Wild Church
Sunday, October 18, 2026

Emily Murphy Park

On the Bank of the River

Welcome and Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

We gather in this place with humble gratitude for the wisdom and compassion of the first peoples who walked this land - those who have persisted in a commitment to remain grounded to the land, living in reciprocity with all Earth Beings. When these wise ones speak of “All my relations”, they do not speak only of blood relatives. They do no even speak only of two-legged creatures. To the Indigenous ones the plants, the four legged creatures, the fish, the birds, the rivers, the lakes and the seas, the mycelia, the bacteria and all other beings are treated with the 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, s we too gather in this sacred circle. Let us gather ourselves in silence *(significant 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.

Bringing Names into the Circle

Each person is invited to say aloud their own name, and to welcome into the circle a non-human being present among us. Following the offering of each name, all in the circle will reply:

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

Theme Reflection

"River is our most natural, ready-to hand metaphor for the journey of life", says Daniel Cooperrider, "because, like our lives, river names that part of the flow of water that is between the beginning and the end." The word river derives from the Latin word "riparia" referring to the bank on either side of the river, making "river" at heart a liminal space, an in-between thing. The river separates the two banks making room for the water to flow between them, and, at the same time the river joins the two banks. By both joining and separating the two banks, river carries the great mysteries of life. As such we may think of river as the "Great Mother".

I think it no accident that the story of life of Moses begins on the tangled bank of the mighty Nile. The Egyptians did not call the river Nile. They called the river "The Mother of All Humanity". (It was the Greeks who later named the river "Nile"). For the Egyptians the Mother of All Humanity was the great nurturer of all life and they approached the river as a goddess, with reverence and prayer.

Rivers are so important to life as providers, protectors and connectors that we are now beginning to recognize them with the reverence of personhood. Thanks to the great efforts of the Innu and First Nations of northern Quebec, on January 18, 2021 the great Mutehekau Shipu (the Magpie River) was recognized with legal personhood, a living entity, and its watershed was conferred with the legal rights of personhood. Consider the enormity of this recognition and its triumph over the mega hydro electric corporate interests of Hydro Quebec. It is evident this triumph would not have been achieved but for the undeniable demonstration of the deadly effects of killing its sister, the Romaine River. I encourage you to read the whole story connected with this hugely significant event.

Today we gather on the southern bank of the great North Saskatchewan River a few kilometres west of the Alberta Legislature (which itself is located proximately

to the site of the former Fort Edmonton of the Hudson's Bay Company). We live by the grace of this great watershed and thus carry the responsibility of stewardship of this river along its total length from its source at the Columbia Icefield, across Alberta and Saskatchewan to its confluence with the South Saskatchewan River just east of Prince Albert and on to the Hudson Bay. Think about that *(pause).* On your solo walk today, I encourage you to survey the bank of the mighty North Saskatchewan, our watershed home. What does our river tell you today? What does this great river teach you today? And how do you respond?

Prayer

Grandfather Sky. Grandmother Earth Great Mother River with humble hearts we seek your great teachings and we gather with equally humble gratitude for all you provide. Challenge us to open our eyes to our responsibilities as beings in the Great Confluence of All Beings. Give us courage to act for the benefit of all life. Amen.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient contemplative prayer practice to allow Scripture to speak to our hearts and to help us discover the multiple ways that the Holy dwells there. Lectio Divina 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 in the sacred texts around us.

This is a time in our gathering when we wander solo in this place. Today as you wander, focus your attention on the bank of the river and open yourself to the great mysteries flowing in the river itself. What does the river tach to you today? And how do you respond?

Wander for 20 minutes, then return to the circle. You will be invited to share your experience as you wish.

(When all have returned to the circle, invite participants to share whatever they are moved to share.)

A Blessing

*“In Praise of Water” (adapted)*from *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings* by John O’Donohue Doubleday: 2008, pp.75-76