

OCTOBER

Jubilee and the Honorable Harvest

Wendy Janzen

OVERVIEW

Here in Canada we celebrate Thanksgiving in October, connected to the season of harvest. It is a celebration of all we have received from the Earth and from God, the Creator and giver of all good gifts. Whether we live in rural communities or in urban centres, it is important for us to cultivate a sense of connection to the land and the food it provides for us.

In this worship gathering we will explore intersecting themes of Jubilee and the Honorable Harvest (an Indigenous tradition of giving thanks). What is our relationship as humans to the Earth and all other life? How do we nurture a sense of gratitude, honor, respect, and reciprocity in all our interactions with the Earth?

See the [Introduction](#) to this series of worship services for further insights into planning a forest/wild church worship service.

GATHERING & GROUNDING

Begin with some words of welcome, introduction, and a territorial acknowledgement that includes giving thanks for the longstanding and ongoing contributions of the particular Indigenous peoples local to your place of worship.

Invite participants to enter into this time of worship by raising their hands to greet the sky and the birds; move their hands outwards to greet the trees, the animals, and each other; and lower their hands to greet the land, the insects, and all that lies below the surface, remembering that together we form a unique community of worship, all created and loved by God.

Next, invite people to close their eyes and take some deep breaths. Feel your breath entering and leaving your body, and notice any smells that are in the air. Notice if the air feels warm or cool, damp or dry. Give thanks for the breath of Life.

As you settle further into this place, take note of what you hear around you. What sorts of sounds can you identify? Are there both motorized/mechanical and natural sounds? Acknowledge that both are part of our modern soundscape.

Now, take some time to pay attention to what you feel on your skin - sun, or breeze, or rain? This is not climate-controlled space! How does it feel to be out in whatever weather conditions you find yourself in?

And, finally, allow your attention to rest on your feet, and how they connect you to the ground on which you sit or stand. Let our worship start where we stand, in gratitude, love and reciprocity with the earth we inhabit.

From this place of groundedness, let us pray:

God of sky and sea, of fire and soil:

In this season of harvest,

open our hearts and minds to

remember that you are the

giver of all good gifts,

and that we are called not to be owners,

but earthkeepers in mutual relationship

with all that you've created.

Guide us and bless us in our time of worship,

that we might hear you here.

Amen.

READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Consider using any of the following scripture passages, or others that come to mind for you. Use these readings and notes to form some reflections to offer the group.

Exodus 20:11; Leviticus 25: 1-7; Psalm 65; Luke 12:23-25

Robin Wall Kimmerer, (citizen of the Potawatami nation) in her book [Braiding Sweetgrass](#), speaks of the importance of practicing an Honorable Harvest as we receive earth's bounty: Never take the first, and never take the last. Take only what you need and leave some for others. Be grateful. Reciprocate the gift. Sustain the ones who sustain you, and the Earth will last forever. Read more or listen to Kimmerer speak about the Honorable Harvest [here](#).

As we reflect on harvest and what we receive from the Earth, we should consider the concepts of enough, of giving back (reciprocity), of not viewing the Earth as just a bunch of “natural resources” for us to exploit. What does it look like to live a ‘right-sized’ life in a ‘super-sized’ culture? What do the teachings of Jubilee, the Sabbath, and the Sabbath year have to show us about how to live in harmony with the Earth? How does God desire us to live? How do the teachings of the Honorable Harvest help us to see things differently? Note that both the Honorable Harvest and the Year of Jubilee are covenants that respect and honor the Earth. (Read more about the Year of Jubilee in [this issue of All Creation](#).)

WANDERING & WONDERING

Invite participants to take 30 minutes to wander and wonder - reflecting on the readings/themes and on how God is speaking to them today, here in this place. Encourage this to be a time of silence and personal reflection, and tell them what time they are to return. If possible, call participants back with a bell or chime of some sort so that they don’t need to worry about the time.

SHARING

Gather people back to your circle and invite them to share from the wandering time. This can either be done in one large circle, popcorn style, or in smaller groups or pairs.

SENDING

Let us be truly grateful
for all we have received.
As we go out from here,
the blessings of this place,
this season, this day,
go with us.
Amen.