us.*

#### **Redemption**

*In the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth,  
God restored the original goodness of creation  
as a commonwealth enjoyed on earth as it is in heaven.  
The Holy Spirit continues to work out the fulfillment of that act.*

#### **Church**

*Through the church universal in which we participate,  
the Holy Spirit nourishes us to flourish as God's friends  
through worship, learning, fellowship, and service.*

#### **Witness**

*By God's grace, in Jesus the Christ, through the Holy Spirit,  
we know what it is to be loved and to love  
amidst all the problems of the world,  
and we are equipped, empowered, and sent  
to sow the seeds of God's peace in all of our circles of influence.*

#### **Hope and Health**

*In the end, God's love will transform the heavens and the earth,  
and bring justice, peace, and joy to every dimension of creation.*

## Monday



As we continue to ponder life in these pandemic times, dear Family, you suggested that we explore the Brentwood Declaration and find phrases there that resonate with your redeeming coherence.

We begin with the story of **creation**.

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth  
and declared them to be very good.*

*God then created humanity, in all our diversity,  
to cultivate blessing throughout the world.*

The phrases that resonate most powerfully  
are “very good” and “all our diversity.”

This is your world, created in your love, for your delight,  
and that is good.

Part of that delight is the diversity of forms and configurations of life  
that you generated through your ways of creating.

In misrepresenting your purpose of blessing,  
revealed most fully in Jesus, your Christ,  
we have denied the goodness of your creation  
and desecrated your gift in our diversity.  
We treat your living earth as a thing to use  
for our controlling consumption.  
We fear your diversity as a threat to our dominance.  
We ignore your initiative and ongoing agency.  
We delude ourselves that we are the masters in control.

Awaken us to the blessings you bestow in your creating  
and the devastations our delusions impose in our destructing.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

## **Your Prayers**

The Monday image, *Cosmos*, is by Shaun Seaman and is used with permission. To see more of Shaun's art, visit [www.rideaulakesstudioandgardentour.com/studio-f-shaun-seaman](http://www.rideaulakesstudioandgardentour.com/studio-f-shaun-seaman).

## Tuesday



We are seeking your coherence, dear Family.  
How, from the formative stories you have entrusted to us,  
can you inspire and instruct us to grow into  
a body of ambassadors that is faithful to you  
in its wisdom and effectiveness?

Today we confront the basic pattern  
of our **rebellion** against that vocation.

*Rejecting the limits of their power,  
our ancestors rebelled against God's vision of goodness.  
By continuing to rebel against God's constraints,  
we compound the pain of toil, tyranny, trauma, and death.*

The story of our rebellion begins in Genesis 3.  
If we assume that we have a divine knowledge of good and evil,  
provided and nourished by eating the fruit of that tree,  
then we will generate death.

It's a pretty stark prediction and it turned out to be true.  
The toil, tyranny, and trauma  
that have flowed from our arrogant appropriation of divinity

have been at the soul of our catastrophic conflicts  
throughout human history.  
Their impact has compounded over the generations.  
We cannot free ourselves from them or repair them on our own.

You have been with us, lamenting, as all this unfolded.

Remind us what you been doing about it.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

## **Your Prayers**

The Tuesday image, *Rainbow by the River*, is by Wendy Fletcher and is used with permission.  
See more of Wendy's art at [www.wendyflecher.com](http://www.wendyflecher.com).

## Wednesday



As we continue this conversation, dear Family,  
being drawn more fully into the coherence  
of your redemption of your creation,  
our attention is drawn again and afresh  
the steadfast love you have for your enterprise  
of **forgiving and reconciling** your world.

Awaken us more deeply to your steadfast determination to save your world.

*But God never gave up, as the Spirit reveals in the Scriptures.  
In a definitive act of reconciling forgiveness,  
God became incarnate among us.*

Through our increasing complicated and convoluted rebellion,  
we have thrown obstacles and raised barriers  
to the kinship of justice, kindness, and humility  
that you desire.



In your wisdom,  
you have chosen a way to restore us  
into the partnership you imagined in the beginning.  
It is the way of the cross.

It makes no sense to us  
when we seek to compose coherence for our lives  
out of the manifold fears  
that arise from the mangled messes we have generated.  
We need to know your ongoing forgiveness.  
We need to know the reconciliation you desire  
in and through your human presences.

Know us in ways that make you known.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

## **Your Prayers**

The Wednesday image, *Peace Prayer*, is by John Stuart and is used with permission. See more of John's art at [www.stushieart.com](http://www.stushieart.com).

## Thursday



In your saving wisdom, dear Family,  
you chose to make yourself known to us  
in a form that both shocked and sanctified us.

The paradoxical particularities of your action  
continues to confront us, confound us, and challenge us.

We need the gift of your humility  
to cultivate in us a teachable spirit  
so we may see your divine Presence ever more clearly  
through the clouded mirror/window  
of our accumulated consciousness.

Provoke us to imagine more fully the scope of your **redemption**.

*In the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth,  
God restored the original goodness of creation  
as a commonwealth enjoyed on earth as it is in heaven.  
The Holy Spirit continues to work out the fulfillment of that act.*

It's not in a single event,  
or in a constricted image,  
or in a clever formulation of ideas or rules,  
that we know you.

