

Learning@Redeemer's Response to:

SEASON OF CREATION 2020

*All My Relations: Learning to Live in the Family of Earth
Living the Message –
30 Challenges from Members of The Redeemer*



THE
REDEEMER
TORONTO

www.TheRedeemer.ca

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Eastern Cottonwood

Day 1: *An Encouragement to Saunter*

Offered by Henry Krol

The naturalist John Muir prefers the word saunter to hike: *“Away back in the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, ‘À la sainte terre,’ ‘To the Holy Land.’ And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers.”*

I like to saunter through the neighbourhoods and green spaces of Toronto. During this COVID-19 pandemic, it clears my head and allows me to smell something other than the inside of my own home or the inside of my own mask. And sauntering allows me to experience Creation in a way that the car-rush doesn't. I see more. I stop more. I appreciate more.



Bruce Trail

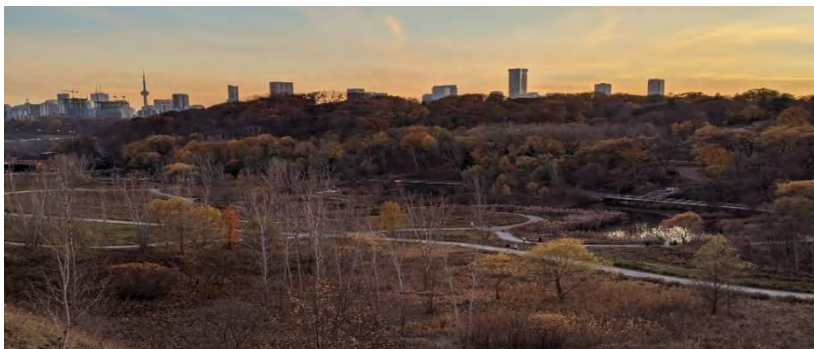
Jesus and his disciples walked — sauntered — everywhere, engaging in rich conversation as they went. His parable of the sower may owe its origin to the observations he made of seed falling on soil as he sauntered.

Two disciples, walking to Emmaus, literally came into contact with the divine when the resurrected Jesus joined them on their stroll.

We all come into contact with the divine if we let ourselves. Jean-Christie Ashmore's book about preparing for the Camino de Santiago begins, “We carry our fears in our backpacks.” That applies more broadly as well. We drive because we fear the vulnerability and slowness of walking. We shackle ourselves to our phones because we fear missing out.

When I go out these days, I carry my mask, my sanitizer, water and my phone. I wish I could leave them behind, but I have my fears. I'm a work in progress.

To really connect with Creation — to give the divine a chance to connect with us — we should saunter more.



Toronto Don Valley Brick Works at dusk

The Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) lists a [number of places](#) to saunter in the city. For anyone considering a more ambitious saunter, John Brieley's [guides to various Camino de Santiago routes](#) offer information for both the physical/practical and philosophical/spiritual journeys.

Day 2: A Day with Water

Offered by Rita Patenaude



Forks of the Credit Conservation Area

"Water ripples deeply in all of us. To stir that rippling is to awaken action." --Eco Logos/Water Docs

"Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility for our human place in nature and the whole." --From the United Nations Earth Charter 2000

To our hearing, the Earth Charter might well have the sound of scripture calling us to act justly, to live in right relationship with all life....and with Water. Let us devote this day, as we are able, to explore how it might be if we really lived in right relationship with Water. Here are some actions we might take today (or later):



Humber River

*Begin and end this day in a prayer/meditation on Water.

*For guidance read the [U.N. Earth Charter](#):

*Review my use of Water, what will I continue or change. Why?

*Consider this mindful practice: become intimate with our Toronto area waterway system, where the many rivers and creeks drain into Great Lake Ontario. Their names read like a litany: Humber, Don, Rouge, Highland Creek, Taddle Creek, Black Creek, Mimico Creek... Choose a time, daily or weekly, to "be with" these sacred waters and pray for their health and healing. If you are a walker, walk as a prayer of intercession for the waters.

*"Come drink deep of living water,
Without cup bend close to the ground,
Wade with bare feet into troubled waters,
Where love of life abounds."*

"Come Drink Deep"

(song by Carolyn McDade)

Day 3: *The Cost of Fast Fashion*

Offered by Avery Maclean

During this Season of Creation, we're invited to reflect on how we can contribute to a sustainable world. Challenges within our reach can positively impact the biological systems that sustain life. What we are confronting is complex – often there is a powerful element of creativity underpinning humankind's insatiable appetites, and this is difficult to reconcile.

I adore clothes. But fashion is one of the top three polluters.

Today I delight in clothes as a mode of self-expression, but during my teenage years, fashion trends provided me with a uniform, helping me to signal 'I fit in.' As Anglicans, don't we enjoy how vestments change with the seasons? And have you noticed how thoughtfully Fr. Mackison has coordinated his mask with his vestments when we meet in person? Clothing is an important signifier of cultural identity; fashion can be beautiful, comforting, provocative, and inspiring.

So how much clothing is enough? Enough to cloth our nakedness? Enough to give us confidence to greet the world of work, of school, of unemployment, or of leisure? And what is the true cost of this appetite?

"The True Cost" is a thoughtful documentary about the impact of fast fashion on our environment. An Italian financial advisor captured my attention with his insight: people he advises, who hold jobs that previously afforded them housing, healthcare and education, are now unable to enjoy these basic rights. However, they present a well-dressed façade that belies their situation. He noted that the fast fashion industry has grown in inverse relation to the shrinking of access to education, housing, healthcare. Fashion hides pain.



What can we do?

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you?" Luke 12:27-28

Gentle Shepherd Daylily

1. Learn why we should care by watching *"The True Cost"* (Netflix).
2. Carefully consider the destination for our no longer needed/wanted clothing prior to acquiring new. Clothing exchanges, thrifting, and consignment all offer sustainable approaches to feed our desire for creativity and novelty.
3. Make informed choices: the *"Good On You"* app and [website](#) "considers the most important social and environmental issues facing the fashion industry to assess a brand's impact on people, the planet and animals."
4. *"Be more, need less"* (a challenging slogan from my nephew Lachlan's t-shirt).

Day 4: *Not Long Ago ...*

Offered by Andrew Scorer

Not long ago, windshields would be covered with insects after a summer road trip. Not anymore. Pesticides and global warming have caused a depletion of insects.



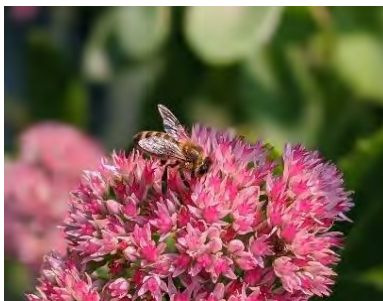
Woolly Bear Caterpillar (Isabella Tiger Moth)

So what? We are part of nature even if we try to set ourselves apart from nature. Every atom of our bodies has passed through an earthworm's gut. Insects are ecologically essential. If we trash the soil with pesticides and if insects disappear, I suppose food will be grown in factories without insects. Okay for a while, but there would be other consequences.



Six-Spotted Tiger Beetle

I believe that the mystery of everything is God, that redemptive change is spelled out by the human Jesus, and that living things are the Holy Spirit. Faith is best described by imagery, not by words. The Church and the Bible are full of imagery, not to be taken literally. As a child, I had a painting of St Francis surrounded by animals, all getting along, instead of eating each other. Even though nature is cruel, I respect it.



Honey Bee

Respecting insects will help save all living things. Frown on pesticide use, cut grass less, rake leaves less, all to help insects. Don't kill spiders and moths. They do good.



Red Admiral Butterfly

Watch and wonder at the intricacies of an insect.

Day 5: Reduce Food Waste

Offered by Theodore Lam

During the Season of Creation, we celebrate the beauty of creation, and we are thankful for all the living things in it, especially the food that provides us with the energy to live. Unfortunately, this relationship with our food is often swept aside and forgotten, and billions of tons of food ends up rotting in landfills; the broken remains of our pact with the Earth.

