

## *Jr. Youth Make a Difference Day*

### **Making a Difference for Creation: Stories for your Great Great Great Great Great Grandchildren**

Due to the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic, we cannot all gather together for our typical Make a Difference Day event. However, we are still committed to finding ways to connect with others, learn, pray and make a difference. We just have to get a little more creative. Jesus is a role model for creative thinking and action. Plus, these skills are exactly what we need to make a difference for creation.

Below is a 'retreat' that can be done individually by jr. youth or with their families, or with a youth group. All the content can be downloaded or printed so it can be done entirely outside. If you choose to do these outdoor activities with others, they are designed to ensure physical distancing can occur. The full 'retreat' will take approximately 2 to 3 hours.

Whether doing this individually or as a youth group, I encourage you to use the comment sections to engage with other Jr. Youth, and youth leaders from across MCEC. Remember that comments are public so do not share any personal information and of course be respectful.

If you have any questions or feedback please reach out to Katie Goerzen-Sheard, Interim Coordinator of Youth Events, at [kgoerzensheard@mcec.ca](mailto:kgoerzensheard@mcec.ca).

#### **Opening Prayer: Home**

Mother Earth,  
You are our home  
Nest, burrow, hollow log, web, reef, den...  
Condo, farmhouse, shack, mansion...  
You shelter us,  
Water us,  
Provide for us,  
Sustain us, and  
Hold us in your care.  
May we, in loving turn,  
Hold you and touch you with tenderness.  
May we tread lightly,  
Respectfully,

With awe.  
We celebrate and give thanks,  
We lament and ask forgiveness.  
We rise up as actors and advocates  
Voices for the voiceless,  
As homes and habitats sit on the brink,  
As temperature rises,  
And plastic chokes.  
You are our one precious home.  
Help us clean up our act.  
Amen

- Written by Wendy Janzen for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, September 1, which kicks off the Season of Creation for many liturgical churches around the world.

<https://burningbushforestchurch.weebly.com/reflections--prayers>

## **Making a Difference on Climate Change**

~by Scott Morton Ninomiya

Discussion/ Reflection Questions:

- While watching this video what emotions did you experience?
- Did you disagree with anything in this video? Can you explain why? Thinking for yourself is also a superpower.
- If you want to learn more about anything in this video where will you go?
- Who can you work with to make a difference on climate change?
- What is your first step to working together with them?
- Who can help you make that first step?
- Scott lives in Kitchener-Waterloo Region and shares about the land he belongs to, the Grand River watershed. What land do you belong to? What is its history? What are the important habitats and ecosystems where you live?

## Step 1: Sensio Divina with Trees

Breathing is a superpower because it connects us to literally everything! It may not be something we think about that often but taking time to focus on our breath can be super powerful. This activity will help us focus on our breath and meditate on our connection with the Divine.

Lectio Divina is a traditional spiritual practice for reading and meditating on scriptures, with the intention to increase connection with God and God's word. Sensio Divina is described by Bruce Stanly from [http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk/blog/post/sensio\\_divina](http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk/blog/post/sensio_divina) as meaning "literally 'Divine sensing', a contemplative meditation to connect and dialogue with Divine presence in a place, object or natural phenomenon (Jer 23:24) and come to a deeper understanding of God through nature (Rom 1:20)."

Trees are all around us and a very tangible connection to the breath of life. This spiritual practice can help us use our breath and the trees around us to connect with God and God's creation. These are the 5 steps in the Sensio Divina with Trees spiritual practice. Find a space by a tree or two to go through these steps.

### Preparation:

Find a place where you can quietly contemplate the trees. Sit so that you are comfortable, shifting your body so you are relaxed and open. Take some time to settle into quiet. With your in-breath breathe in awareness of the presence of God; with the out-breath, breathe out all that keeps you from being fully present.

### Noticing:

Shift your awareness to the trees in front of you. Notice the aspect of the trees that invites you or stirs you in this time of prayer. It may be a colour, a smell, a sound, a particular tree or a particular part of a tree. Notice the way that the Holy Spirit might be calling you to deeper attention through trees today. Use your senses to get to know the trees. Listen until you have a sense for which aspect of trees is inviting you, and spend time savouring it.

### Reflecting:

Continue to savour this aspect of trees, and begin to allow it to unfold in your imagination and/or memory to speak to you more deeply. Notice what feelings, thoughts or memories arise for you. Allow God to expand your ability to listen and to open you to a fuller awareness of the role and place of trees on this earth.

Begin to notice where these qualities touch or mirror your life. What is evoked in you? Allow it to interact with your thoughts, hopes, memories, desires. Rest in this awareness.

Responding:

After a time of resting in what the trees evoke in you, you may be moved to deeper insight and a desire to respond to God. When this comes, attend to the way your reflection on trees connects with the context and situation of your life right now. Take time exploring this connection. How is God present to you there? Is God calling you to anything in your present circumstances? Is there a challenge presented here? Address your response to God in whatever way seems appropriate.