It's by being drawn back into alignment with your creating,  
back into resonance with your music making,  
back into delight in your kinship.

You have already opened up that possibility for us.  
Just how you did that is a mystery.  
That you did that is our reality.

Deepen our appreciation and appropriation of your commonwealth.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

## **Your Prayers**

The Thursday image, *The Risen Lord*, is by He Qi and is used with permission. See more of He Qi's art at [www.heqiart.com](http://www.heqiart.com).

## Friday



As you patiently and persistently, dear Family, incorporate us into your work of redeeming your creation, you urgently encourage us to participate in that missioning and take responsibility for the contributions to it that you have equipped us to compose.

Within the matrix of your creation, you scatter and cultivate little garden patches that we call churches – collectively, the church.

You have instructed us in how to participate in and contribute to your gardening, but left us lots of space to improvise with the basic steps to adapt to the climate and soil conditions in the places where you have sent us.

In and through the **church**, you cultivate a communal compassion that is embodied and enhanced through our life together.

*Through the church universal in which we participate,  
the Holy Spirit nourishes us to flourish as God's friends  
through worship, learning, fellowship, and service.*

In that bewildering and disturbing diversity,  
too often I have allowed my perceptions  
of others misrepresenting you to lead to othering and rejecting.  
Cure me of that sad madness!

Awaken me to what is good, and acceptable, and true  
in their ambassadorship for your message.  
Bring us into your divine dialogue  
in which we compose your future together as your friends.

Continue to surprise us with your formulations of your faith.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

## **Your Prayers**

The Friday image, *Hospitality, Hope, and Healing*, is by Kayden Gorden, one of our members and a gifted jazz trumpeter. One of the groups he plays with, led by one of our music directors, Ben MacRae, is Grand Slam. Find out more about them at [www.grandslamjazzband.com](http://www.grandslamjazzband.com).

## Saturday



What is it that frees us, dear Family,  
to consider and choose how we respond  
to your forgiving and reconciling love  
that has reached out and embraced us  
to grow into our ambassadorship as your body  
on earth as in heaven?

What enables us to **witness** to your reality?

You are teaching us how to show up  
as friends of your creation,  
as sowers of the seeds of your mercy and grace,  
as midwives of your future,  
as a sampling of your justice, kindness, and humility.

*By God's grace, in Jesus the Christ, through the Holy Spirit,  
we know what it is to be loved and to love  
amidst all the problems of the world,  
and we are equipped, empowered, and sent  
to sow the seeds of God's peace in all of our circles of influence.*

There is a mysterious mending that goes on  
in the relationships that you generate among us.  
You have chosen, to our consternation and horror,  
to entrust much of that hope and healing  
to your earthen vessels that we designate as humans.  
You have not entrusted this to just some of us,  
but to all of us as stewards of the goodness of your creation.  
When we face the ravages of a pandemic, for example,  
we show up as humans caring for other humans.

Cultivate among us your seeds of your faith, hope, and love.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

### **Your Prayers**

The Saturday image, *Jazzthink*, is by Colin Righton and is used with permission. For more of his art, visit [www.colinrighton.com](http://www.colinrighton.com).

## Sunday



You have revealed to us, dear Family,  
over and over again,  
that your vision for our missioning  
is a kinship/commonwealth.

Our **hope** and our **health** are generated by your hospitality.

*In the end, God's love will transform the heavens and the earth,  
and bring justice, peace, and joy to every dimension of creation.*

So many brothers and sisters in Christ,  
especially in the last two centuries,  
have pictured the final realization of your desires  
as a horrific final judgement  
in which those who live like them will be saved  
and those who don't, won't.

It's such a gross misrepresentation of what you have revealed  
about your intentions for your creation  
and how you are realizing them.



When we accept the gift of your insights,  
the dimness of our sight, the cloudiness of our eyes,  
the deafness of our ears, the confusions in our steps,  
are healed with the hope of your salvation  
and the healing of our participation in it.

This is a vision for the salvation of the whole world,  
a forgiveness and reconciliation that loves us all back together.

Compose us into the coherence of your consummation.

## **Ponderings from the Image and Prayer**

## **Your Prayers**

The Sunday image, *The Two Sons*, is by James B Janknegt and is used with permission. For more of her art can be found at [www.bcartfarm.com](http://www.bcartfarm.com).

## In gratitude ...

- to the participants in the missioning of Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, BC, whose hospitality, hope, and healing has meant so much to so many over the years;
- to the many friends who have reviewed and suggest revisions for this little devotional resource;
- to those of you who are giving it a try, to test it out as a provocation for the love and good works that flow from your gratitude for the workings of the divine Family within and through you;
- to the artists who so graciously have allowed us to use their images to stimulate our imaginations; and
- to all those in interdependence with whom I am being nourished to flourish in the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ through worship, learning, fellowship, and service.



The image for this gratitude page, *The Sowers*, is by Laura Zerebeski. It hangs in the church to remind us of the seeds we sow in all our circles of inspiration and influence. It pays tribute to the late Emmanuel Boadu, one of our beloved ruling elders at Brentwood. You can find more of Laura's art at [www.laurazee.com](http://www.laurazee.com).

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