The food that sits uneaten in landfills is not only a gesture of ungratefulness, but has tangible environmental impacts. 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than any country other than China and the US, is used to produce food that is never eaten. The problem is even worse in an affluent country like Canada, where a full 58% of food that is produced is wasted. Fifty-eight percent!

The good news is that the absurdity of this problem means there are some very simple solutions. Unlike some other green initiatives, reducing food waste does not cost anything, in fact, it saves you money.



Cooking with sourdough discard

Here are five easy tips on how to reduce food wastage in your household:

1. Don't buy more food than you can eat.
2. Use [apps like Flashfood](#) and [Feedback](#) to reduce waste at grocery stores and restaurants.
3. Buy "ugly" foods. Many perfectly good fruits and vegetables are thrown out due to blemishes or other "imperfections".
4. Keep track of what food is in your fridge and when it is going to expire. Apps like [FridgePal](#) can help with this.
5. Recycle meals as leftovers. There are many [creative and easy ways to do this](#).

Reducing food waste is probably the most impactful action that you, as an individual, can take to reduce your carbon footprint. If we all do our part, we can slowly start to repair our relationship with Mother Earth, one leftover meal at a time.



Stock Photo 20832407

In the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, Jesus says to *"gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost"* (John 6:12). This is exactly what we need to do.

Thank you for doing your part.

Day 6: Trees

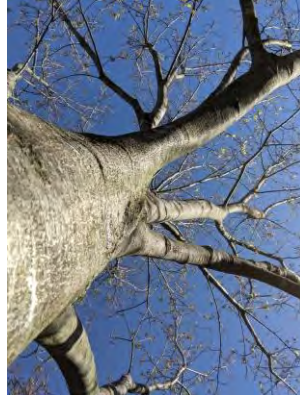
Offered by John Stevens

For the past 71 years I have spent part of every summer at our family cottage.

Since I became an adult, my particular focus (some would say obsession) at the cottage appears to have been the trees.



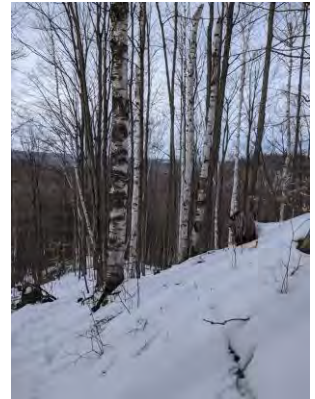
Norway Maple



Northern Red Oak



Sugar Maple



Aspen

I have watched the magnificent ancient elms fall prey to beetles and worried my way through the natural progression from softwoods to hardwoods that followed. I have planted and transplanted. I have lived enough years to experience the joy of seeing small white pine saplings mature into a towering pine forest. And I have exercised my patriarchal prerogative to prevent two generations of family from cutting down trees to open up the view to the lake or to let more light into our admittedly very dark cottage.

For the past 10 days I have stood helplessly at our cottage kitchen door.

And watched and listened and agonized as, less than thirty feet away, chain saws screeched and excavators growled while trees were cut down and a hillside was clawed away. At the cottage next door a new roadway is being built and the landscape is being re-created to better conform to current Muskoka fashion.

In the midst of the anguish this was causing me, and the constant admonitions to “get a grip”, I happened upon a beautifully written reflection in the Toronto Star from Kingston poet and author Steven Heighton. Heighton’s reflection is based on “the counter-intuitive notion of Toronto-based Jungian scholar Kate Eccles that you should **embrace the smallest life you can love**. This idea seemed to speak to me in the midst of the overweening ambition that I was witnessing next door.

At the same time I kept remembering Jesus saying, “I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly.” (In fact I had misremembered John 10:10 and substituted “you” for “they”). In any case, Eccles’s **smallness** and Jesus’s **abundance** seemed to be at odds.

During this Season of Creation during this year of COVID-19 I have set myself the task of trying to better understand what Eccles means by the smallest life you can love and what Jesus means by an abundant life and to see if, perhaps, there is a point where they might intersect.

Day 7: Words in Your Heart and Soul

Offered by Karen Turner

You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul

.... teach them to your children,

*talking about them when you are at home and when you are away,
when you lie down and when you rise.*

*....so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the landas long as the
heavens are above the earth.*

(Deuteronomy 11:18-21)

This morning my lovely daughter-in-law posted a couple of photos on Facebook of my four year-old grandson by the side of the river near their Peterborough home, reaching into the water, “being an explorer and taking water samples”. Now, you need to know that Robin has a PhD in environmental biology, with a specialty in the eco-systems of streams and wetlands.



Hockley Valley--Oak Ridges Moraine



Northern Green Frog

When I asked her in the comments what she was teaching him with these water samples, she said, “in an episode of his science show yesterday they were exploring by taking samples and checking for turbidity, so he was looking at how cloudy the water was.” In another comment she said, “we also counted how many different animals we saw and took pictures to measure biodiversity.” Knowing my little grandson, he would have been loving this, deeply engaged in these tasks with her, because he’s a bright, curious little guy, and loves spending time alone with his mother! A true teachable moment!

I was moved and delighted by this story, and the passage from Deuteronomy I quote above came to mind. When you read the bible carefully (particularly if you’re influenced, as I am, by Sylvia Keesmaat!), through an eco-justice lens, you see that the Bible calls us repeatedly, as in the larger passage from which I pulled this passage, to be faithful observers and servants of the land. In this time of environmental crisis brought about by human disobedience to these calls, we need to be attentive to the task of not only teaching ourselves, but also to look eagerly for these “teachable moments” with our children and grandchildren, to not only love God, but to lovingly observe and care for the earth, understanding we are not her masters, separate and apart, but part of her beautiful, interdependent family.

Day 8: *Three R Testimony*

Offered by John Sutton

“Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” are the new three “Rs”. Questioning whether we really need that item we are about to buy is step one. Living by the mantra “this may be of use” at some time to someone in the future is step two. Making sure that everything possible is recycled is step three. As the principal conscious stewards of this fragile island home, humans are the only species to exercise this imperative.

Our first baptismal covenant includes the affirmation of God as creator of heaven and earth. We must actively live this affirmation by honoring creation. The implementation of this is incorporated in our last covenant by promising to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. We cannot exploitatively consume without impacting the conditions of others.

I am an active packrat. Every possible screw, bracket, piece of miscellaneous metal, wire or fitting finds its way into my basement “hardware store”. My neighbors find it way more convenient to ask if I might have this or that to solve their immediate repair needs than driving to the closest big box retailer to search their shelves. Besides, it is far more fun to talk about how we might fashion a piece of otherwise “junk” into a custom solution. Items that are clearly destined for recycling are gathered in a metal container and periodically go to our neighborhood scrap metal yard for sorting and conversion back into feedstock.



Toronto Climate Strike March: 2019

Until being asked to write this piece, I had never considered my aversion to throwing things away as anything other than the annoyance my family label it. Now, I can look at it as a small part of living my faith. Over forty plus years, it is quite a storehouse. If anyone asks, I will simply direct them to Matt: 6:19.

Day 9: *Something Every Day*

Offered by Susan Graham Walker

At the Earthsong Launch of this year's Season of Creation guest speaker Jennifer Henry, Executive Director of Kairos pointed us to some resources her organization has put together.

([Kairos](#), supported by the Anglican Church of Canada, is an ecumenical organization that works in faithful action for ecological justice and human rights.)



The one she mentioned in her talk is called [Take a Sacred Pause](#) with 'sacred' becoming an acronym - Sense, Appreciate, Connect, Respect, Express, Delight.

It is part of a larger resource of another 30 Day [Eco-Justice Challenge](#). While it was released for use in September 2020, I think it could adapt well to any 30 days - one you start tomorrow or one you start on November 1. (Both months have 30 days.)

I'm going to take this on. Join me?

