

**Wild Church
Sunday, September 17, 2023**

Autumn Equinox

Paul Kane Park, Edmonton

Announcements

Land Acknowledgment

Calling a Circle on Sacred Land

As Earth circles our star, the Sun, so too we gather in this sacred circle..
Let us gather ourselves into silence (*pause*). Listen to your heart beat. Listen to the life-blood coursing through your body. Take a deep breath in (*pause*). Let a long breath out (*pause*). Listen to the sounds around you. Feel the blessing of this moment.

You belong here. You are welcomed here. You are a 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 that same dust. Take another breath (*pause*). As we stand here, in this sacred circle, 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 relations with the rest of the natural world.

Prayer

Standing Like a Tree (sung)

Bringing Our Names into the Circle

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

We greet the Tree in you _____. Be enriched by its wisdom.

Reading

A Dream of Trees by Mary Oliver from *New and Selected Poems Volume One* Beacon Press, 1992, p247

Theme Reflection

Friends, in the crises of these times, it is tempting to want to hold on to what we knew, to what we have loved, to what we fear we may lose. We believe that by doing so we can stop the unfolding of a future which we fear.

The Autumn Equinox is very near. We seek the wisdom and calm of the balance of the light - equal hours of day and of night - of darkness and light. At the same time, perhaps, we lament the increasing hours of darkness, the shedding of the hours of daylight.

Let's think again of Mary Oliver's poem *A Dream of Trees*. It is a powerful poem and a cautionary tale. Be careful what you wish for. Examine what you assume to be true.

Is it the trees you dream of or is it your fantasy of trees that binds you, holds you - perhaps holds you back.

The trees around us are joyful! The yellow of their leaves is a sign of fulfillment. They have gathered enough sweetness so they no longer need to produce chlorophyll. Therefore the leaves turn yellow and they drop to the ground because they are no longer needed. To keep them. To hang on, would be a dangerous waste of the tree's energy and could jeopardize its survival through the winter and its emergence into the new life of Spring.

So the tree sheds its leaves. The leaves dance with abandon. They dance with joy.

Lectio Divina

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 extended 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 wander solo in Nature, listening for the wisdom of the natural world as we amble - allowing this wisdom to inform what we have heard in the reading and theme reflection. 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.

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

When we are re-assembled in the circle, invite participants to share insights.

Blessing

For Freedom from To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings By John O'Donohue, Doubleday, 2008, p.30