

**BIG MAMA MAKES THE WORLD:  
REFLECTIONS ON THE STEWARDSHIP OF ALL CREATION**  
Story by Phyllis Root, Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury



*Scripture:*

**Genesis 1:1-19**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created<sup>Ⓜ</sup> the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God<sup>Ⓜ</sup> swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon

the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

## **Genesis 1:20-31**

Introduction: As you listen to the rest of this creation story, Please notice the image of God description in verses 26 and 27 where it reads: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in OUR image, according to OUR likeness....'" and then it goes on to say:

So God created humankind in the image of God, MALE and FEMALE. Ancient scripture is inclusive.

The Presbyterian Church USA encourages the use of inclusive images of God in the reading of scripture and singing of hymns so that all of humankind is included in the faith as we were created to be.

Listen now:

<sup>20</sup>And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make humankind<sup>(e)</sup> in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,<sup>(e)</sup> and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

<sup>27</sup>So God created humankind<sup>(e)</sup> in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." <sup>29</sup>God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

### **This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



In honor of Mother's Day, I borrowed a story that was shared in the worship service at our last Presbytery meeting at the San Anselmo Presbyterian church. This is another imaginative perspective on the creation story that helps us remember that our Creator gave us a vital role as stewards of all creation. The health of the creatures is our responsibility.

### **BIG MAMA MAKES THE WORLD**

By Phyllis Root

Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury

(Big Mama's words are in **bold print**)

When Big Mama made the world, she didn't mess around. There was water everywhere, and Big Mama saw what needed to be done alright.

So, she rolled up her sleeves and went to it.....Wasn't easy either, with that little baby sitting on her hip. Didn't stop big mama though.

Not for a minute.

**"Light!"** .... Said Big Mama, and you better believe there was light!

**"Dark!"** ....Said Big Mama, and there was the dark. Just as big as the light!

**"You two got work to do!"** Big Mama said, **"Don't you be foolin' around!"**

Then she looked at the light and she looked at the dark and she looked at that little baby looking at the light and the dark. Smiling and cooing....

And Big Mama said, **"That's good. That's real good."**

That's how the first day went by.

Next day, Big Mama looked around, **"Can't tell my up from my down,"** said Big Mama.

**"Better have some sky here."**

And there it was! One big sky wrapping over everything. Soft and blue as baby blanket.

Wasn't much else yet. But water and light. And dark and sky. All doing what Big Mama wanted them to do.

And Big Mama, ... she was pleased all right. **"That's good!"** she said, **"That's real good!"**

That's how the second day went by.

Next day, Big Mama looked around some more and she said, **"Got me some light, got me some dark, ...but I still can't tell what time of day it is! How am I gonna know when it's morning and evening? Time to put the baby down for a nap?"**

Big Mama wanted to know alright. And anything Big Mama wants Mama gets!.... That's just how it goes.....

**"Sun!"** Said Big Mama. **"You take care of this day business for me.**

**Moon!"** Said Big Mama. **"You take care of the night."**

Big mama made the stars too. Just in case old moon overslept sometime.

Big Mama looked at the sun and the moon and the stars filling up her sky just in time for the little baby's nap. And Big Mama nodded. And she smiled and she said, **"That's good! That' real good!"**

That's how the third day went by.

Next morning Big Mama got up with the sun... And she said, **"I need a place to put my feet down when they need putting down."**

She knew there'd be some foot puttin down when that baby of hers got to growing more.

**"Earth!"** Said Big Mama. **"Get over here!"**

And it did. All one big ball of mud it was. Nothing much to look at. Baby liked it alright just the way it was. But Big Mama wasn't finished yet.

**"Need some grass to wiggle my toes in,"** said Big Mama, **"Some big ol' shade trees for hanging a hammock. Papayas and oranges. And boysenberries for eatin' on."**

That's how it was then. Just like Big Mama said.

Little baby sucking on a mango and the grass and trees and fruit all over the place like somebody tipped over a fruit stand.

Big Mama she looked at all the earth and said, **"That's good, that's real good.**

That's how the forth day went by.

Lots of folks would be plenty pleased. But Big Mama didn't quit a job until it was done and it was done right. Big Mama looked at all that water and earth and trees and sky and sun. And moon and stars. And she said, **"Awful quiet down there. Better have some whales, better have some birds, better have some fish."**

That's exactly what happened alright. Pretty soon, there were more whales and catfish, and mockingbirds and crows than a little baby could shake a stick at, (which a little baby could do if a little baby wanted to, since Big Mama had already made all those trees full of sticks.)

Big Mama looked at all that action, and she said, **"That's good, that's real good."**

That's how the fifth day went by.

Big Mama was about ready to be done with it all. Making a world was a lot of work, what with the laundry piling up, and the dishes needing doing.