Day 10: *The Mustard Seed Challenge*

Offered by Kate Werneburg



In the gospels, Jesus tells the parable of the mustard seed. A mustard seed is tiny. When it is planted, it becomes a mighty tree. Some reach up to twenty-five feet! This parable teaches us not to underestimate a tiny action, a small change. Early in the pandemic, life changed hugely for most people, as stay-at-home orders went out across the globe. Car traffic decreased, fewer planes flew, and factories were closed. The Indian city of Delhi saw the neighbouring Himalayan mountains for the first time in over a generation.



Karios 30 Day Challenge: Day16

During this time, global pollution only went down very minimally. An overwhelming amount of climate change is caused by industry, and today I call us to an individual task that focuses us towards a collective goal: write to those who represent you politically about the urgent need to act on climate change. Demand that they speak out and act on legislation that will drastically reduce our carbon footprint. Your message need not be long or formal. It can be a few brief sentences.

You might also want to call their office and deliver this message over the phone. The more of us call and email the more our elected officials will be unable to say that their constituents don't care about climate change or are focused on other issues. Every chief of staff keeps a tally of the nature of the messages that come in. We can push this to the top of the political agenda by taking small actions all together, by planting all our little mustard seeds. I will be keeping all of us, and our elected officials in my prayers today, as we bloom out into a specimen that cannot be ignored or downtrodden.



Alamy Stock Images: oil painting by V. Van Gogh

Day 11: A Tale of Three Trees

Offered by Jim Boyles



Calloway Crabapple Tree

Deuteronomy 20:19

When you lay siege to a city for an extended time while fighting against it to capture it, you must not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit. You must not cut them down. Are the trees of the field human, that you should besiege them

In these pandemic days I've been walking in the neighbourhood and have become enamored by trees. So many in our city, and so beautiful and majestic. Here's one part of nature, of God's creation that is immediate, and outlasts us. Even in warfare, Moses calls for saving the trees.

We have a Manitoba Maple that's right up against our garage, and as it grows and its trunk expands, the garage frame (wood) will be threatened. The arborist says that it could be chopped down if we agree to plant another tree from a list approved by the city. We've pondered this possibility over the last fifteen years.

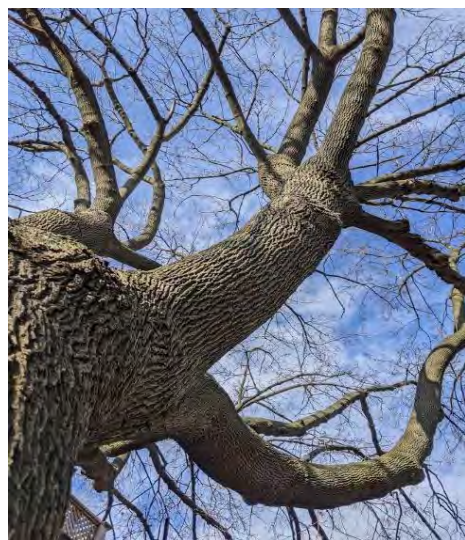
In our front yard we have a crabapple tree that this year produced a bumper crop of crabapples, and I've been making jelly. What a joy to see the bright red fruit, gather it and see it turned into tasty jelly.



Manitoba Maple (Wikipedia)

The third tree is on our neighbour's lot, a huge, old maple. Over the last twenty years large branches have fallen from it four times, once smashing into a car, once taking out our power line, and twice landing on the sidewalk. A city inspector has been to look at it regularly and determines each time that it's healthy enough. I wonder. One large branch looms over our property, and if there were to be a severe western wind, and it were to fall, our house would be damaged.

As caretakers of creation, care for the trees. Care for your trees, plant new ones. Actively encourage your city councillor to support the city's initiatives in expanding the urban forest.



Norway Maple

Day 12: 'Nothing is Too Small'

Offered by Sheree Drummond

A major challenge of big issues or problems, is, well, that they are big. This is certainly the case with climate change and relatedly the overall declining health of Creation. Faced with such an overwhelming problem it is understandable that it may feel as though our actions and decisions as individuals won't make a difference.



Toronto Climate Strike March: September 2019



8-Spotted Forester Moth (wingspan 2-3 cm)

But we Christians believe in a God who cares for the smallest things, a God who shows us that even the smallest things have value.

As Christians, we should be emboldened to reject the forces within society that foster a sense that everything is disposable. The belief that we can just keep using whatever resources exist to make new things - and to throw out those things (whether big or small) sometimes even after they've only been used once. We have to challenge this prevailing attitude by changing small things in our day to day actions and behaviours.

Every time we approach our recycling bins to drop something in we should be asking ourselves – 'do I really have no other use for this?' I grew up in a home where almost everything was put to use again. One example of this was that my mother re-used the clear plastic milk pouches that came in every 4-litre bag of milk. After we finished the milk, she sliced the top open – washed it, left it to dry – and then it would be used multiple times as a bag for sandwiches and other things. I have carried on with this practice as an adult and only came to notice that it was unusual when one of my kids remarked upon it a few years ago. There are so many things like this that we can do within our own homes. And if we all do these small things, it will begin to make a real difference – for all of Creation.

<https://cottage.life.com/general/5-crafty-ways-to-reuse-your-milk-bags/>



Day 13: All in God's Image

Offered by Faris Nimry

My proposition: all are created in God's image. Humans, animals, plants, the air, the land, the waters. We are all connected through the spirit of God, which is love. We are BE-ings in the image of God (our true self) when we offer God, other humans, the environment and land, unconditional love.

I can respect the earth unconditionally because I respect myself unconditionally. I try to respect myself and the Holy Spirit within because I am made in the image of God. God sent his only begotten son to die for me. Acting without love does not align me with my responsibility to God, within me and outside of me. Our love of God connects and makes us care for the other, and for the environment. We are stewards of the environment for our sisters and brothers today, and for future generations.



Black Press File Photo

How can we respect others and things, and our sacred calling to love God and our neighbor when we do not respect our sacredness and act as we were instructed in Matthew 22:36?

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Look within yourself, Sisters and Brothers, and listen to the beliefs you have about yourselves. Do you believe that you are 'chosen'? For many are invited, but few are chosen Matt 22:14. We are not chosen when we do not believe and act as the chosen ones, by acting with love. The guest arrived without wedding clothes. He did not act as a believer in the meaning of the gathering. He was thrown out of the 'wedding'.



TRC Bentwood Box by Coast Salish artist Luke Marsten
(from University of Manitoba News, January 2017)

We say the Land Acknowledgement regularly at our meetings. Yet do we act in accordance with the spirit of the words, the invitation to stewardship and love of the land, and of others? Do we wear our wedding clothes to the banquet? The Indigenous have been benevolent land stewards for thousands of years. Eventually, the Settlers benefited abundantly from these lands. But some of us still act with little or no love towards the land, or towards the marginalized. Do we want to continue to refuse the invitation to God's banquet? Do we come to Church without our wedding clothes?

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)
[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:](#)

Day 14: Brother Air

Offered by Nancy Luno

“Praise, too, for our ever-present Brother Air, who, though invisible, surrounds us and gives us life and breath. Truly, he is a creation in your likeness.”

From *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, a children’s version of St. Francis of Assisi’s “Canticle of the Creatures” as reimagined by Katharine Paterson

How lovely and quiet it was in my residential neighbourhood as I went for walks this spring, when the city shut down due to the pandemic. With many people staying home, there were few vehicles moving. It felt that humans took priority over cars for a change.



*“A Wheatfield and Cypress”, V. Van Gogh
(from Franciscans of Canada website)*

So it was something of a shock to the system when things opened up! Once again, the streets around me were full of moving cars and trucks. Besides the noise, something else returned, idling vehicles. Now I see drivers parked and hunched over cellphones, contractors lunching in their trucks, people making complicated deliveries - all with their engines running!



