

# Who Is Your Neighbor?

A zine for our liturgical season of  
Ordinary Time

With inspiration from  
**What is God Like,**

*Rachel Held Evans and Matthew Paul Turner*  
**The Book of Creation,**

*J. Philip Newell*

Art from *What Is God Like*, by Ying Hui Tan

# Welcome

Dear friend,

We invite you to join us this Ordinary Season, so named because the Sundays are identified by ordinal numbers (e.g., Second Sunday after Pentecost, etc.) not because the season is “boring.” As we explore the theme of *Who is Your Neighbor?*, we will turn to the Genesis Creation story for wisdom and insight. Together, we will learn and relearn the stories of Creation, who God is, and how we are to see God in Creation, one another, and ourselves.

To support our journey, there will be weekly conversations on *Forming*, the formation podcast for the Diocese of Southern Ohio, with invited guests focusing on that week's theme of Creation. We hope these conversations and this resource inspire new and ancient ways of practicing the Way of Love, as followers of Jesus.

You will discover that this Zine has been organized into seven sections reflecting the seven days of Creation. Each section is three pages. The first page shows the art and Scripture theme for that part of Creation story (the full text of which can be found on the Resources and Citation page at the end of the Zine). The second and third page contain the content from both *The Book of Creation*, and *What is God Like?* This content is separated into questions and reflections geared toward folks of different age ranges, though is open to all. The first content page asks slightly more mature questions, the second asks questions in a way that younger participants and newer theologians may be able to begin grappling with the topics.

We are glad to have you with us!

Following along on our  
podcast *Forming*



# Welcome

# The Story of Anansi

It was long ago in Africa, child, when there was First Spider, Kwaku Anansi. He went everywhere, throughout the world, travelling on his strong web strings - sometimes looking more like a wise old man than a spider.

In that long-ago time, child, there were no stories on Earth for anyone to tell. The sky-god kept all stories to himself, up high in the sky, and locked away in a wooden box. Because they had no stories to share, the people of Earth did not have much to do. They just sat around their campfires and whistled. Anansi the spider could see that the people were restless and bored. He decided he would bring them something that would help them pass the time and so that they could know the beginnings and endings of things.

Anansi stretched his eight legs and wove a wonderful web that reached all the way to the sky. He climbed up the web until he arrived at the throne of the sky god, Nyame, the keeper of all stories. "Nyame," Anansi said, "great, wise god of the sky—I would like to take the stories to the people who live on Earth. Will you let me have the great box where you keep the stories?"

Child, when the powerful sky-god saw the thin, spidery, old man crawling up to his throne, he laughed at him, "What makes you think that you, of all creatures, can pay the price I ask for my stories?" Anansi only wanted to know, "What is the price of the stories?"

"I will give you the stories," said Nyame, "but the price is high. You must bring me three things: Onini (/oh\*nee\*nee/), the great python who can swallow a goat; Osebo (/oh\*say\*boe/), the mighty leopard whose teeth are as sharp as spears; and Mmoboro (/mmoh\*boh\*roh/), the hornet whose sting burns like a needle of fire." "I will pay the price," said Anansi.

# Welcome

# The Story of Anansi

This story from the Akan people of West Africa reminds us of the importance of storytelling . We are reminded that storytelling serves, not only to entertain, but also to pass along information from person to person and generation to generation. Repetition and other mnemonics serve to assist in memorizing the story in order to preserve information when reading and writing are not viable options. Anansi was willing to pay whatever price, even a seemingly impossible one, in order to bring the treasure of stories and storytelling to the people.

Storytelling has played a large role in the Christian tradition, as well. Large portions of the Old Testament existed through oral transmission for many generations long before being written down. The Gospels were written anywhere from 30 to 80 years after the Resurrection. As such, they would have been passed along by oral transmission as well. What price are we willing to pay to learn and share the story of our faith? What might we learn if we open ourselves to hearing familiar stories in new ways?

