

Wild Church
Sunday, December 18, 2022

Gifts of the Winter Solstice
Welcome Dark and the Return of the Light

Welcome and Announcements

Calling Us Into a Circle of Silence

Let us gather ourselves into silence. Listen to your breath. Listen to the air around you. We are all connected through the breath of God. In Hebrew - the ruach (pronounced roo-ah) - the wind is the breath of the Holy. Our own breath literally depends upon the breath of the trees. We breathe in the oxygen that the trees breathe out. The trees breathe in the CO2 that we breathe out.

You belong here. You are a welcome part of this ecosystem. All beings welcome us because they have not forgotten that we are all related, that we come from the same dust and will return to the same dust...Take another breath (pause so people can take a deep breath) to acknowledge that our lives depend on all of life.

Friends, we are not only meeting in Nature. We are entering into a relationship with Nature. We are here to re-member ourselves back to where we belong. We are here to restore a loving and kindred relationship with the rest of the natural world, as spiritual practice.

Acknowledging the Land

Prayer Loving Creator, we come as we are, knowing you accept us. We come as all we have ever been, knowing that we are still being created. We pray for hearts open to all we can become. Amen.

Introduction to the Theme

We are approaching the Winter Solstice, the longest night; and, as we gather we think of all the gifts and the mystery that the dark of night offers to us - the quiet time of rest , the magic time where dreams are made. We speak of the "quiet curve of evening" when we gather round the hearth - the time of soft light, the opportunity to

reflect on the gifts of this day. We think of all the good things that come with the darkness. We are born from the soft darkness of our mothers' wombs. The darkness invites us to slow our pace, to see the world differently; to remember who and whose we are. We are thankful for the dark.

We also know, from the experience of our ancestors over millions of years, that the longest night is followed by a return of the light. Following the Winter Solstice the hours of daylight increase, slowly until mid-February and then more and more quickly leading to the Summer Solstice when we enjoy many hours of sunlight where we live. As the light begins to lengthen, may we receive it with wisdom and grace garnered from the hours of darkness and reflection, of dreaming and remembering. May our eyes be opened to the new world you dream for us Creator. May our hearts be filled with gratitude and with joy.

Readings

Welcome, Dark by Charis St. Pierre, illustrated by Rachel Wade

Preface to Waking Up to the Dark by Clark Strand

Sermon/Conversation

Part One: Wandering and Listening

This is a time in our gathering when we are invited to wander solo in Nature,, listening for the wisdom of the natural world. This is heart listening. You are not listening with your head or your ears. Listen to what your heart is saying to you as you interact with all the beings that share this place. Acknowledge, with gratitude, their wisdom as you receive their teachings. This will take some time. Wander for 25 minutes, then return to our circle to share the gifts you have received during this special time.

Part Two Witnessing

When we are re-assembled in the circle, invite people to share insights, symbols, whatever wants to be shared.

Blessing As We Leave the Circle

Before Sleep By John O'Donohue from *To Bless the Space Between Us* p.99