

Leaf Listening

Environment Best setting is outdoors under trees; sitting on the ground if possible. If indoors, provide an open space with fall setting.

Materials Needed Pile of fall leaves (real, not artificial) from which participants can choose.

Theme A leaf tells us the story of our connectedness to the entire universe.



Introduction

(Welcome participants and invite them to sit quietly and listen to all sounds around them: noting which sound predominates and speaks to them most clearly.

After five minutes, invite each person to speak one word or phrase about the sound attuned to and then come forward and choose one leaf from those provided and return to the sitting position.)

Pray together

(when all have a leaf)

Oh, Great Spirit,
whose voice I hear in the winds
and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me.
I am small and weak.
I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes
ever behold the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand
the things you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden
in every leaf and rock.

*american indian - lakota
- chief yellow lark 1887*

Reading/ Reflection

Leader As the Native American recognizes, the Great Spirit has lessons for us to learn from every leaf—especially today, from the leaf you hold in your hand.

You are now invited to spend some time befriending and listening to your personal leaf.

The leaf has a story beyond its taking form from the tree. As Brian Swimme writes in his book *The Universe Is a Green Dragon*:

“The universe as a whole is...like a developing being. The universe has a beginning and is in the midst of its development....Everything that exists is involved in this emergence—galaxies and stars and planets and light and all living creatures.”

Reflective Statements (various readers)

♦ Imagine the beginnings of your leaf as the universe began; all that is part of the leaf you hold in your hand was present there. Experience this life beginning to emerge.

(Pause for silent reflection after each statement.)

♦ Eons later imagine the formation of the earth from which a tree will grow.

♦ Imagine the development of a seed with all its potential and its growth into a towering tree from which a bud blossoms into the leaf open to the powers of the sun.

♦ A tree has formed and through the centuries this tree has given way to the new life of another tree continuing to the tree from which your leaf has come. Travel with your leaf through its development and adventures to the moment you chose it as your personal leaf.

♦ Study your leaf, its shape, color, fragrance, texture. What does it tell you of your connectedness with its beginning, its development, its importance of being here with you in this moment of your life?

A Song of Praise

Leader As we hold this gift of creation in our hands, let us together pray a song of praise:

How wonderful, O (Creator God),
are the works of your hands!



The heavens declare Your glory,
the arch of the sky displays Your handiwork
In Your love You have given us the power
to behold the beauty of Your world
robed in all its splendor.

The sun and the stars, the valleys and the hills,
the rivers and the lakes all disclose Your presence.

The roaring breakers of the sea
tell of Your awesome might,
the beast of the field and the birds of the air
bespeak Your wondrous will.

In Your goodness You have made us able to hear
the music of the world (in these leaves we hold).

The voices of the loved ones
reveal to us that You are in our midst.
A divine voice sings through all creation.

traditional jewish prayer

Leader I invite you now to share what this experience was like for you. Were there messages for you, for our world as we struggle through environmental and global warming issues.

(Pause for a time of sharing.)

Closing Ritual

Leader Through the cycle of life we are enriched with life around us and then move forward to times of letting go, allowing life to move on into the continuing development of our universe. At this time bring forth your leaf, take time for the farewell you need, and place your leaf back onto the pile. You leave it to continue the journey of dying to allow for the gift of new life.

Conclude with prayer of thanks:

Reader 1 For the expanding grandeur of Creation, worlds known and unknown, galaxies beyond galaxies, filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 2 For this fragile planet earth, its times and tides, its sunsets and seasons:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 1 For the joy of human life, its wonders and surprises, its hopes and achievements:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 2 For our human community, our common past and future hope, our oneness transcending all separation, our capacity to work for peace and justice in the midst of hostility and oppression:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 1 For high hopes and noble causes, for faith without fanaticism, for understanding of views not shared:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 2 For all who have labored and suffered for a fairer world, who have lived so that others might live in dignity and freedom:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 1 For human liberty and sacred rites; for opportunities to change and grow, to affirm and choose:

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 2 For the gifts received through our time of leaf-listening,

All We give thanks this day.

Reader 1 We pray that we may live not by our fears but by our hopes, not by our words but by our deeds.

*we give thanks this day - o.
eugene pickett*



Acknowledgments

“Leaf Listening” ritual: [Marguerite Samz, OSM](#);
from [Hill Connections](#) <<http://hillconnections.org>>, a web site linking [Contemplation](#) and [Social Justice](#).
All prayers are from the web site of [World Prayers](#) <<http://www.worldprayers.org/index.html>>.