Hear this story  
read aloud



# The Light of God

Genesis 1:3



# The Light of God

## Matthew 6:5-6

"God is like the flame of a candle, warm and inviting. With God close by, you can look to the Light and see through the darkest of nights" *What is God Like*

"We desperately need a new and gentle light where the soul can shelter and reveal its ancient belonging. We need a light that has retained its kinship with the darkness. For we are the sons and the daughters of the darkness and the light." --John O'Donohue

## Reflect

- What are the desires that God has planted in the depths of your being? Express these in prayer or in some form of creative expression. Know that your deepest yearnings arise from the image of God within you.
- On the images of "light" and "dark": What arises in you as you contemplate the lightness and darkness of God? How might our human conditioning and systems of domination influence our understanding of lightness and darkness? And how might this limit our understanding of and relationship with God, our selves, and one another?

## Look

- Look for the light in people around you; when they laugh, in their eyes, when they sing a song or share a story.
- Wake up early to see the sun rise. Watch as the dawn breaks and the sun starts to rise above the horizon. What do you notice about yourself as the sun comes up? What do you hear? What do you see?
- Find someone in your neighborhood or community that you've never met and introduce yourself. Find out something that brings them joy and light and share something that brings you joy and light.

## Pray

Bless us, dark earth as we give back  
That which we have received  
As we make a forest of blessing a  
ridge of blessing  
For the future to grow upon.

—Chinook Psalter

## Care

Plant a few of your seeds in a dixie cup covered by soil, in a quiet spot with limited sunlight, cover with seran wrap or a loose bag.

# The Light of God

"God is like the flame of a candle, warm and inviting. With God close by, you can look to the Light and see through the darkest of nights" *What is God Like*

## Reflect

- What are the your most favorite things about yourself? What are the things that you are proud of? God has made each and every one of us to be ourselves and your unique traits bring light to the world and to the lives of those who love you!
- Just like we need light, we need darkness too. Think of the things that grow because they have darkness to rest in?

## Look

- Create shadow puppets using a flashlight. Can you create a shadow without light?
- Try to sing your favorite song without smiling. Or use a silly voice to tell someone you love them. These silly and fun things help us to shine our light into the world!
- God outside and try to catch the sun rising. What do you notice at the break of day that is different than other times you are outside?
- Go outside and watch the sunset. What do you notice at dusk that is different than other times you are outside?
- Find someone in your neighborhood or community that you've never met and introduce yourself. Find out something that brings them joy and light and share something that brings you joy and light.

## Care

Plant your seeds in a dixie cup, in a quiet spot with limited sunlight, cover with seran wrap or a loose bag.

## Pray

In bright light and dull darkness  
In the energy of each day and the  
rest that comes with night

**We remember the goodness of God\***

# The Wildness of God

Genesis 1:6



# The Wildness of God John 3:8

"God is like the wind, passionate and full of mystery.

God is both here and, mysteriously, also over there.

God is everywhere, swirling throughout the world, whistling across mountain ranges, rustling through trees, and pressing against your cheeks on a breezy day."

*What is God Like*

## Look

- Follow a buzzing fly, butterfly, or bumblebee around for a few minutes, "both here and over there."
- Find a breezy spot in your community and watch the trees rustle about
- Watch a storm and sit in the passion & mystery of the weather patterns of our Earth

## Care

- Enjoy an outdoor hike, maybe in a park or in the woods. Take your time and listen to the sounds of nature. Smell the fragrances. Look at all that surrounds you. What is familiar and what is unknown? Give thanks for all.
- Find some weeds in your yard—maybe a dandelion. What is beautiful about what grows wild?

## Reflect

- The creation story tells us that wind inspires movement; creation is born from chaos and disorder. Yet, there is fear. Where do you feel the winds of change in your life now? How might you invite a different relationship with change so that you can be present with God in this time?
- What is beautiful about what grows wild?

## Pray

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time

I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

*The Peace of the Wild Things, Wendell Berry*

# The Wildness of God

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*What is God Like*

## Look

- Follow a buzzing fly, butterfly, or bumblebee around for a few minutes, "both here and over there."
- Find a breezy spot in your community and watch the trees rustle about
- Watch a storm and sit in the passion & mystery of the weather patterns of our Earth
- Find a space where wildflowers grow and watch as the bees buzz from one to the next.

