

Wild Church
Tuesday, April 22, 2025

Picnic Site #3, Emily Murphy Park, Edmonton

Earth Day: In Touch: Gratitude and Grace

Welcome and Announcements

Land Acknowledgment

We gather in this place with gratitude for the wisdom and compassion of the first peoples who walked this land - those who have persisted in engaging with the Holy in the Great Conversation. When these wise ones speak of “All my relations”, they do not speak only of blood relatives. They do not even speak only of two-legged creatures, for to the Indigenous ones, the plants, the four-legged creatures, the fish and the birds are likewise treated with the reverence and respect of personhood.

With them, as members of Treaty Six, we are reminded of our Treaty responsibilities and of the call to be at one with all beings, holding reverence for place and for life.

Blessed be.

Calling the Circle

As Earth circles our star, the Sun, so we too gather in this sacred circle. Let us gather ourselves into silence (*pause*). Listen - listen so carefully that you hear the beating of your own heart. Listen to the life blood coursing through your body. Take a deep breath in (*pause*) and let a long breath out (*pause*). Feel the blessings of this place, this time, this Holy moment.

You belong here. You are welcomed here. You are part of this ecosystem. All beings welcome you, for they have not forgotten that we are all related, that we come from one dust and will return to that same dust.

As we gather 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 a kindred relationship with all beings.**

Bringing Our Names into the Circle

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

Warm greetings to you _____. We give thanks for your presence here.

Prayer

Creator, deep mystery, heart of all that is, we gather on this day, April 22, a day set apart that calls us to consciously connect with Earth, your amazing creation and our home, a home we share with all our relations. We come with gratitude and with joy. We come with open hearts and open eyes, seeking unity with all of life. We come to learn. We come to participate in the beauty of Gaia and the grace and vitality of all your generosity, your gifts and your love. Amen.

Theme Reflection

Today is Earth Day, a moment in the circle of the year when we pay particular attention to the grace and beauty, the generosity and vitality of our planet in all life's wonder and variety. It is a particular time to cultivate wonder and gratitude through intimacy with Nature. It is a time to find ourselves in the reciprocal power of Gaia.

Of the many spiritual paths available to the seeker, perhaps the monastic tradition speaks to us most plainly as we contemplate our place in the scheme of things. Monastic tradition has its roots in a call to be in intimate connection with nature. Christine Valters Paintner, in her book *Earth: Our Original Monastery* reminds us that the monk's path "was birthed in the forests and deserts, the places of wilderness and other wild edges that reflect an inner reality as well... This call to the edges...is a call to wildness - that which lies beyond our domesticated, neat, safe, and secure lives." Nature reminds us of the rawness, the messiness and the fierce beauty of things. Nature says that when we let ourselves get messy and play in the dirt, profound things can happen.

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 stirrings of the Holy the sacred texts around us.

(Offer a lectio divina reading of: The Plateau (first paragraph of chapter 1 in The Living Mountain by Nan Shepherd.

This is a time in our gathering when we wander solo in Nature, listening for and watching for; sensing in all aspects of our senses, the wisdom, the beauty, and the mystery of the natural world, as we amble. Today's walk is a gratitude walk. As you move and listen and sense, be aware of and offer thanks for all the gifts you receive. Do this for 10 minutes, then retrace your steps and each of the gifts you have received. Consider what gifts you, in turn can offer for each gift received. Think of all the ways you can offer reciprocally, gifts to Gaia. (Time, talent and treasure, think about all of these.)

Wander for 20 minutes, then return to the circle with the gifts you have received and with your commitment to give what you can in return. You will be invited to share these gifts in the circle if you wish.

(When all have returned to the circle, invite participants to share insights.)

Blessing *the closing prayer and blessing on page 69 of The Awkward Season by Pamela C. Hawkins*