

Eco Contemplative Liturgy

Our relationship with trees

Sunday 24 August 9:45 am in the Southwood Garden and on Zoom

Led by Petra



photo by [Simon Wilkes](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Gathering

We take time to connect with the space we're in. We feel the incoming and outgoing of our breath, feeling our connection with the life that is around us.

The Sycamore by farmer and poet **Wendell Berry**

In the place that is my own place, whose earth
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,
a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself.
Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,
hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightning has burned it.
There is no year it has flourished in
that has not harmed it.
There is a hollow in it
that is its death, though its living brims whitely
at the lip of the darkness and flows outward.
Over all its scars has come the seamless white 2nd reader
of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history
healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection
in the warp and bending of its long growth.
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate.
It is a fact, sublime, mystical and unassailable.
In all the country there is no other like it.
I recognize in it a principle, an indwelling
the same as itself, and greater, that I would be ruled by.
I see that it stands in its place and feeds upon it,
and is fed upon, and is native, and maker.

Trees of Grace by **Gertrude of Helfta**, translated for our times by Mary T. Malone. Gertrude (1256-1302) was a teacher, counsellor and mediator, a gifted musician, poet and singer. Her main writings are in the **Herald of Divine Love**. This prayer was written sitting among trees at the monastery at Helfta in Germany.

I had gone into the courtyard before Prime
And was sitting beside the fishpond
Absorbed by the charms of the place.
The crystalline water
Flowing through the fresh green trees standing
around,
The birds circling in flight.
Above all,
The freedom of the dove gave me pleasure.
There was nothing but sweet calmness.
I was lonely and longing for an intimate
companion.

You, O God, guided my prayer,
Breathing into me the knowledge
That if I poured back like water
The flowing streams of your grace,
I would grow in grace like the trees
When they are in fresh flower.
I would soar easily towards you like the birds
And I would learn to live more in your friendship.
My heart would be free.
I would let go, O God.
Let it be.

Contemplative time in the garden (15 minutes). Take time to notice the place of the trees in the garden, and to be aware of the gifts the trees bring to you.

Re-gathering. We are invited to share our responses if we wish to.

I Go Among the Trees. Poem by Wendell Berry

I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.

Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it,
and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.

Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.

After days of labour,
mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last,
and I sing it. As we sing,
the day turns, the trees move.

Prayer

God of all life,
We thank you for the strength and beauty of trees and the role they play in the web of life.
Help us to see ourselves as part of this web, and to act with respect and gratitude towards all living things.
May we learn from the trees to be rooted in love and to reach for the light.
Amen.