## Care

- Watch your seedlings and notice how they may just be beginning to grow out of the soil. Whisper an affirmation as they grow strong.
- Enjoy an outdoor hike, maybe in a park or in the woods. Take your time and listen to the sounds of nature. Smell the fragrances. Look at all that surrounds you. What is familiar and what is unknown? Give thanks for all.
- Find some weeds in your yard—maybe a dandelion.

## Reflect

- The creation story tells us that wind inspires movement; creation is born from chaos and disorder. Think about a big storm and what may swirl around in a big wind. Have you ever seen things carried from one place to another by a storm? Can you think about ways that God could sway your heart like God moves the trees around in a story?
- What is beautiful about things that grow wildly?

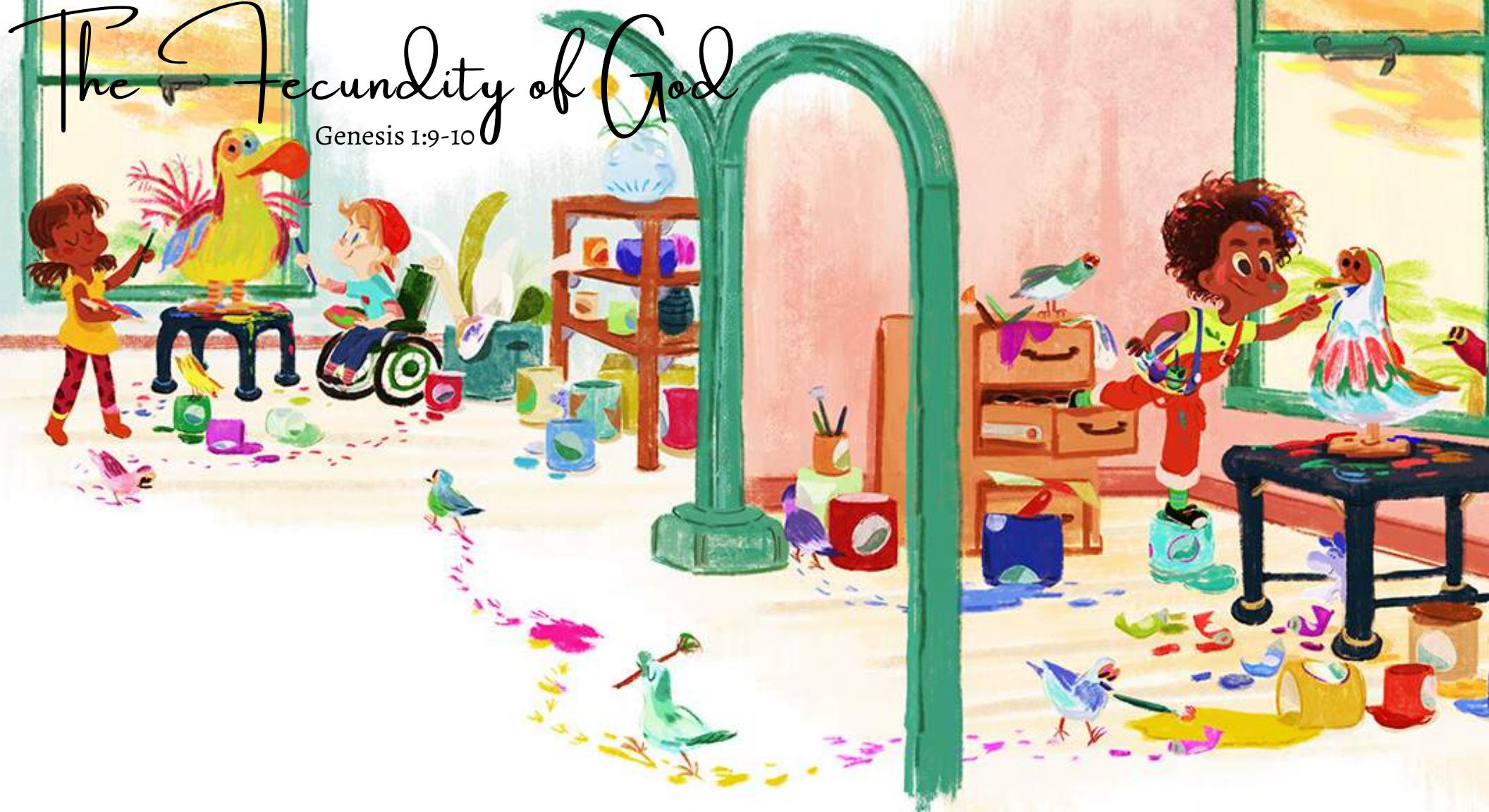
## Pray

In the heavens high above our heads  
In waters that run deep around the  
world

**We remember the goodness of God\***

# The Fecundity of God

Genesis 1:9-10



# The Fecundity of God

Exodus 31:2-5

"God is like an artist, creative and unpredictable, always busy making and remaking everything brilliant and new"

*What is God Like*

"Everything that is born in the great matrix of life is sustained by roots that reach into the deep mystery of God's life."  
*The Book of Creation* p36

## Look

- Visit a place where beauty is in the eye of the beholder. What do you see? What is your favorite thing about this space that not all find beautiful?
- Visit a space where you see God working creatively. What does it mean to see God alive in a unique space compared to what may be a more groomed and planned area?
- Take a picture of something not 'meant' to be art, but that is lovely to you
- Make your own sidewalk chalk mural on your sidewalk and brighten someone's day with a kind message

## Care

- Your seedlings are just beginning to sprout through the soil! Wow! Look closely and notice what the mound of soil looks like.
- Does your plant need water? Does it need sun? Does it need fresh air?

## Reflect

- Kenneth White writes, "I have grown chrysanthemums in the dung of God." It's easy to not pay attention to where God is in our world given the suffering and hardship. Where are you experiencing God in the midst of it all, right now?
- What does the soil look like in your life? How can you nourish that soil around you to create the environment you need to thrive?

