

Wild Church
Sunday, May 21, 2023

Praying With the Elements Part 3: Earth

Government House, Edmonton

Announcements

- Wild Church meets the third Sunday of each month at 1:00 pm. Plan to join us in June at Emily Murphy Park at Group Picnic Area #3 for the fourth in our series Praying with the Elements. This event will include a Potluck Picnic which will begin about noon followed by Wild Church.
- Everyone is invited to stay for a beverage and conversation following our gathering today.

Calling a Circle on Sacred Land

We gather with reverence in this sacred circle at the Stark Oak, an Alberta Heritage tree. *(Share Scott Digweed's account of the Stark Oak in Heritage Trees of Alberta, p. 74 - Published by the Heritage Tree Foundation of Canada, 2008)*

Let us gather ourselves into silence *(pause)*. Listen to your heartbeat - to the life blood coursing through you. Listen to the murmurs of this fine tree. Listen. What is the tree saying to you? *(pause)*

You belong here. You are a welcomed part of this ecosystem. All beings welcome you here 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)*. As you breathe in, remember that the oxygen you need is provided by this tree. As you breathe out, this tree receives the carbon dioxide you expel to enable its photosynthesis process.

As we stand here, 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.

Prayer

Today we will pray an embodied prayer that we may be opened up to receive the wisdom of the trees: *(sing Standing Like a Tree - with actions - words follow)*

*Standing like a tree with my roots down deep
My branches wide and open
Down comes the rain, down comes the sun, down comes the love
to a heart that is open, to be...*

Theme Reflection

Though we could choose a number of metaphors to aid us in getting in touch with Earth, there is, perhaps none so strong as the tree. We think of the Tree of Life. We think of being rooted and/or branching out. We think of trees as shelter for birds and homes for insects, squirrels and many other creatures and as shelter for the soul. Trees are also metaphors for change. What if we consider the seasonal changes in trees as a sacred text where the Holy One is revealed in a myriad of new ways.

Trees are brilliant communicators, sending messages of warning and of healing to companion trees through the fungal networks that connect them. Nurse logs nourish saplings growing up from the base of rich nutrients the fallen trees provide. Every large tree has an ecosystem of its own, a sphere of influence within its immediate environment.

Tree canopies will move and are, in fact, moving all the time to allow light to filter to the smaller trees and other vegetation. Such is the living influence of trees among their kin.

Humans and most other forms of land beings would not exist if there were no trees. They provide oxygen, essential to our wellbeing. "Trees are to the atmosphere in which we live and breathe as the placenta is to the fetus." (Jean Shinoda Bolen from *Like a Tree*, Mango Publishing, 2020 p.xix) We have a reciprocal relationship with trees.

Many of us have a deep affection for a particular tree. Is there a particular tree you love? What makes this tree special for you?

A Story

The Tree that Survived the Winter by Mary Fahy, Paulist Press, 1989

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient contemplative prayer practice used to allow script to speak to our hearts and to help us discover the multiple ways the Holy dwells there. It means "sacred reading". The practice can be extended beyond the reading of scripture to that other great book of revelation - Nature. Lectio invites us to enter into silence and to find stillness. It is in the stillness that we are enabled 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 reading. This is heart listening. You are not listening with your ears only or with your head. 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 open to the wisdom of the trees. How well are you rooted? What keeps you well-rooted or well grounded? Are you so firmly rooted that you have become rigid? Where might you be called to branch out? Where do you find shelter and solace? How do you share shelter and solace? Are there other teachings the trees are offering you today?

Wander or simply sit under a tree - 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 Abundant Earth, O beautiful Gaia
Allow me to live in the knowledge that
I am of Earth, from Earth, and am returning to Earth.

Tree of Life
Rise up in me,
Rooting me deeply in the ground
And inviting me to extend my branches far into the sky.

Great Spirit, rise up in me
that I may nourish others.

Blessings of Earth be upon me.