Resting:

Finally, simply rest in the presence of the One who has spoken to you intimately and personally through the gifts and life of trees. Rest in the silence of God's loving embrace, and allow your heart to be moved to gratitude for this time. Allow yourself to simply be in God's rooted presence.

When you are ready, slowly return to awareness of the world around you.

## **Step 2: Web of Life Activity**

Always remember that every breath connects you with literally everything. We are part of earth's HUGE web of life, but sometimes we can forget just how connected we really are. Caught up in our daily lives and surrounded by plastic, cars, concrete, toilets, kitchen sinks, electricity, garbage and all the other things that aren't always obviously connected to the earth we forget that we and all of those things are connected and dependent on creation.

This activity will help us think about our connection to everything and the web of life that is, as God said, 'GOOD'.

### Instructions:

Stand in a wide circle (2 meters from the person on either side of you). One person will start with the ball of yarn. They will name a part of creation (creature, plant, habitat, element etc.) and then pass the ball of yarn across the circle to another person, holding on to the end of the yarn. The person who you passed the ball of yarn will then name a part of creation that is somehow connected to the part of creation just said (think about obvious and more complex, less obvious connections). They will then pass the ball of yarn across the circle to someone else, again holding on to a piece of the yarn. Continue passing the ball of yarn across the circle, naming connected parts of creation and making sure to hold on to a section of yarn before passing it along.

After a few times through everyone in the circle you will have a web held up between all of you. Look at the complex web of life made up of so many connections between various parts of creation. Think about how much larger and complex this web is in real life. Ask one person to drop one of the pieces of yarn they are holding. Then ask another person, and another. Imagine if some of these strings were fully cut.

### Alternate Instructions for Individuals:

If you are doing this on your own or just one other person, draw out a web of life similar to a 'mind-map'. Start with one part of creation (creature, plant, habitat, element etc.) and then draw a line to another part of creation that is somehow connected (think about obvious and more complex, less obvious connections). Keep going, naming and connecting parts of creation. Feel free to get creative with it. Draw pictures, collage, or do it on a computer.

### Discussion and Reflection Questions:

- What happens to the web of life when parts of creation (habitats, animals, plants etc.) are lost or damaged? What are some examples in real life of parts of creation that are being lost or damaged?
- Was it difficult to think of connections? What were some of the types of connections between parts of creation that you came up with?
- What does it mean to be part of the web of God's creation? What is our responsibility to all the parts of creation we are so deeply connected with?

### Litany of Lament:

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, we bring to you our prayers of lament for the Earth. In your mercy, receive our prayers as we name the species of our province that are threatened, endangered or extirpated:

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, we bring before you our laments as we name other environmental concerns we carry:

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, we hold before you other griefs and laments that are on our hearts today:

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, have mercy on us. In your kindness and love, you have entrusted us as caretakers for your Creation, to live as your image-bearers in a world you created for your delight. We confess that we have turned from your will, often abusing the natural world for greedy and short-sighted purposes. Now we are facing global climate disruption and other ecological crises as a result of our rebellion. Forgive us of our sins, and the sins of our society, and our failure to care for what you created for good. In your mercy, lead us to repentance, compassion, and life. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

I have set before you life and death . . . therefore choose life. (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Partial list of species who are threatened, endangered, or extirpated in the province of Ontario:

- Eastern Tiger Salamander, Extirpated
  - Fowlers Toad, Endangered
  - Barn Owl, Endangered
  - Golden Eagle, Endangered
  - Greater Prairie Chicken, Extirpated
  - Lake Sturgeon, Endangered
  - Paddlefish, Extirpated
  - Rusty-Patched Bumble Bee, Endangered
  - Karner Blue Moth, Extirpated
  - Mountain Lion (Cougar), Endangered
  - American Badger, Endangered
  - American Chestnut, Endangered
  - Small White Lady's Slipper, Endangered
  - Spring Blue-Eyed Mary Extirpated
  - Four-Leaved Milkweed, Endangered
  - Blue Racer Snake, Endangered
  - Eastern Box Turtle, Extirpated
  - Spotted Turtle, Endangered
  - Timber Rattlesnake, Extirpated
  - Incurved Grizzled Moss, Extirpated
  - Pale-Bellied Frost Lichen, Endangered
  - Piping Plover, Endangered
  - Grey Fox, Threatened
  - Butternut Tree, Endangered
  - Eastern Flowering Dogwood, Endangered
  - Red Mullberry, Endangered
  - Common Five-Lined Skink, Endangered
  - Algonquin Wolf, Threatened
  - Eastern Persius Duskywing Moth, Extirpated
  - Northern Bobwhite, Endangered
- and more...

- Wendy Janzen

<https://burningbushforestchurch.weebly.com/reflections--prayers/previous/2>

### Step 3: God's Creation Walk

Let's go on a walk and remind ourselves of God's creation love story. This walk will take us through the creation story asking us to pause at various points along our walk and give thanks for each part of creation. We ask you to pause by some sort of water, vegetation, leaves changing colour, and animal. Think about a route that may take you by each of those things. Hint: they are all around, even in a city. This walk can be as long or as short as you would like.

