

The Season of Creation
 All Saints Episcopal Church, Skowhegan
 September 6 - October 4, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of All Saints,

How do we find joy in the present moment, with all the powers of nature seemingly turning against us? I watch the world weather news, and the catastrophic destruction caused by wind, fire, rain and floods. I am amazed our weather forecasters do not blaze a broadcast message about the destruction that falls upon the heads of all who proliferate and promote fossil fuels.

Maybe nothing will return to normal. But in these present moments, how do we maintain our joy? How do we maintain hope?

During this Season of Creation, I pray that our hearts are stirred by a profound Christian truth: the presence of the Living God is not confined to the walls of our sanctuary, nor is it restricted to the pages of our theology books. I invite all of us into a transformative way of seeing—an invitation to behold the living Christ in every single atom of creation.

From the vast galaxies spinning in the night sky to the smallest cell in your own body, the universe is vibrant with the presence of the Creator. Genesis Chapter 1 tells the story and the Apostle Paul reminds us in Colossians 1:17, "In Christ all things hold together." I have always held these words close to my heart: "In Christ we move and have our being" (Acts 17:28)

To help us ground this vision, we will explore a rich, historical, and deeply scriptural tradition within our faith: Christian Mysticism - seeing the Creator's presence in all things. While the word "mysticism" might sound mysterious or unusual at first, it simply refers to the direct, lived experience of God's love and presence. It is a tradition practiced by Saint Francis of Assisi, Dame Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, Thomas Merton and Fr. Richard Rohr. We will join countless everyday believers throughout history who refused to let God become a mere abstract concept.

To help understand this pathway, it is helpful to look at how Christian mysticism contrasts with modern Western Evangelical thought:

Experiential vs. Intellectual: Western Evangelical thought highly values right doctrine, biblical literacy, and intellectual assent to truths. While these are important, Christian mysticism

emphasizes a direct, heart-to-heart encounter with the living Christ that transcends human language.

Panentheistic vs. Dualistic: Modern Western thought often views God as existing "out there"—separated from a fallen, secular world. Mysticism recognizes that while God transcends creation, God is also radically immanent within it, infusing all matter with sacred worth.

Transformation vs. Transaction: Much of modern evangelicalism focuses on a legal or transactional view of salvation (accepting a creed to secure an afterlife). Mysticism focuses on ongoing union with God, transforming how we live, love, and care for our neighbors and the earth right now.

Mystery vs. Certainty: Western theology often seeks absolute certainty, neat formulas, and systematic answers. The mystical tradition humbles itself before the infinite mystery of God, finding comfort in silent contemplation and holy wonder.

This is not a new faith, but a recovery of our oldest roots. When we begin to see Christ in every atom, the entire world becomes a sacrament. Every conversation becomes holy ground. Every breath becomes a prayer.

Over the coming weeks, we will explore this contemplative path together through scripture, preaching, videos and coffee hour conversations. I invite you to bring your story, be it a rock, a memory, or something written that helps you find rest and joy in the good creation that God has given us. Our Season of Creation will conclude with the Blessing of the Animals on St. Francis Day, Sunday Oct 4..

With love and hope for the future, our theme song is "This Island Earth", by Jonathon Edwards.

Fr. Jack

Creation Care Schedule:

Sept 6 Mystic Christianity
Sept 13 Diversity in Creation

Coffee Hour Video
Bishop's Committee Mtg.

Sept 20	Our Government and the Climate Crisis	Coffee Hour Video
Sept 27	Morning Prayer	Coffee Hour Conversation
Oct 4	Blessing of the Animals -	Feast Day of St. Francis

Thursday Night 5:30 Free Concerts:

Oct 22 Some Reel Peopled

Season of Creation Holy Eucharist

The Word of God

Hymn:

Family Guitar Time

Celebrant: Let us stand together.

Blessed be God who creates, redeems, and sustains the earth.

All: And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

Collect for Purity:

Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, mirror your care for all living things, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect for the Season:

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, you spoke your Word and brought forth light, shaping the universe with wisdom and love. During his Season of

Creation, open our eyes to see your presence in all things, and open our hearts to hear the groaning of your earth.

Grant us the grace to repent of our waste and destruction, and inspire us to become faithful stewards of your handiwork, that we may care for the home you have shared with all creatures. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Gloria - our usual melody

Glory to God in the highest realms,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, celestial King,
Father of all, all-powerful,
we bow to you, we give you thanks,
we sing your praise for your great splendor.

Jesus the Christ, the only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you clear away the sin of the world:
show us mercy;
you sit enthroned at the right hand of the Father:
welcome our prayer.

The Lessons:

Gospel Hymn.

The Sermon:

An Affirmation of Faith and Hope

We believe in God, the Creator of all things, who shaped the heavens, the earth, and the seas, and breathed life into every living creature.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, through whom the entire universe was brought forth, who walked the earth, healed the broken, and reconciled all creation through the cross.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life, who hovers over the waters of our world, renews the face of the earth, and groans alongside creation in childbirth.

We confess that we have scarred the earth, disrupted its delicate and sacred balance, and ignored the cries of the land and the poor. We commit ourselves to look, to listen, and to love, to protect the soil, the water, and the air, and to safeguard the habitats of all our kindred species.

We hope in the promise of a renewed creation, where justice and peace flow like an ever-living stream, and all creatures sing praise to the Creator forever. Amen.

The Prayers of the People:

Lector: With all creation, from the soil beneath our feet to the farthest stars, let us bring our prayers to God, the Maker of all things.