City of Toronto

We’ve known for decades that car exhaust is harmful to our health and can contribute to premature death. And now researchers think that Covid-19 mortality rates may also be worsened by poor air quality. Toronto has one of the oldest and toughest idling control bylaws, limiting idling to no more than “one minute in a sixty-minute period”. But it appears lots of drivers don’t know about it or choose to ignore it.

So if you are a driver, please think, the next time you get in your car. Perhaps you could put your seat belt on, find your sunglasses, or wait for your dawdling teenager - before – you turn on your engine. Or turn it off while you have that snack, or chat with your neighbour. According to Natural Resources Canada:

*“if Canadian motorists avoided idling for **just three minutes** every day of the year, CO2 emissions could be reduced by 1.4 million tonnes annually.... the equivalent to taking 320,000 cars off of the road” for a year.*

True, your action won’t be the definitive solution to global warming, but every little bit helps! And you and the people passing by on the sidewalk will all breathe a little easier for it.

To learn more, see:

“How big a problem is idling?” <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/what-on-earth-newsletter-idling-population-climate-change-1.5351917>

“Emission impacts resulting from vehicle idling”

<https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/efficiency/communities-infrastructure/transportation/cars-light-trucks/idling/4415>

Day 15: *My Three-Legged Guru*

Offered by David Townsend

Such a cat as Ticket will not pass this way again. He managed the last eleven of his nineteen years on three legs, after the second of two bungee jumps from a balcony. Each time, he forgot the cord.

I remember his younger quadruped self, leaping to the top of a bookcase and nudging his way behind a picture frame that surely concealed the portal to another world. Or taking a leap from across the room at the aquarium, his front paws splayed around the sides, in pursuit of the shiny thing with scales that somehow drifted always just out of reach.

After he lost his leg, he developed the build of a linebacker on the steroids he took to control an autoimmune disorder. He spent summer afternoons sitting half-visible at the back of the garden, a black cat with only the white tip of his tail and startlingly white whiskers standing out in the shadows. In his later years, he negotiated the ascent to the couch by way of the hassock that we dubbed the Mobile Pussycat Launcher.



David Townsend

At the end, when his remaining hind leg gave out, the house call vet was a model of wisdom and compassion, gently confirming our sense that it was time to send him on. His last goodbye couldn't have been gentler. He drifted off to sleep purring on my lap. From there he took his last leap out of this life, finally learning to fly, as his friend Naomi put it. Into his heart's desire, the place where iridescent fish flit among the branches of trees.

He was dumber than dirt. And utterly at one with his world. An improbable sage who became my teacher.

Do I any longer believe that my life needs to be any more precious in the sight of God than was his? Or any less? I'm not sure I do. Being that precious--as precious, and miraculous, as a whale, a sea otter, an old-growth forest, a coral reef--is enough.

Day 16: *Transforming What's Ordinary*

Offered by Heather Bennett

When I was a teenager, my great-aunt Gertie made me a quilt. She was my grandfather's sister and lived in a farming community. My quilt is a variation of the "Dresden plate" pattern. Each block of 20 "petals," as well as its centre circle, are made from leftover fabric or re-usable parts of clothing cut into 3-inch strips, carefully arranged to create contrasts of light and dark and sewn together. Then, patterns between the blocks were created by neat, precise stitches on the white background. Taken together, these elements represent loving, intentional transformation. My quilt is a keepsake as much as the practical item it was in my university dorm room.

Looking at the colourful cotton, I imagine unknown stories—were the mostly blue pinstripe pieces made from shirts my uncle wore to church? Was the fabric with pink, blue and red apples on it used to make an apron worn for church suppers? Surely the red gingham pieces were! And, almost certainly the yellow daisy-like patterned fabric was from a summer dress Aunt Gertie delighted wearing!



Heather Bennett



Didy Erb

Earlier this year, I desperately went through closets and drawers, looking for leftover fabric or clothing I could offer a friend to sew into masks. Leftover cotton from long ago curtains and a dresser scarf, a fitted bed sheet that no longer fit any mattress, and fabric I kept from my mother's sewing box. These remnants of cloth were lovingly transformed into potentially life-saving masks, to limit the spread of COVID-19, for people unknown to me.

I have become glaringly aware in recent months of how little I actually need; that my resources are finite and may need to last a very long time; that the ordinary can be transformed for essential purposes. I have become aware of how vulnerable the Earth is when, in crisis, we exploit her resources. I have resolved to be intentional about what I purchase, for what purpose, and how, at some future date, it may be lovingly transformed. If you searched your closets and drawers, what would you find?

Day 17: *Relating to Creation Around Us*

Offered byCarolynn Bett

Martin Buber, a 20th century theologian, wrote a book called *I and Thou*, which calls us to relate personally rather than objectively to creation around us.

In all major religions we are called upon to love our neighbours as ourselves. During COVID 19, those of us who have isolated, worn masks and washed hands faithfully have statistically fared better than those who have not.

But what if our neighbour in Canada is the vast boreal forest, or the prairie grasses that hold water in their bodies and in the ground, preventing fires and floods, and tempering the climate? Can we learn to love and respect these beings who care for us in their own specific ways? Can we learn fast enough and show our love with life-affirming actions? Collectively, these beings are Mother Earth who birthed us and continues to give us food and shelter.



*All Beings Confluence Hand-painted Silk Panels
Community-based Prairie Interactive Project
The Redeemer, Season of Creation 2019*



Toronto Climate Strike March: 2019

We need to announce the climate emergency to politicians, leaders, and neighbours, and demand emergency procedures be followed. We know how to do this; we have just done it; we are still doing it with respect to COVID 19. We have signed petitions, written emails and letters, gone to the media with deep concerns. Witness the truckers demanding rest stops and the teachers and parents fretting publicly over school opening.

The key to gaining results is communal, societal involvement so available to us in this digital age. Individual actions such as eating less meat, or reusing, repairing, and recycling are important mindfulness practices, but the communal actions of signing petitions and writing will transform the systems that bind us. 36 specific actions we can take communally are outlined in the **Exponential Climate Action Roadmap**:

<https://www.wedonthavetime.org/events/exponential-climate-action-summit-202009?invitation-button1>



Karios 30 Day Challenge: Day 4

Day 18: *How We Eat: A Spiritual Choice*

Offered by Susanna Jacob

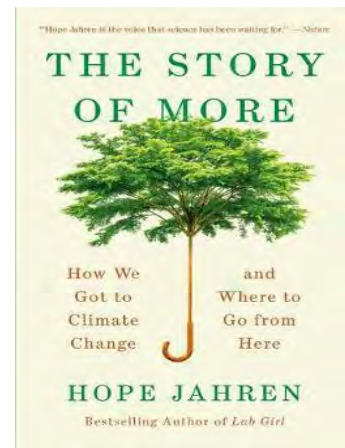
On October 5, 1947, in the first televised White House address, President Harry Truman asked Americans to refrain from eating meat on Tuesdays and poultry on Thursdays to help stockpile grain for starving people in Europe. His request was met with laughter, derision, and denial. Though Truman was asking people to sacrifice for a greater good, post-war Americans seemed more focused on their own lives than on helping to make the world a better place by limiting their own intake of meat and poultry.



In 1978 I decided to stop eating meat, a decision based at first simply on taste. I didn't know how to do it in a healthy way, so I read books and attended classes, learning both about nutrition and about a broader range of reasons to eliminate meat from my diet.

One of those books was Laurel's Kitchen (1976). It was dedicated to "a glossy black calf on his way to the slaughterhouse", whose eyes met hers and inspired her to stop eating meat and to "give the gift of life." Her compelling rationale for adopting vegetarianism included alleviating world hunger, and respect for life.

More recently, Hope Jahren's The Story of More (2020), has approached the topic of alleviating world hunger. The section "Raising Meat", is directed more toward this as a secular issue than toward overtly spiritual ideals, but she reminds us, forcefully, that "Starvation is caused by our failure to share what we produce, not by the earth's ability to provide". She goes on to point out that, "If the entire OECD adopted the habit of just one meatless day per week, an extra 120 million tons of grain would be available to feed the hungry this very year. Feeding the hungry, whether locally or by sharing the bounty of the earth, is ultimately a spiritual act.