#### Beginning of Walk

Begin by finding a comfortable standing position and close your eyes. Imagine a nothingness, a formless void.

*Genesis 1:1-5 NRSV*

*1 In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

Open your eyes. See the light. Take a moment to share gratitude for the light of the day that allows our sight for this walk as well as for the dark nights for our sleep.

#### By Water

As you walk, look for water; a river, pond, or small puddle. Pause next to it. Reach your hand in and feel the glorious water.

*Genesis 1:6-8 NRSV*

*6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

Take a drink of water from a water bottle if you have one. Give thanks for all types of water that quenches our thirst, provides life, and is full of beauty and strength. Thanks be for the rain, the rivers, the lakes, the oceans, the puddles, the glaciers, the groundwater, and waters of all forms.



## On Land by Vegetation

Pause along your path by a bit of vegetation. Perhaps a berry bush, a walnut tree, farmer's field, grass, mushrooms, etc. If you have a snack, eat it. Or try a piece of cedar leaf. Say thank you and only take a little. \*Don't eat anything unless you know it is edible.

*Genesis 1:9-13 NRSV*

*9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*

As you chew, voice gratitude for the land we stand on and the vegetation that grows from it. Thanks be for food that sustains us and the fertile land that provides.

## By a Tree Changing Colours

Pause somewhere where you can see the magnificent changing colours of leaves. Stand in awe of the beauty of the changing season of autumn.

*Genesis 1:14-19 NRSV*

*14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*

Share in gratitude for the sun that lights and heats our days giving us so much energy and life. Say thank you to the stars and moon for lighting up the night sky. Give thanks for the seasons that change and remind us to be present and grateful for each moment in time.

## By an Animal

Walk quietly, treading lightly. Pause by an animal or a sign of one. Some birds, a squirrel, a pet dog. If you don't notice any try stopping and being very still and quiet. Who shows up?

*Genesis 1:20-25 NRSV*

*20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.*

*24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.*

Take a moment and be grateful for the other animals we share our home with. Thanks be to all the other animal life on this earth who have so much to teach us. We are grateful for the sustenance they provide as well as for their very existence.

### In an Open Space

Find an open space, perhaps back where you started or where you would like to end up for the next activity. If you are with others (who are 2 meters away and may be wearing a mask), look around at them. Place a hand on your heart and feel your heartbeat.

*Genesis 1:26-31 The Message*

*26-28 God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them  
reflecting our nature*

*So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,  
the birds in the air, the cattle,*

*And, yes, Earth itself,*

*and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."*

*God created human beings;*

*he created them godlike,*

*Reflecting God's nature.*

*He created them male and female.*

*God blessed them:*

*“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!  
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,  
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.”*

*29-30 Then God said, “I’ve given you  
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth  
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,  
given them to you for food.  
To all animals and all birds,  
everything that moves and breathes,  
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.”  
And there it was.*

*31 God looked over everything he had made;  
it was so good, so very good!  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Six.*

Give gratitude for the life we have. For every breath. For the life and breath of each other. Thanks be for all of creation! Now let us take on the responsibility we have been given and take care of creation so that the earth may continue to care for every part of creation, including us.

#### **Step 4: Together Raising our Voice with Art**

Finding ways to connect our voices so they are loud and can make a difference can feel daunting. But don’t worry. Breath. We are going to do it together. Art is a fantastic way to share a message. In Scott’s video you saw a few examples. There were many signs carried by Climate Strikers. There was the faith climate justice banner that churches and other faith communities in the Waterloo Region are being asked to hang. There was also the shoe strike, which are happening globally, using shoes as an artwork and protest demanding climate action.

#### **Instructions:**

Using sidewalk chalk, create a large mural. Draw and write a message about making a difference for creation. Get Creative! How will you use this as a way to connect with others? What is your message? What images will you use? Don’t have sidewalk chalk? Use whatever you have available to you.

Take a picture of your art and share it. Post it here for others to see.

## **Closing Prayer: We Hold all Creation in Our Hearts**

We hold in our hearts our siblings who suffer from storms, droughts, wildfires, and famines intensified by climate change.

We hold in our hearts all species that suffer. We grieve their loss of habitat and the loss of species already extinct.

We hold in our hearts the world leaders delegated to make decisions for life.

We pray that the web of life may be mended through courageous actions to limit carbon emissions, fossil fuel extraction, plastic pollution, and other harmful activities.

We pray for right actions for adaptation and mitigation to help our already suffering earth community.

We pray that love and wisdom might inspire my actions and our actions as communities. . . so that we may, with integrity, look into the eyes of fellow humans and all beings and truthfully say, we are doing our part to care for them and the future of all of our great, great, great, great, grandchildren.

May love transform us and our world with new steps toward life. -Amen.

~adapted from Interfaith Climate Prayer

<https://www.faithclimateactionweek.org/prayers-and-climate-blessings/>