Creator of the cosmos, you spoke life into the waters, the land, and the skies. We thank you for the breathtaking beauty of this earth. Awaken our wonder and fill us with gratitude for your magnificent handiwork.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Sovereign God, you placed us in a garden to tend and keep it, yet we have often been rulers instead of stewards. We confess our greed, our waste, and our blindness to the wounds of the earth. Cleanse our hearts and renew our minds.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of justice, the cries of the earth match the cries of the poor, who suffer first and hardest from changing climates, rising seas, and ruined lands. Move the hearts of world leaders, lawmakers, and corporate heads to choose the common good over short-term gain.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Healer of the broken, we pray for the species facing extinction, the forests consumed by fire, and the oceans choked with waste. Infuse your church with the courage to advocate, protect, and heal the ecosystems that sustain life.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Sustainer of life, we pray for our local community. Teach us to live more simply, to share more generously, and to see your divine presence reflected in every creature, plant, and person we meet.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Silence for personal prayer, aloud or silently.

Celebrant: Holy God, you love everything you have made, and your mercy is over all your works. Gather these prayers into your keeping. Grant us the strength to be your hands and feet in restoring the harmony of creation, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Confession of Sin:

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God, our neighbors, and the beautiful diversity of God's creation.

(Silence may be kept.)

All: God of all life, we confess that we have sinned against you, and against the sacred web of your creation.

We have taken your gifts for granted, and fueled our lives through destruction. We have diminished the earth's variety, silenced the unique voices of your creatures, and driven entire species to extinction. We have broken our kinship with the land, polluted the waters that sustain us, and failed to be faithful stewards of your handiwork.

Forgive us for what we have done, and for what we have left undone. Awaken in us a deep reverence for all living things, and turn our hearts toward healing, restoration, and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Celebrant

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life, in unity with all creation. Amen.

The Peace and Welcome:

Offertory Hymn: *Thank you for your generosity as we serve the Risen Lord in His name.*

The Holy Communion:

The Great Thanksgiving:

Celebrant: The Lord be with you!

All: And also with you!

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts!

All: We lift them up to the Lord!

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise!

Celebrant: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

For by your eternal Word, the earth brought forth living creatures of every kind: creeping things, wild animals, and livestock in their teeming variety. You filled the vast seas with swarming life and the skies with winged birds, rejoicing in the rich tapestry of your design.

In the marvelous diversity of species, you have revealed your infinite wisdom and woven a sacred web of life, calling us to dwell among your creatures as humble kin and faithful stewards.

Grant us eyes to see these things, and we will join our voices with Angels and Archangels, with the song of the forest, the roar of the sea, and all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Celebrant: Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and broken our kinship with your creation—diminishing the earth's variety, silencing the voices of your creatures, and turning away from your covenant—you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, and to reconcile to yourself all things in heaven and on earth.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Celebrant: We celebrate this memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him.

Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, serve you in protecting the habitats of your earth, and honor the sacred variety of your handiwork. And at the last day, bring us with all your creation into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.
AMEN.

Celebrant: And now, as Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come, thou will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
for Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever, Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread:

Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us!

All: Therefore let us keep the Feast! Alleluia!

The Distribution:

All are encouraged to come forward to the rail, to stand or kneel.

For communion, extend your hand to receive the bread,

you may dip the wafer into the chalice.

For a spoken blessing, cross your arms before your chest.

Celebrant: These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart, with thanksgiving!

Prayer after Communion:

Loving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Through this Holy Sacrament, you have bound us to yourself and to all living things.

Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve your whole creation. Give us eyes to see your presence in all of creation, and hands ready to heal and protect our fragile island home. Keep us faithful to our kinship with all your creatures, until all things are made new in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blessing: *The people respond with Amen four times.*

Celebrant: May God, who established the heavens and the earth, fill us with a deep reverence for the magnificent diversity of all living things. **Amen.**

May Christ, the Word through whom the whole cosmos was made, grant us the courage to protect threatened species and heal the broken habitats of this world. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, the Breath of Life moving over the face of the deep, renew our souls and empower us to live in harmony with all creation. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us for ever. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn:

Crucifer: Let us go forth into the world to love and serve the Creator and all creation.
Alleluia!

People: Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia!

More on Christian Mysticism

Christian mysticism is a spiritual tradition focused on achieving a direct, unmediated, and experiential **union with God**. Rather than viewing faith strictly as a system of intellectual beliefs or moral laws, a mystic seeks to consciously encounter God's immediate presence within the soul through deep, contemplative prayer.

Historically, this tradition spans centuries and includes foundational figures like St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Merton.

Core Differences: Mystic vs. Evangelical Believer

While both are Christians who love God, they navigate their faith through entirely different frameworks of authority, practice, and spiritual goals. [\[1, 2\]](#)

Spiritual Element	Christian Mystic	Evangelical Believer
Primary Goal	Union and communion with God; dissolving the sense of separation.	Personal salvation through faith; active evangelism and living a moral life.
Source of Truth	Direct inner experience and revelation supported by tradition.	Sola Scriptura (the Bible alone) as the ultimate and final authority.
View of God	Immanent ; God is a living reality hidden deeply within the self and creation.	Transcendent ; God is a holy, separate King ruler "up there" who operates over creation.
Core Practices	Silence, solitude, contemplative meditation , and centering prayer.	Bible study, intercessory verbal prayer , church attendance, and worship music.
Approach to Mystery	Embraces paradox and unknowing ; acknowledges God is beyond human concepts.	Seeks theological certainty and clarity through structured doctrine and apologetics.
Direction of Change	Inside-out ; internal transformation naturally reframes outward life.	Outside-in ; conforming behavioral and mental attributes to the model of Jesus.