## Pray

Beseeching the breath of the divine one,  
His life-giving breath,  
His breath of old age,  
His breath of waters,  
His breath of seeds,  
His breath of riches,  
His breath of fecundity,  
His breath of power  
His breath of all good fortune,  
Asking for his breath  
And into my warm body drawing his breath,  
I add to your breath  
That happily you may always live.  
—Zuni chant

# The Fecundity of God



“God is like an artist, creative and unpredictable, always busy making and remaking everything brilliant and new”  
*What is God Like*

## Look

- Find the oldest piece of art in your community, and then the newest piece of art in your community (mural, sculpture, garden sculpture) What is similar about them? What is different?
- Take a picture of something not ‘meant’ to be art, but that is lovely to you
- Make your own sidewalk chalk mural on your sidewalk and brighten someone’s day with a kind message

## Reflect

- Can you picture God as an artist? What kind of art does God create?
- If we pretend we are seeds that have been planted, what does the soil look like in your life? How can you nourish that soil around you to create the environment you need to thrive?

## Pray

In solid land and flowing seas  
In vivid flowers and fruit laden-trees

**We remember the goodness of God\***

## Care

- Your seedlings are just beginning to sprout through the soil! Wow! Look closely and notice what the mound of soil looks like.
- Does your plant need water? Does it need sun? Does it need fresh air?
- Take your seedling for some time outside or a walk. What does it feel like to take your plant around with you?

# The Harmony of God

Genesis 1:14-16



# The + Harmony of God

Romans 12:16

"God is like a mother, strong and safe. You can crawl up into her lap whenever you want to, and she will hold you until you fall asleep."

"God is like a father, gentle and safe. He will put you on top of his shoulders to give you a bird's-eye view of all creation."

*What is God Like*

## Look

- Take a walk in a nature preserve or space where lots of animals live. Can you spot any parent/child animal pairs? What do you notice about how the parent animal is keeping watch over the child?
- Listen for God's harmony in creation. Sit outside or open a window and listen to the sounds of nature. How do all of these sounds blend together in a unique song?

