

Suttons Bay Congregational Church  
Genesis 1-2:3

April 22, 2007  
Rev. Robin Long

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Genesis 2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

My dad used to call me a tree hugger and maybe he still does but he doesn't do it to my face any longer because I now have the bargaining power of being the mother of his only grandson. But I never took offense at his comment and I know he didn't mean it as an offense. And even if the term were reserved for only the most radical environmentalists among us, there was a time in my life when I qualified as such. During middle school, I was crazy about the environment and protecting all of the creatures in it. I dreamed of graduating from high school and college and then one day going off with Green Peace to save our dear Mother Earth. I stopped using hair spray—quite a feat for a middle school girl in the late 80's which I like to refer to as the Big Bang era—because of its detrimental effects on the ozone layer. When a friend invited me to a Mary Kay party, I wrote her a letter explaining the horrors that were afflicted on bunnies and monkeys in the process of testing make up. Much to my frugal fathers' delight, I took very quick, very cold showers to save on natural resources. I wore t-shirts sporting messages about saving whales, saving owls, and saving the rain forests. I bought the Beatles "Imagine" album and played it over and over again—after all, Strawberry Fields are Forever. If ever I was a tree hugger, it was then.

But all of that changed practically overnight. Suddenly I was begging my mom for more allowance so that I could go to Rite Aid to buy blue eye shadow and coordinating teal eye liner. I was saving up my money so that I could get a perm that would encourage my rather flat and straight hair to be more inclined towards "Big Bangs." And of course, when I finally got my bangs big—I sprayed them until they were as stiff as a straw hat on a cold Easter morning with aerosol hairspray. And what brought about this change in a grungy girl formerly known as a tree hugger? Was it the introduction of supposedly scientific data that undermined the theory of global warming? No. Was it changes made in testing procedures by responsible companies like Mary Kay that eliminated animal abuse and neglect in the testing process? No. It was Bob Leininger. In the eighth grade I fell head over heels in love with Bob Leininger. Two grades ahead of me, smart, athletic, funny—I was just wild about Bob. And so the tree hugger t-shirts were stuffed in the back of a drawer and replaced with anything sporting a Guess or Liz Claiborne logo. And as with all of the boy chasing endeavors of my youth, I never caught the boy, but I sure did learn an important lesson about myself in the process. Namely, extremes don't work for me—t-shirt wearing, non-meat eating, no-make up wearing, limp-haired tree

hugger—not for me. Big banged, well, well not really well made-up but excessively made-up, fashion mongering boy chaser—not for me either. I’m just not an extreme gal.

And quite frankly, I don’t think extremes work for most of us. It seems that we’re pushed into an either/or instead of a both/and culture—politically, economically, socially, and environmentally. I hate this kind of “in the box” thinking. It is lazy, irresponsible, and—worst sin of all—boring.

In the creation story, it clearly states that we are created in God’s image. I don’t think this means that we literally look like God, but rather we are created to do the kinds of things that God does. And in the Creation story, God creates. Therefore, I believe we are called to create too. And not just to create—after all if you set me in front of an easel with a palette of paints I would just freeze up in anxiety. But we are called to be creative—and that can take so many forms. Albert Einstein was creative in the way he thought about numbers and equations. Beethoven was creative in the way he thought about notes and rhythm. The founders of this country were creative in the ways they thought about politics and governance. The earliest Congregationalists were creative in the way they met in secret places and kept their beliefs and faith alive in the midst of persecution. Tom as in Tom’s of Maine was creative in the way he structured his toothpaste business to be respectful of the environment, his employees, and yet be competitive in the free market. Louis Armstrong was creative in the way he handled and played the trumpet. Mother Theresa was creative in the way she choose to care for the poor and dying. In using their God given talents—all of these folks helped to co-create a world that was a little better, a little healthier, a little happier, a little more expressive, and in the case of Tom of Maine, a little whiter. And I believe we are called to do the same, not because it’s the moral thing to do, but rather because it is purely and simply the very thing God has called us to do and be a part of.

As I was brainstorming this sermon with Danielle, she talked about creative problem solving exercises she used to lead in her classroom. The teacher’s guides told her that it isn’t until around the 21<sup>st</sup> attempt at finding a solution to a problem that the proposed solutions get truly creative. Until then, we’re just clearing our minds of the obvious and making space for the innovative, the creative, and the ultimately life-changing and life-affirming solution.

And so I have to believe that there has got to be better way, a more creative way than choosing between the careers and livelihoods of hundreds of loggers or the life and existence of an owl. I refuse to believe that it is an either/or choice. I have to believe that there has got to be a better choice, a more creative way than choosing between a sudden and complete withdrawal that leaves hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis vulnerable to insurgents or a prolonged stay during which many American lives continue to be lost along with the lives of thousands of Iraqis. I refuse to believe that it is an either/or choice. I have to believe that there has got to be a better way, a more creative way, than choosing between a law that completely bans the use and possession of guns or a policy of gun ownership that is so broad that a mentally ill individual with a history of anger and aggression issues is able to buy a weapon that can fire many bullets—and therefore kill—tens of people in just minutes. I refuse to believe that it is an either/or choice.

Why does it matter if the earth was created in 6 billion years or 6 thousand years?