

Wild Church
Sunday, April 16, 2023

Praying With the Elements Part 2: Water

Emily Murphy Park, Edmonton

Announcements

- Wild Church meets every third Sunday of the month at 1:00pm. In May we will meet at the Stark Oak, an Edmonton Heritage Tree located to the east of the garden terrace at Government House.
- Everyone is invited to stay for a beverage and conversation following our worship today
- Location of washrooms

Calling a Circle on Sacred Land

We gather with reverence in this sacred circle. The fire at the circle's centre brings to mind the stewardship of the first two-legged peoples who walked this land, carrying the sacred fire bundle from circle to circle as they travelled.

Let us gather ourselves into silence (*pause*). Listen to your heartbeat - to the life blood coursing through you. Listen to the great river, the river of life. Listen.

You belong here. You are a welcomed part of this ecosystem. All beings welcome you 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*). Acknowledge that your life depends on all life.

Friends, we are not only meeting in Nature. We are entering into a relationship within 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.

Prayer

No matter what our work, let it be our own.

No matter what our occupation, let what we are doing be organic.

Let it be in our bones and in our blood.

In this way, we will open the door by which the wealth of heaven and earth shall stream into us.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson (adapted)

Bringing Our Names into the Circle

Each person is invited to say aloud their name. Following the offering of each names, all in the circle will reply:

(Name) you are welcome here as a kindred spirit in the Circle of Life.

Praying With the Elements: Sister Water

We encounter water in many different forms - ocean, lake, fountain, river, rain, pool, puddle, tears. Water is malleable, appearing in different forms - steam, liquid, ice.

Human life itself begins in a watery womb. We spend our first nine months of life in water and then emerge from this warm, dark brine into the world.

Water is a dominant symbol in religious practice. Ritual bathing and hand-washing are acts of purification in many traditions. For Christians, the fount of holy water is the place of baptism and initiation into community.

Water lives and moves according to its own rhythms. Consider the tides, their ebbing and flowing. Consider the babbling brook or the raging river. Consider the serenity of a lake on a calm day. Feel the comfort of water flowing from a fountain. Experience the joy of jumping into a puddle left by melting snows or refreshing rain. Feel the solace of the sound as steam rises from a "boiling kettle" in preparation for the sacrament of tea.

In our prayer today, we asked that what we do may be organic. Being organic means allowing the rise and fall of our own energy and desires, much like the rise and fall of the tides. It means holding plans and expectations lightly and noticing where our energy and prayers are taking us. It means being open to the subtle ways the Holy shapes and transforms us moment by moment, listening deeply for the call of the Spirit leading us forward into our lives. This kind of awareness of what simply is at a given moment leads us to discovery. We discover new things about ourselves. We encounter our stumbling blocks and resistances, our hopes and our joys, our fears, what makes us feel vital and alive. Welcome them all as wise guides.

Readings:

1. Like the sea itself, the shore fascinates us who return to it, the place of our dim ancestral beginnings. In the recurrent rhythms of tides and surf and in the varied life of the tide lines there is the obvious attraction of movements and chance and beauty. there is also, I am convinced, a deeper fascination born of inner meaning and significance.

When we go down to the low-tide line, we enter a world that is as old as the earth itself - the primeval meeting place of the elements of earth and water, a place of compromise and conflict and eternal change. For us as living creatures it has a special meaning as an area in or near which some entity that could be distinguished as Life first drifted in shallow waters - reproducing, evolving, yielding the endlessly varied stream of living things that has surged through time and space to occupy the earth.

-Rachel Carson

2. May what I do flow from me like a river,
no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.
Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
these deepening tides moving out, returning,
I will sing you as no one ever has, streaming through
widening channels
into the open sea. -Rainer Maria Rilke

Lectio Divina with Water

Lectio divina is an ancient contemplative prayer practice used to allow scripture to speak to our hearts and to help us discover the multiple ways the Holy dwells there. It means “sacred reading” and the practice can be extending beyond the reading of scripture to that other great book of revelation - Nature. Lectio invites us to enter into silence and stillness to listen deeply to the stirring of the Holy in the sacred texts around us.

This is a time in our gathering when we are invited to wander solo in Nature, listening for the wisdom of the natural world - allowing this wisdom to inform what we have heard in the theme reflection and readings. 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 the beings in this place.

Today you are invited especially to be aware of the way water is present in the world around you. Listen to the ways in which the Holy may be calling you to deeper attention to water today.

Wander for 20 minutes, then return to the circle with the gifts you have received during this special time.

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

Blessing

Spirit of Living Water
You hold all of creation in your womb
And spring us forward onto Earth at birth.

Spirit of the Tides
Remind me of the rise and fall of your rhythms
So I may discover them deep within my own being.

Spirit of Greenness,

Bring moistness and vigour to my life
So I might savour the experience of your energy
Moving through me out into the world.

Blessings of water be upon me.
May I be carried by the flow of the great river of life.
May I discover a hidden spring within, gushing forth,
May I be carried to the shores of the sacred and renewed.
-Christine Valters Paintner