Cover design: Linda Huang Cover images: Shutterstock; SOOAK Design Agency



This summer Redeemer Readers shared Barbara Brown Taylor's An Altar in the World, 2009, in which she encourages us to look beyond the altars in recognized sacred spaces, to the everyday altars of nature and our own households. A kitchen, and the choices we make within it, can be an altar. Choosing how we eat can be a spiritual practice. Small though the choice may appear, it contributes to alleviating world hunger, and to intentional respect for life, steps toward the Kingdom of God, where the environment that sustains us, and all life on it, are valued and respected.

So – might you consider taking up President Truman's call, and refrain from eating meat on Tuesdays and poultry on Thursdays?

Day 19: Loving the Soil

Offered by John Deacon

King Uzziah, the Bible tells us, loved the soil.

Kings aren't renowned for loving the soil. They are more likely, at least in a biblical context, to love good advisors, a strong army, prophets who tell them their kingdom will never end and in King Solomon's case, many foreign women. Uniquely, in Uzziah's case, he as king, *'had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands because he loved the soil.'* (2 Chronicles 26:10)

Why? The Bible doesn't say but here's my guess.

Uzziah began his reign at the age of 16 and reigned for 52 years. Over that time, when he wasn't at war, he was stuck in a magnificent palace that his great, great, great, great-grandfather Solomon had made. His responsibility as king had divorced him from the common labourer who worked the soil. His job didn't allow him to get his hands dirty with the fertile soil that made for:

- *food from the earth and*
- *wine to make he and his people glad and*
- *olive oil to soothe their skin,*
- *and bread to give them strength. (Psalm 104:15)*

King Uzziah was divorced from the soil, much the same way we in urban centres are divorced from the soil: by job responsibilities and life ambitions that give little credence to fertile soil, let alone the farmers and the hired help who work it.

With Jesus, fertile soil is a big deal.



"The Sower" V. Van Gogh, Faith Magazine, Dec.2016

In his parable of the Sower and the seed, he taught that the ground on which the seed lands is vital to growth. He taught that seeds do not prosper on shallow or rocky soil. Nor do they even prosper in good

fertile soil when it is overrun by thorns and weeds. Seed, Jesus insisted, only prospers in unobstructed, fertile soil, which can make for growth up to 100 times what was planted.

Fertile soil takes weeding. As anyone who gardens can tell you, weeding takes a lot of time on your knees. Praying not only that what you've planted will grow but praying that you can stand up again.

Fertile soil takes depth to allow the seeds to take root. It requires a diversity of nutrients and micro-organisms to ensure plant growth. Fertile soil requires constant recycling and clean water and loving care. It must be free of the toxins of misuse, abuse and greed. Fertile soil can't go it alone, it relies on sun and rain and the hard work of those who work it.

*Put your faith in the two inches of humus
That will build under the trees
Every thousand years.*

--Wendell Berry



Chris, a migrant worker in ON for 10 yrs. works 13hr/day, 7days/week to support his family in the Caribbean. From Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, Oct. 2018 report

Fertile soil takes time, patience, and labour. Without it, creation cannot prosper.

It requires faith. Not only in the two inches of humus that Wendell Berry refers to, but in the humility of a community who makes room for the seeds of God's mercy, peace and justice to grow in our world.

Not just mercy, peace and justice for ourselves but for the poor, the hired help, and the migrants who work the land that we might have food and wine and oil and bread.

"If you drink wine this thanksgiving, thank a migrant worker!"

So let us be thankful for:

The fertile soil without which we would have nothing to eat.

And the fertile soil without which the kingdom of God can grow.

And for the farmer, the hired help, and the migrant worker who harvest what the good seed brings forth.



Caledon Township

Day 20: Talking to Trees

Offered by Katy Waugh

Since I was a small child, I have always had a relationship with trees!



[American Mountain-ash \(*Sorbus americana*\)](#)

I can remember sitting under a cedar tree at our cottage on Smoke Lake in Algonquin Park, pouring my heart out about the injustices that had been done to me by my parents or my sisters.

Over these past forty years I have formed a strong bond with a Mountain-ash which I planted in our backyard.

During these COVID days, when I have spent so much time alone out on my back verandah, that same tree has heard it all.



Near Belfountain, ON

So my suggestion to you in these next months is this. Go outside or look out a window and strike up a conversation with a tree. They are superb listeners, but you will also be surprised by their innate wisdom gained from years of weathering storms, droughts, man-made disasters and... and...

If you want some fascinating reading on this practice, let me recommend a book that I have just re read by Belden Lane called *The Great Conversation*. In it we find a Cherokee legend which might help you start your conversation.

"Legend says that when humans first appeared on the Earth, the insects and animals were outraged at the way they casually killed and trampled the homes of the four-legged, six-legged and eight-legged creatures. In reaction, the animals and insects brought diseases into the world to afflict these arrogant two-legged ones. But when they asked the plants and trees to help them punish the humans, they refused. 'The human beings are our children,' they said. 'We have to help them even if they are foolish.' Consequently, each tree, shrub and herb, down even to the grasses and mosses, all agreed to furnish a remedy for each one of the diseases the insects had given."

Twenty-five per cent of prescription medicines today are drawn from the four hundred thousand known plant species on our planet. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for the trees and other plants.

Why not go out and talk to trees and begin by thanking them?
The rest of the conversation will flow from there.

Day 21: *Winged Beauty*

Offered by AJ Finlay



Chickadee & White-breasted Nuthatch

One of the first memories of my childhood is being held in my mother's arms as we look out the window at colourful birds on the handmade feeders and she names them for me.

I don't know why that memory is still in my brain but it may have been an image of how important birds were in my parents' lives. Admiring the delicacy and beauty of birds gave my parents such delight that I think I absorbed their wonder.

When I was old enough to trudge through the woods with them on weekends, a pair of small binoculars slung around my neck, I could already add warblers and woodpeckers and nuthatches to my list.



Downy Woodpecker K. Mills

My mother eventually coaxed chickadees to land on my hand to feed on peanuts. On an early morning walk my father found a baby owl that had been rejected from the nest. "Hoot" (no imagination on my part) grew into a magnificent Great Horned Owl that would fly to us as he lived in and out of an old barn on our property.

Living in a city makes it more difficult to enjoy the marvel of birds. I grieve the numerous bodies that are picked up off the streets every morning in downtown Toronto . . . the songs of goldfinches and wrens and others that are lost after flying into the windows of high-rises.

*Wild Ontario
Season of Creation 2019*



Great Horned Owl



I can barely stand to read articles about how songbirds are dwindling in number. There are 3 billion fewer birds in Canada and the USA than in 1970. Why is this happening? The American Bird Conservatory suggests such things as habitat loss through fire and deforestation, collisions with glass, hunting by domestic cats and pesticides as the biggest contributors to the population loss.

Goldfinch – K. Mills

In some cases the decline is staggering but those who are hopeful point to the success of organizations such as Ducks Unlimited which has brought back the numbers of waterfowl. Perhaps other forms of saving habitats could be focused on forests and grasslands as well as more control over seed pesticides.



Albino Dove - Rebecca Finlay

Trumpeter Swan with Identification Tag



Kathryn Mills

In the meantime, keep your eyes and ears open to birds in your neighbourhood. Listen for that cardinal singing as he claims his territory or the cheeky chickadee scolding you as you pass by. Recently my daughter photographed a partial albino dove nearby (yes we have a photograph, there is such a thing).

Last week we saw a huge red-tailed hawk swoop by my balcony and perch until evening looking for a stray mouse. Birds are all around us just “preening” to be admired. In the spring go over to the Island and watch as the spring warblers and kinglets come through. It will make you feel as if you are lifted up on eagles’ wings!