## Care

- Greet the sun in the morning; give thanks for its rising and the new day. Honor the moon in the evening; give thanks for the end of the day and the dark of the night.
- Set your plant by an open window or out on a front stoop for the sunlight this week. Make sure it has plenty of water to nourish its roots while the sun bathes its leaves.

## Reflect

- Connecting with the rhythms of nature supports the awakening to and participation in the web of life. What rhythms in nature inspire you? How might you be more sensitive to these rhythms and practice being in relationship with them?

## Pray

Creator of the cosmos,  
of eternity and time:

**Be with us in this time**

Saviour of the world,  
healer of the nations:

**Be with us in this place**

Breath of all that lives,  
of people near and far

**Stir within our lives**

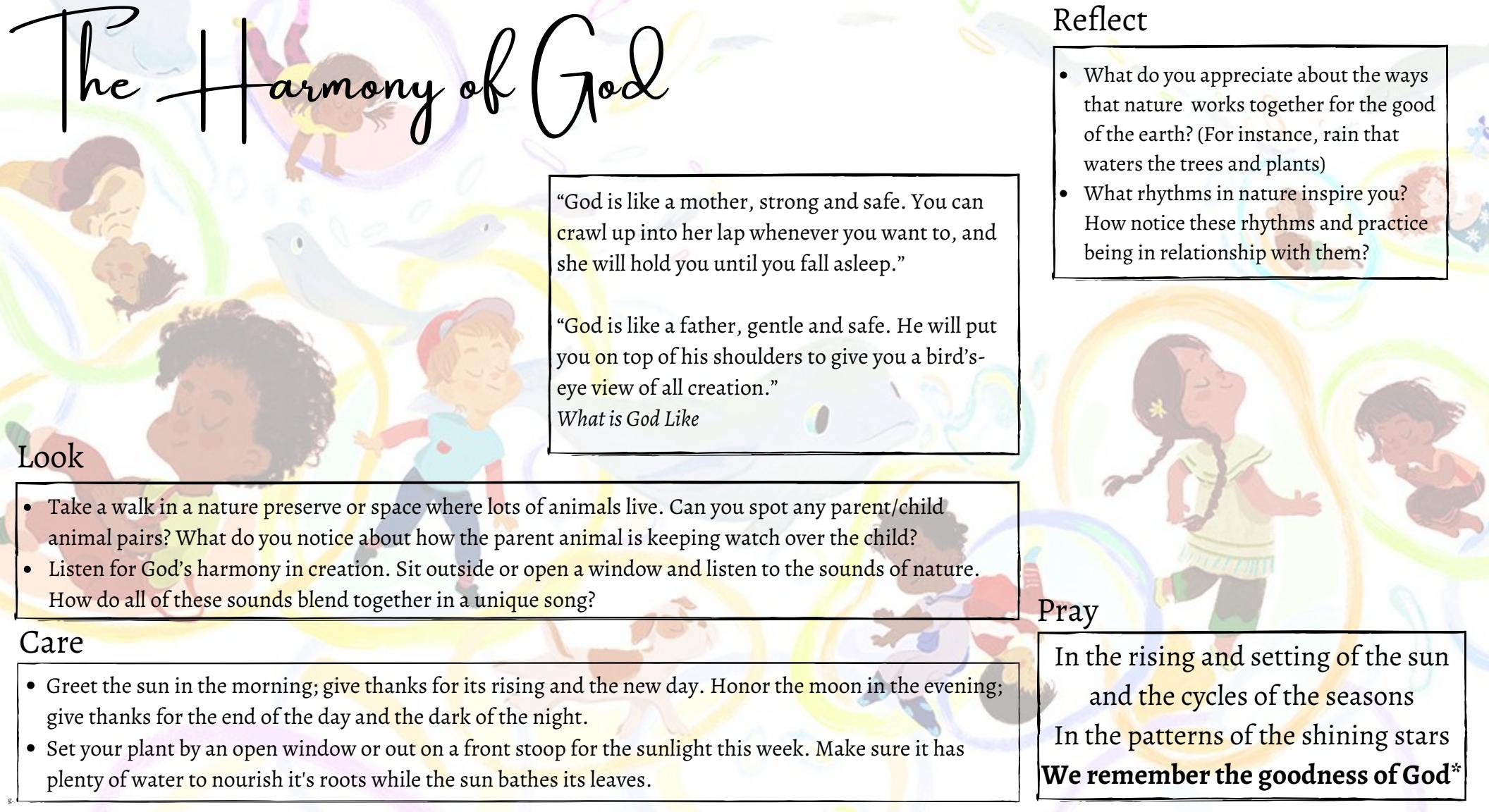
Maker-Spirit-Son

God of here and now:

**Be present in our worship,  
that we may find new ways  
to be present in your world.**

Iona Abbey Worship Book

# The Harmony of God



## Reflect

- What do you appreciate about the ways that nature works together for the good of the earth? (For instance, rain that waters the trees and plants)
- What rhythms in nature inspire you? How notice these rhythms and practice being in relationship with them?

## Look

- Take a walk in a nature preserve or space where lots of animals live. Can you spot any parent/child animal pairs? What do you notice about how the parent animal is keeping watch over the child?
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- Set your plant by an open window or out on a front stoop for the sunlight this week. Make sure it has plenty of water to nourish its roots while the sun bathes its leaves.

## Pray

In the rising and setting of the sun  
and the cycles of the seasons  
In the patterns of the shining stars  
**We remember the goodness of God\***

# The Creaturliness of God

Genesis 1:20



# The Creaturliness of God Job 12:7-10

“Our knowledge of God is not an external deposit of truth, watched over in unaltered form from age to age by the authority of the Church. Rather, it is an experience of God that comes to us in the use of our inner senses, whether that be through the scriptures and sacraments or through creation and one another...the desire for God should not lead to a denial of our creatureliness and a subsequent looking away from life. Rather, it should lead us to the renewing of our senses that we may be aware of God within life and at the very heart of who we are.” *The Book of Creation*, p70-72

