

Befriending Our Trees and Forests



SETTING: If possible, outdoors under the trees. If indoors, arrange setting with photos and realistic drawings of trees; have enough pictures for each participant.

Introduction

Leader The United Nations has recognized the crucial importance to our earth of the gifts of our forests and waters. In naming 2011 the International Year of Forests and the days of



March 21 World Forestry Day and March 22 World Water Day, this international body has called all peoples to take time to reflect on our dependence on these resources, their intrinsic value, and what changes we must make to insure the protection and wise use of these life sustaining friends on our earth.

We come to prayer to give thanks to our Creator for these gifts and to ask for the wisdom to find ways that we can live in a way that expresses this gratitude and our appreciation.

Opening

Song “Canticle of the Sun” by Marty Haugen, vs 2, 3

Prayer

ALL

Oh my Beloved Adonai
You are alive for me today.

Seeing the wind
caress the branches
Of the trees
I am delivered by Your grace into
the infinity of Your existence.
You are alive in me today.
I feel Your presence coursing
through my body and
Burning my heart with a golden fire.
Your voice — such sweet
silent flames of raging love
That purify me in blissful splendor
but do not consume me.

Oh My Beloved
Oh Ever Faithful One
Open my mouth so that my lips
may declare Your praise
now and always
Open my heart to Your Love
now and forever.

early morning blessing by ronald bedrick — World Prayers

Reflections

Reader 1

At times I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons.

How does this speak to your own experience? What relationship have you found with a tree, with nature?

Carl Jung

(Pause for quiet reflection.)

Reader 2

As I go in under the trees,
dependably, almost at once,

and by nothing I do, things fall into place.... I am less important than I thought, the human race is less important than I thought. I rejoice in that.

Have you ever found the trees to be a source of renewal; of giving you a new sense of being?

Wendell Berry

(Pause for quiet reflection.)

Reader 3 (The Trees)

We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many people of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.

ohenton kariwahtekwen — iroquois thanksgiving address (World Prayers)

(Invite participants to choose a tree they can see or to choose a picture of a tree that speaks to them of gifts they see or have experienced in this tree.)

(In groups of two or three allow time for sharing these gifts of the trees.)





Sharing

Leader Having considered the gifts trees and forests are to us, we also realize that these gifts are often taken for granted or are ignored in the abusive use of these resources. We know of many stories of deforestation in our own country and in the [Amazon Rain Forests](#) and other rainforests throughout the world. We know of stories of trees being destroyed for our “civilized” use and to make way for “progress” without regard for the value they have and the loss of the gifts they offer.

(In groups of two or three, please share a story you have experienced of an abusive action toward a tree or forest. Share also one positive action you have done or can do to correct or counteract this abuse.)

(Allow time for sharing.)

Leader Let us share the actions suggested in our conversations.

(Allow time for comments from participants.)

Leader With these positive thoughts for the future we can say with the poet [e.e. cummings](#):

i thank You God
for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly
spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;
and for everything
which is natural which is
infinite which is yes

Conclusion

Leader Let us close with a Hindu prayer for peace in all things.

ALL

I desire neither
earthly kingdom,
nor even freedom from
birth and death.
I desire only the
deliverance from grief
of all those
afflicted by misery.
Oh Lord, lead us from
the unreal to the real;
from darkness to light;



from death to immortality.

May there be peace
in celestial regions.

May there be peace on earth.

May the waters be appeasing.

May herbs be wholesome and
may trees and plants

bring peace to all.

May all beneficent beings
bring peace to us.

May thy wisdom spread peace
all through the world.

May all things be a source of
peace to all and to me.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

hindu peace prayer by mahatma gandhi (World Prayers)

Song “Canticle of the Sun” by
Marty Haugen, vs 5, 6

Acknowledgments

“Befriending Our Trees and Forests” ritual by [Marguerite Samz, OSM](#);
available on [Hill Connections](#) (<http://hillconnections.org>), a web site linking [Contemplation](#) and [Social Justice](#).