Yellow Warbler K. Mills



House Wren K. Mills

The season of songbirds has arrived and cooing of turtledoves is heard in our land. (Song 2:12)

Thanks to 30 years of dedicated volunteer work, now Eastern Bluebirds are thriving again! [*"Restoring the Happiness of Bluebirds"*](#) , *Canadian Wildlife Magazine*, Sept. 2019



Eastern Bluebird K.Mills

Day 22: *Slowing Down and Shopping Locally*

Offered by Paul Pynkoski



Paul Pynkoski

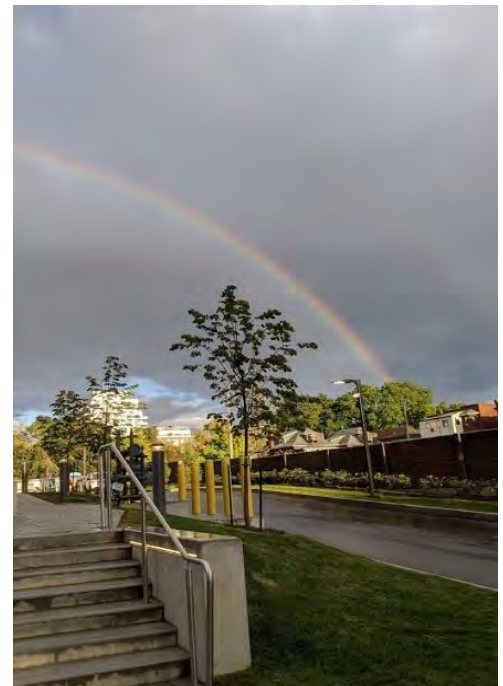
This past summer a group from Redeemer read Barbara Brown Taylor's book, *An Altar in the World*. She encouraged us to experiment with spiritual practices drawn from every day living: Sit still and pay attention. Take a walk. Encounter others. Say "no." The stuff of our daily lives, she insisted, could open into a deepening sense of the Divine.

Sitting still and paying attention, along with walking (and cycling), had the greatest impact on me. They have combined to encourage reflection and change in a wider range of daily activities.

I cycled through Mount Pleasant Cemetery, got off the bike, and sat still for twenty minutes. I watched how the breeze moved the leaves on the trees, and how the colours altered as the light shifted. Going back almost daily has become the cornerstone for a renewed experience of prayer and meditation. Each trip along the same paths seems like an entirely new experience.

My gym closed, making walking (and cycling) my new exercise staples. Moving more slowly and paying attention have meant a deepening appreciation for the infinite variety of sameness. Random conversations with walkers and joggers have been graced moments. I have developed relationships with local grocers, butchers, clothing stores, and coffee shop owners; I speak more with my neighbours.

This, I think, is grace. I was only aiming to experiment a bit, but the Spirit teased me towards more. I commenced with no thoughts of community or ecology. But the combination of COVID-19, paying attention, and transportation without combustion deepened my appreciation for my neighbourhood, helped me support local small businesses, and simultaneously lowered my carbon footprint.



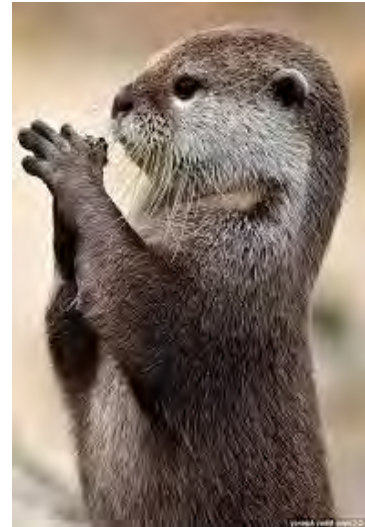
Near High Park Subway Station

Day 23: Catch Them Doing Something Right!

Offered by Grant Jahnke

One of my earliest childhood memories is singing “*All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all...He gave us eyes to see them....*” From as long ago as I can remember it has seemed the most obvious thing that God, creation and “church” were of a piece. So that in recent decades as it has been increasingly clear that so many of our “ordinary” human endeavours are contributing to the present devastation of the planet, it gave me pause to reflect that the present broken relationship between us humans and the rest of creation is indeed a spiritual issue.

It’s easy to be daunted by the magnitude of the task ahead, or to wonder how my small efforts can possibly make any significant difference. Easy to get stuck in complaining about how bad things are. Yet I am impressed by the many who are working hard for systems change.



River Otter Pinterest.com



Red Squirrel

So I recommend a practice I call “Catch them doing something right.” This involves making a point of contacting leaders whose efforts are moving, or even nudging, things in a more sustainable direction. Like my elected officials at all three levels of government. (I’ve learned it adds leverage if I’ve introduced myself in person to your representatives so they know and are aware of my particular concerns.) Or business leaders who are making efforts to do the right thing. Get their names. Get in touch.

Or NGO’s that are undertaking the challenging work of tackling the environmental crisis ahead on in so many ways. Even the local market that no longer uses plastic bags, or the manager of the local coffee shop who has begun to use compostable coffee cups! Change, even incremental change can be hard won and those who are taking steps can always use encouragement. Let them know you notice the effort. Seems to me it can only be helpful to offer a round of applause.



Raccoon Pinterest.com

Day 24: Go with Candles into that Good Night

Offered by Sylvia Keesmaat



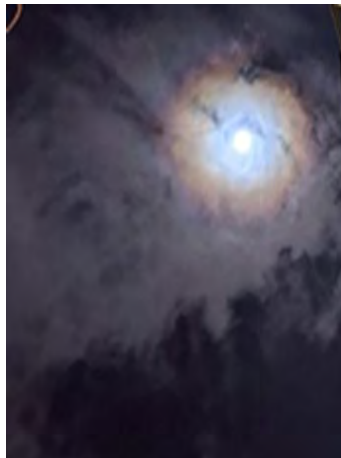
Blue Moon Oct 31, 2020

We like to think of ourselves as creatures of light. Yet darkness is equally essential for creaturely life.

Animals depend on darkness so that they can prowl and hunt, turtles depend on the light of the moon and the stars in the darkness to know how to find the ocean, insects depend on darkness to govern their mating rituals. We human beings depend on darkness for a deep sleep. In the darkness of night God called Samuel, and spoke in dreams to Jacob and Joseph.

The Psalmist tells us that the night is the time for animals to creep out and find their food, and that the day is for people to do their thing. (Ps 104.19-23)

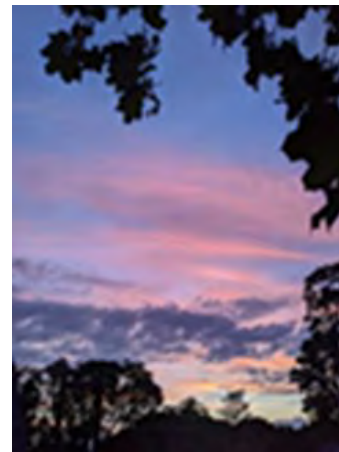
But we have polluted the night sky with outside lights, streetlamps, advertising and well-lit high-rises. We have confused the animals who need the darkness. And we have confused our own bodies by lighting our homes brightly into the night hours. Not only do we inhibit our own ability to sleep well, we pay the electricity company for the privilege of doing so!



Supermoon March 8, 2020

I invite you to ponder the lives of the creatures that live around your home. Turn off your outside light once everyone is inside. Turn off your motion sensor light. Do it for them.

I invite you to calculate the cost of the energy that lights up the night. Is it worth destroying creation to subvert the rhythms of day and night?



Sunset seen from west Toronto

Reflect on what will give you peace in the dark. Once the darkness falls, only light the room that you are currently in. Put away your phone and turn off your TV and computer. If possible, read or play a game by candlelight (more than one candle might be necessary for reading). Or use a single lamp to light only what you are doing. If you live with others, sit in the shadows and share a time of gratitude for your day. Enter slowly into the darkness and into rest.

