

JULY

Abundance & Diversity

Wendy Janzen

OVERVIEW

Summer is a season of abundance as gardens reach maturity and fruit trees offer ripened fruit. Days are long, flowers bloom and stretch for the sun, and life takes on a playful, care-free spirit. Summer is a celebration of life, of passion, of immersion. Conversely, it can also be a dry time of drought or fires. It is important to read the 'book of creation' in your area and allow it to inform your worship.

As we celebrate the abundance of the earth, we also want to recognize the gifts and importance of biodiversity and interconnectedness. As you prepare for this gathering, you may want to do a bit of research into the variety of native plant and animal life in the area where you will meet. The app iNaturalist or local nature groups should have that information available.

In this service, participants will be invited to reflect on areas of growth and vibrancy (or drought or burnout) in their spiritual lives, and deepen their awareness of and appreciation for their many more-than-human neighbours.

See the [Introduction](#) to this series of worship services for further insights into planning an outdoor worship service.

GATHERING & GROUNDING

Take time for welcome and introductions, including naming the watershed you are in. As you gather in your particular place, remember that most of us are guests and newcomers to this land that has been home to particular Indigenous peoples from time immemorial. Offer a fuller acknowledgement of their past and present gifts to the land and community.

It is also home to many trees (name some particular species) that are older than any of us. This place is home to many species of animals, birds, and insects, including (name

some particular species). It is among all of these that we gather our hearts for worship.

Take a look around you, and notice the diversity your eyes can see – colours, textures, shapes, flora, fauna, and different elements. Notice the beautiful diversity of faces of the people gathered. (pause)

Close your eyes, and take some deep, calming breaths as you settle into a sense of being present for worship. Receive each inhale as a gift of God and a gift of the Earth, and offer each exhale as an act of reciprocity. (pause)

With your eyes still closed, what sounds can you hear? What sensations can you feel on your skin? Sun? Breeze? Rain? Feel the ground beneath your feet, and feel a sense of connectedness with this place. (pause)

Pray: God of all life, thank you for bringing us together here in this place. You created this earth with stunning abundance and biodiversity. Remind us that we are a part of this community of creation, and that we share kinship and covenant with the land and all creatures in our watershed. Open our hearts to your presence and guidance in our gathered worship. Amen.

READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Choose from any of these scripture readings, or others that come to mind:

Genesis 1:31a; Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 148:7-10; John 10:10b

“Each and every creature is a unique word of God, with its own message, its own metaphor, its own energetic style, its own way of showing forth goodness, beauty, and participation in the Great Mystery. Each creature has its own glow and its own unique glory.” - Richard Rohr

Offer a few reflections about how God created, loves, and blesses all of creation, in all of its abundance and diversity. God did not create us to be separate from, but interconnected with all life. We share a communion of sorts with all that lives, a sacred reciprocity of give and take, as we share our breath with photosynthesizing plants and trees and with everything that breathes, and as we eat and are eaten in order to live.

WANDERING & WONDERING

Invite participants into a time for wandering, to pay attention to the flora and fauna and

see what draws their attention. How many can you call by name? What are the various ways you experience God? The various ways God speaks? How does this season of summer reflect your inner spiritual life? How is God's sacred presence manifest here?

SHARING

Invite people into a time of sharing about what they experienced during the wandering time. You might want to ask them to each name one particular tree/plant/animal/element they encountered specifically by name in order to honour the abundance and diversity of this season and place.

SENDING

God of earth, sky, and sea,
in your great wisdom you created
each living being.

Send us with your blessing,
and may we in turn be a blessing
to the world around us.

Amen.