

**Wild Church
Sunday, January 15, 2023**

Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat

Emily Murphy Park, Edmonton

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 the CO2 that we exhale.

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 be. Amen

Introduction to the Theme

Here we are in the middle of winter. The days are ever-so-slowly lengthening but it is still the dark, quiet time. What can we learn from this time?

Plants and animals do not fight the winter. They don't pretend, as we humans so often do, that winter is not happening. They don't try to live as though it is still summertime.

They prepare. They adapt. Some perform extraordinary feats of metamorphosis to get them through the cold. Some hibernate. Others change their eating, breathing and sleeping habits to accommodate the change in the amount of daylight available to them. Some grow thick coats.

Winter is a time for withdrawing from the world, maximizing scant resources, finding efficiencies and sometimes vanishing from sight. For this is where transformation happens. Winter is not the death of the life cycle, but its crucible.

Once we stop wishing it was summer, winter can be a glorious season in which we become aware of the world's stark beauty. It is a time to reflect, to recuperate and slowly to replenish. It is a time to put your house in order.

Katherine May, author of *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* says, "Doing these deeply unfashionable things - slowing down, letting your spare time expand, getting enough sleep, resting - is essential." It is essential to our health and spiritual wellbeing, and one of the most important choices we can make.

Readings

Excerpt from *Permanent Astonishment: A Memoir* by Tomson Highway

Excerpt from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard

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. Note today

especially, how these beings have adapted to the season. Acknowledge, with gratitude, their wisdom as you receive their teachings. This will take some time. Wander for 20 minutes, then return to the circle with the gifts you have received during this special time.

Part Two: Witnessing

When we are reassembled in the circle, invite participants to share insights.

Blessing As We Leave the Circle

A Blessing for the New Year from *To Bless the Space Between Us* by John O'Donohue