Listen. Perhaps you will hear your name, called by God into the darkness. Perhaps you will dream so well, that when you awake you will feel that God has been with you. Perhaps you will long to embrace the darkness once again.

Day 25: Waste

Offered by Richard Van Delft

Photos by Common Table Staff

After a morning of serving our guests at the Common Table, the volunteers close the ramp door and come downstairs to the kitchen with any leftovers. We prepare around 130 meals, of which most will find a belly to feed. Depending on the time of the month, the weather, or any other reason that makes no sense, the number of returning plates varies. Sometimes every meal goes out of the door, and sometimes (not often) there are still 30 meals on the cart.



A few of us have gotten into the habit of packing our own bag with up to eight meals to distribute to any homeless or troubled people as we go home. I have never made it home with one of those meals untaken.

Handing out meals on the street elicits all kinds of responses. Surprise is one. "Bless you" is another. A simple, "Thank you" is the most common. I will often notice if the individual looks particularly hungry and offer two meals. The one response that always takes my breath away - and it happens all too often - is "No thank you, one is enough. I only take what I need."





I have made it a habit to try my best to reduce the waste my home kitchen produces. Taking what I need when buying food has become a healthy obsession. Fortunately, I love to cook with fresh ingredients that I buy daily or every other day. As I get older, I have become such a purist when it comes to real ingredients that have not gone through a factory process.



This has also created a resentment in me aimed at the corporate food industry the 20th century left to us. The Swanson's t.v. dinner intended to make our life easier, but it leaves behind another piece of foil, plastic wrap, and a cardboard box to taint creation. A box of Rice-a-Roni was to bring elegance to the table but has left many of us lost as to how to cook rice and season it ourselves. I have seen confused singles

never having been taught how to shop, not daring to pick one tomato off the vine to purchase but rather buy the whole vine, knowing four of them will be spoiled by week's end. That leaves yet another plot of earth forced to give birth to food that will end up wasted. I shudder when I think of the overproduction of food our Western world makes just to throw away.

In this moment, I cannot help but think of the individuals tied to the street taking only what they need.

Every Tuesday at the Common Table, the Second Harvest truck shows up with donations. Justin and I will stand at the truck's door and choose from the food in the flats. Examples of the catch could be kilos of frozen chicken, cartons of fresh cauliflower, boxes of oranges, trays of single serving yoghurt, and so forth. One visit even brought 24 whole ducks! Our guests felt like royalty...

This brings me to my "waste" conundrum. A lot of the food we receive gets picked up by charities as it is on its way to the garbage dump. Perfectly good food that is the result of the aforementioned overproduction system will get tossed into our Common Table lap in order for us to feed people who take only what they need. Without the waste, they would go hungry.



Reflecting on such a vicious circle of waste, I do not know what my challenge to you can be in this 30-Day Challenge. Perhaps I will just encourage you to take only one of the tomatoes off the vine next time you need to buy one. Better yet, take the one that fell off... chances are it is the ripest of the lot.

Find out what's locally grown & in season all year long: [Foodland Ontario Availability Guide](#)

Day 26: “The Ache in the Spirit We Label Despair”

(from Bruce Cockburn’s “Beautiful Creatures”)

Offered by Karen Turner

*. . . the land mourns,
and all who live in it languish;
together with the wild animals
and the birds of the air,
even the fish of the sea are perishing.
(Hosea 4:1-3)*



Bruce Trail – The Hockley Valley Nature Reserve

There’s a relatively new term for the feeling many of us have in the pit of our stomach these days – ecological grief. Yes, it’s a thing. Grief, we all know, is the normal human response to loss, so ecological grief can be defined as the grief felt as a response to the environmental loss of species, ecosystems, and meaningful landscapes due to climate change.

I would also suggest it is a form of “disenfranchised grief”, which is grief from a loss that is not readily acknowledged in society. When a close family member dies, there is a general social understanding and acceptance of the loss, and a period of grieving is accommodated and encouraged. But some kinds of losses, although they can be deeply felt by individuals and groups, do not elicit the same kind of acknowledgement and support. These would include losses such as an abortion or a miscarriage, being fired from a job, betrayal by a friend, the onset of a mental illness, or the death of an admired celebrity.

As the environmental crisis humanity faces, including its human causes, dawns on each of us, grief is often among our many complex emotional responses. However, since one of the other dominant social and individual responses to this crisis is denial, there is little social acknowledgement of ecological grief, which makes it very difficult to even internally name the sadness and anxiety many of us feel as the deep grief that it is, let alone process it effectively. When our grief is disenfranchised, we are often prevented from accessing the healing conversations and rituals that normally help us through the “valley of the shadow of death” (*Psalms 23*)

Humber Riverbank near 401 Hwy.



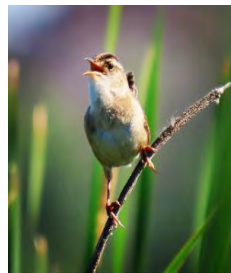


Ecological grief is not only often disenfranchised, it is also complex, because it is often mixed up with other complicated reactions such as guilt, anger and helplessness. There can be no resolution to this grief, since the crisis continues. It may well be that this complex, disenfranchised grief cannot be borne entirely alone. Certainly being attentively alone in silence and allowing the feelings to surface, naming them, feeling and expressing them in the presence of the Holy Spirit is a beginning. Music and art can open us to allowing these feelings to surface. You have likely had the experience of hearing a piece of music and deep feelings come unbidden to your awareness. For the purpose of feeling and honouring ecological grief, I have found these two songs very evocative. But you may also have found others as well.



Black Swallowtail Butterfly

B. Cockburn [The Beautiful Creatures](#)



Marsh Wren K. Mills

Michael Jackson [Earth Song](#)



But to be processed well, grief needs also to be shared, brought into a beloved community to be processed with others who lovingly understand. Such a community can be family, or a group of dear friends, or a worshipping community such as Redeemer. In such a loving context we can begin to name our grief together, to share healing rituals, songs, and prayers. The Season of Creation has been a beginning to creating such a community. Animated by our shared grief and love of the Earth, we can open a door to a communal determination to courageously set out together on the hard, painful journey toward justice and sanity, towards the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God



Day 27: Mindfulness

Offered by Craig Spielmacher

“When we’re sitting outside in a beautiful place surrounded by greenery with a delicious soundtrack provided by singing birds, and perhaps the sound of rustling leaves and moving water, it’s a whole lot easier to experience sensations of transcendent unity, isn’t it? Surrounded by verdant serenity, and that congenial chit-chat with Mother Nature, it’s easy to free our mind from the stodgy demands of serial thought and simply experience the peace beneath it all. Our social and material concerns fall aside, and we can perceive the thinness of that membrane that only seems to separate us from the Divine. We are that too.

‘Sitting in the wilderness’ has always had a metaphoric power as well, for a meditator like me, because two of my most important spiritual inspirations personified, the Buddha and Jesus, each sat in the wilderness as a means to overcoming that delusion of separateness; and it’s their experience of overcoming the obstacles presented by everyday life (and the machinations of my human intellect) that I re-enact, in a way, every time I sit outside on my rock.



Bruce Trail – Hockley Valley Nature Reserve



Bruce Trail – Hockley Valley

Each of them, out there alone in nature, were met by three tenacious challenges that arose the instant they realized they were not really alone, that there was a whole different person out there (and in here) with them—an antagonistic aspect of their own inner natures. For the Buddha, he was called Mara, the tempter; and for Jesus, of course, it was good old, bad old Satan.

In our present-day psychological mythology, it’s no great metaphorical stretch to realize that these two bad actors are personifications of what we may call our “ego mind”—the mental interface of expectations, desires and fears that obscure our natural view of the divine.”

Robert Kopecky, *The Mindful Word* – August 14, 2015

I was given this passage several years ago when I was enrolled in a Mindfulness Study. I did not think much of it then and quickly filed it away. Earlier this year, when there was not much to do, I was going through files and found this part of a meditation. It struck a nerve.