She figured she better finish things off in one Big Bang.

**"I need some creepers and crawlers,"** said Big Mama. **"Some runners and jumpers. Some diggers and divers... Everybody else wants to get created. This here's your chance! Hedgehogs and night crawlers, raccoons and garter snakes. Rabbits and polar bears!"**

That's how Big Mama made them all. One Big Bang!

But, Big Mama still wasn't done, **"Oh, No! I'm lonely!"** said Big Mama.

**"Who is gonna sit on the front porch and swap stories with me? Not these creeper and crawlers. Not these diggers and divers. They're good alright, but not one of them can tell a story worth a plug nickel! And all this little baby can say so far is: Goo goo, ga ga. I need some folks to keep me company."**

Big Mama, she scooped up some of that leftover mud, and she pushed and she pulled and she pried and next thing you know there were folks everywhere! Big folks and little folks, fat folks and thin folks, all kinds and shapes of folks. And everyone of those folks had a story to swap with Big Mama. **"That's**

**good!"** Said Big Mama, **"That's real good!"**

That's how the sixth day went by with Big Mama and all those folks sittin' on the porch and gabbing while the sun went down.

Big Mama was ready for a rest alright. Ready to bundle up with that little baby of hers in that big blue blanket of the sky....

But Big Mama had one more thing to do.

She lined up all those folks and said, **"This is a real nice world we got here, and you all better take some good care of it! I'm taking a day off to rest now, but I'll be keeping a close eye on you."**

That's what Big Mama said alright. And you better believe she meant it!

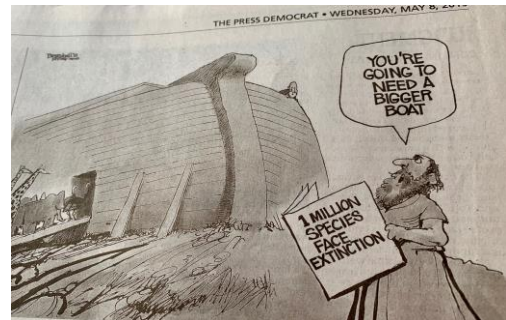
Every once in a while, when she's burping the baby, or making cookies, or rocking that little baby to sleep, Big Mama looks down and says,

**"Better straighten up down there!"**

And every so often Big Mama looks down on this nice little world she made and she nods and she smiles and she says:

**"That's good, that's real good!"**

I recently saw this cartoon in the newspaper.



Noah seems to be looking up at Big Mama. And I'm sure she is currently not happy with us humans. We have been divinely ordained to be the stewards of the earth! Thanks to reckless greedy human behavior we are responsible for creating a path of extinction for 1 million species of animals and birds and insects. A recent global study reported by the United Nations found that

1 million species are on the path to extinction. The results of the study were explained this way: “the “unprecedented” decline in global biodiversity has alarming implications for human health, prosperity and long-term survival.”

A report on NPR said: When a species dies out, we all lose something.

The importance of biodiversity can't be overestimated. Humble creatures (that we might not see as vital in our lives) are actually crucial to our existence.

Honeybees are irreplaceable pollinators. Earthworms that aerate soil with oxygen are #2 on the endangered worms list. Frogs love to eat insects that would ravage plants if left unchecked. A recent study by Yale reports that amphibians are declining worldwide at an alarming rate.

Without keeping a balance in nature, even the tiniest ant can become a destructive monster colony. When the sparrows, wrens and starlings are gone, ants will flourish even more than they do now.

Our polluting behavior is “eroding the very foundations of economies, livelihoods, food security, health and the quality of all life worldwide.”

(NHPR: <https://www.nhpr.org/post/1-million-animal-and-plant-species-are-risk-extinction-un-report-says#stream/0>)

For example, I love penguins! 10 out of 18 species of penguins are on the path to extinction. My grandson will never forgive me if we lose penguins!

We all know polar bears are deeply suffering due to the disappearing sea ice. Siberian and South China tigers are critically endangered due to habitat loss from logging and over development.

The National Wildlife Federation's CEO, Collin O'Mara warns that the U.S. also has much to lose — especially if biodiversity is viewed as someone else's problem. "About one-third of all species right now in the U.S. are at heightened risk of potential extinction in the next couple of decades." But O'Mara also adds: “it is not too late to act.”

Here is one way we can work hard to help heal our oceans:

Show Video: starting at 5:40 minutes; let it run to the end: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HBtI4sHTqU>

Big Mama is clearly lookin' down and saying: “Better straighten up down there!”

On this Mother's Day, may we honor our Mother Nature by “straightening up” as best as we are able so that all of her creation can have a future, including us. Amen.

**Benediction:  
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God and the fellowship of  
the Holy Spirit be with you now and  
forevermore. Amen**



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