

Hope Has Wings

consider the birds

As we journey through our Hope Has Wings sermon series, we invite you to use this guide as a companion for reflection throughout the week. Filled with songs, poems, and book recommendations, these resources are designed to help you slow down, pray, and pay attention to God's presence in the world around you. Whether you're taking a walk outdoors or listening to birdsong outside your window, we hope these offerings will deepen your connection to both God and creation and help the themes of the series take root in your daily life.

Pray

A Guided Prayer for Listening to Birdsong

Begin by sitting in a comfortable position, either outside or next to an open window.

Settle into a prayerful posture. Maybe that means shutting your eyes, firmly grounding both feet on the ground, or placing your palms facing upwards on your lap.

Become aware of the rhythm of your breath. Begin inhaling and exhaling more deeply and more slowly.

Turn your attention to the sound of the birds. What do you hear? Spend a moment simply noticing their chirps and trills.

Jesus tells his disciples, "Consider the birds of the air – they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

As you continue noticing the birdsong around you, become aware of the presence of God. Just as God cares for each and every creature, God cares for you. Rest in this promise for several moments.

As you listen to the birds, consider the ways God cares for you.

As you listen to the birds, consider the ways God cares for all of Creation, both big and small.

As you listen to the birds, consider how God is asking you to join in caring for God's creatures.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious onto you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Listen

Scan or click a QR code to access the link.



Bird Song Meditation



**This Is My Father's World
(song)**



**His Eye Is on the Sparrow
(song)**



Birds (song)



**All Creatures of Our God
and King (song)**

Reflect

Upon Hearing Birdsong **From *Every Moment Holy: Volume 1***

You draw praise
from the frailest of things.
So also draw praise
from me.

Wild Geese **By Mary Oliver**

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers **By Emily Dickinson**

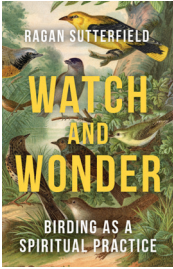
"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Read

We have copies of each book available in the church library for check-out



Watch and Wonder: Birding as a Spiritual Practice

by Ragan Sutterfield

Birdwatching is a delight, a deepening. It puts us in touch with the ineffable, and it draws us toward self-denial for the sake of love. Birding brings us close to hope, abundance, and joy. In fact, it looks a lot like prayer.

From having his vision opened by a rare flycatcher, to learning the power of naming while watching shorebirds, to forging friendships on a Christmas Bird Count, naturalist, birder, and Episcopal priest Ragan Sutterfield delves into how birdwatching shapes our souls. He writes of turning yards into refuges for birds on their long migration. Even as we reckon with the inconsolable grief of habitat loss and species decline, he writes, birds can give us hope amid the desolation.



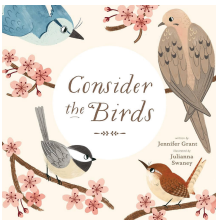
Looking Up: A Birder's Guide to Hope through Grief

by Courtney Ellis

Through the painful days of the pandemic stuck in her home, Courtney Ellis found herself looking down in despair. Soon after, her beloved grandfather died unexpectedly.

It was around this same time that Ellis took up watching birds. "Took up" might not be exactly right - as she puts it, "the switch flipped," and she's been borderline obsessed with birds ever since.

Looking Up is a meditation on birding as a practice of hope. Weaving together stories from her own life, including the death of her grandfather, with reflections on birds of many kinds, Ellis invites us to open our eyes to the goodness of God both in the natural world and in our own lives. By "looking up" to the birds, Ellis found the beauty and wonder of these creatures calling her out of her darkness into the light and hope of God's promises.



Consider the Birds

by Jennifer Grant

This lyrical children's book is a gentle invitation to discover the wonders of nature and the love of God. Jennifer Grant's simple text and Julianna Swaney's endearing art will encourage readers to slow down and marvel at the amazing world around them.