Gerbera Daisy

Life is not what we wanted or what we planned for it to be this year. Work is different, social interaction is sparse, and outings and trips have been cancelled, it is easy to get demoralized. One thing that I have found useful is the poignant therapy of the sounds, sights, and smells of nature

The warmth of the sun and wind, the colorful leaves, and the visions of skirring wildlife and the scents of the lake and the mown grass. These together allow us to look deep into our being, and with reference to Scripture, to see the beauty in which we live, and to be grateful to what we have.

As we celebrate what God has given us and realize that we need to do to protect it, I challenge you to get away for five minutes everyday to appreciate nature's beauty and to enter into an opportunity to be grateful for what we have and for what God has created.



Fern's-Eye View of a Mature Maple

Day 28: Foraging

Offered by A. J. Finlay

A few weeks ago I had a rare treat. . . I was given a puffball. . .which just happens to be my favourite food. I know other fungi are also delicious but this is the best.

It was not a huge specimen for a puffball, just a circular ball of about six or seven inches in diameter, they can grow much larger. But, what a treat. The outer skin of this marvelous fungus easily peeled away to reveal the pure white interior. I lathered the slices with butter and fried them to a golden brown. The taste was divine.

I write about this because foraging was part of my family's pleasures. In the spring we would look for delicious morels, in the autumn it was shaggy manes and puffball. In the autumn we would also forage for hickory nuts, hazelnuts and walnuts.



Puff Ball



Shaggy Manes Sara-Jane Finlay

These were enjoyed during the winter months with a glass of sherry or they would appear in my mother's baking. In the summer there were black and red raspberries picked in the wild to make jam. My mother would cling to the side of a steep hill just to reach a plentiful supply.

We had a large book with pictures of mushrooms organized into edible, palatable, or toxic categories. When a strange mushroom was found, we would check in the book to see if it was safe and tasty and we would give it a try. Meals were often an adventure!

My mother loved to tell the story of how one group of mushrooms was very odd looking but the book said it was okay. She fried them up, but secretly left a couple of the mushrooms in the pan. She reasoned that if she were dead in the morning, someone would find the mushrooms and know what killed her!

My daughter in BC tells me that these foraging experiences are important for intergenerational learning. She in turn has taught her children about mushrooms, nuts and berries. Shared learnings get adapted by people depending on where they live.

My other daughter reminds me of the important role that fungi play in our planet and ecosystems. Check out a [Nature documentary](#)



Morels Sara-Jane Finlay



Wild Blueberries



Becky Slater

Nature provides us with delicious treats and gives us great options to the expensive, processed foods in the stores . . . Unfortunately, foraging has changed as a result of pollution—we are forced to move deeper into the forests and fields to find food uncontaminated by road salt, pesticides, fertilizer and car exhausts. But sometimes nature also knows how to make use of climate change. Morels are among the first plants that come back in areas that have been badly burned by forest fires.

Foraging is fresh air in the beauty of nature and tasty food. What more could one ask or imagine?

Day 29: Blue Jeans

Offered by Joan Robinson

These days, my go-to garment is a pair of jeans. With no need to dress up, like everyone else, I go for practical wear. My closet contains black ones, dark blue ones, grey ones, distressed ones, faded ones. They get washed and hung to dry. I love putting freshly laundered jeans on with no wrinkles and knees flat to the legs.

Recently while casually listening to CBC Radio, a Climatologist reported on discovering jean fibres on the Arctic Ocean floor* and implored everyone to wear their jeans more than once before washing them again.



Pixabay



Taken from Toronto Island

Skinnyes, boot cut and trousers are ubiquitous. Since the 60s, jeans have been part of my wardrobe. Then new jeans were stiff and needed breaking in before truly comfortable. Now, with processing and stretchy fibres, jeans are soft and comfortable from the moment they are purchased.

Research reveals that jeans have a huge negative impact on the environment through water usage and water pollution. Genetically modified cotton required for the production of fashion jeans is a thirsty crop. Making jeans soft uses large amounts of water and the dying and distressing process causes water pollution. Nearly 1 billion pairs of jeans are produced each year and about half of the world's population wears jeans every day.

Levi's CEO Chip Bergh agrees with postponing throwing jeans in the laundry. He is proud to own unlaundered ten-year-old jeans. He says the freezer trick to kill germs is a myth and depends on spot cleaning to take care of surface dirt.

Hanging jeans out in the sun for several days can reduce odor and spritzing with 1-part vodka and 2-parts distilled water is a natural deodorizer.



Morning Glory



Personally, I am not prepared to go so far, but in the interests of the environment I can forgo and postpone throwing my beloved jeans in the laundry. Wrinkles at the hip flexors and knees will just have to become fashionable.

[*"Your Blue Jeans are Polluting the Ocean"](#)

Day 30: *Making New Friends*

Offered by Mary-Jane Wilson



Black Squirrel

For me, one of the very hardest aspects of COVID has been being cut off from family members and friends. No more hugs and kisses, no more looking into someone's eyes or smelling their perfume, no more hearing laughter around a dining room table at a party. We have heard the word "isolated" a lot these past few months, and I have felt it.

At the beginning, we were allowed to do two things: shop for groceries and go out (once a day) for a walk. Like many people, I walked around the block or a little further afield, always stepping far away from fellow pedestrians. That started to get tiresome, so I set out early in the morning. Still too many people. So I started out earlier again (sometimes before 5:00 a.m.!).

It was just me and all of non-human creation. I did this every day, week after week, month after month. My sense of the world changed. I slowed down and drew closer to all that I passed. There was no speech, but there was communication. Raccoons, skunks, cats, dogs, and opossums stopped and looked at me. The trees were shy at first (perhaps because they were naked without their leaves!), but as they came into leaf, they started to show themselves and often waved at me. The flowering bushes and flowers showered me with scent; the wind played with my hair (cheeky!). And the birds, well, they were just plain noisy!



Yellow Swallowtail Butterfly



Venus MJ Wilson

And then, gloriously, there were the planets (Venus in the east, and Mars in the west), and the stars and the moon filling me with peace and awe.

The theme of this year's Season of Creation was "All My Relations: Learning to Live in the Family of Earth". I learned about being related to creation during this Season of Creation. I have lived it during my "COVID walks", when all of creation has been a new companion.



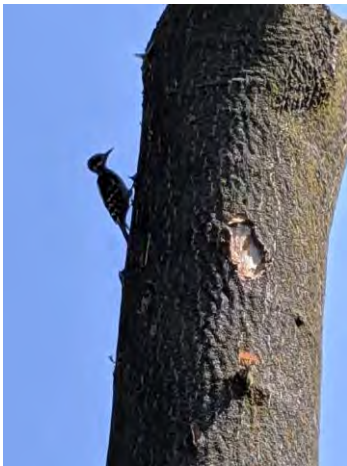
Mock Orange Shrub

Now, my challenge is two-fold. First, I must continue to develop and nurture these relations and not abandon or ignore them when I am able to reconnect with my human friends and family.

Second, I must remember that the very best relations are reciprocal and based on respect and care. I don't know if my new friends respect me, but I do know that they have shown me great care; they have comforted me, delighted me, and reminded me that I am not alone.



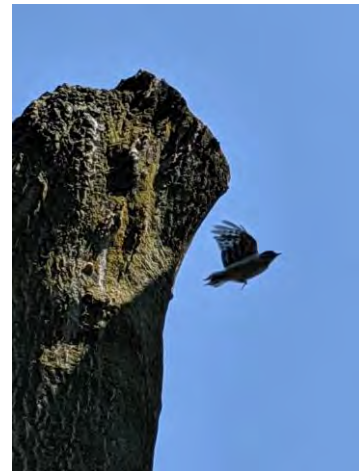
For that, I respect them and feel a great need to care for them. May God guide me and strengthen me in this challenge.



Hairy Woodpecker



Purple Martin



Hairy Woodpecker