## Care

### *Kimmerer offers this set of guidelines as a possibility to guide daily living:*

Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them.  
Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life.  
Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.  
Never take the first. Never take the last.  
Take only what you need.  
Take only that which is given.  
Never take more than half. Leave some for others.

“Collectively, the indigenous canon of principles and practices that govern the exchange of life for life is known as the Honorable Harvest. They are rules of sorts that govern our taking, shape our relationships with the natural world, and rein in our tendency to consume—that the world might be as rich for the seventh generation as it is for our own. The details are highly specific to different cultures and ecosystems but the fundamental principles are nearly universal among peoples who live close to the land.”

*The Honorable Harvest* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

## Reflect

When we remember that we live in interdependence and mutuality with all of creation, we are encouraged to act differently. Consider how the principles of interdependence and mutuality impact your relationships.

## Pray

Apprehend God in all things,  
For God is in all things

Every single creature is full of God  
And is a book about God

Every creature is a word of God.

If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature—  
Even a caterpillar—  
I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full  
of God  
Is every creature.

—Master Eckhart

# The Creaturliness of God

Job 12:7-10

## Reflect

The rain waters the crops, which grow the fruit and vegetables that are harvested and then nourish our bodies. What can we do to be stewards of the earth and give to the earth as we have received from the bountiful harvest the earth has provided?

"God is like an eagle, sharp eyed and swift, with wings so wide you can play under the shadows.

God is like a river, constant and life giving. When you grow near God, you'll sprout up strong as a tree."

*What is God Like*

## Pray

In oceans teeming with fish

In skies filled with birds

**We remember the goodness of God\***

## Look

- Visit a local park with a path where you would see different creatures than what may live in your backyard.
- Find a flying creature and follow the shadow it makes.
- 

## Care

- What does your plant look like this week? What colors do you see as it grows?
- Find a stream and take your shoes off! Walk along the water without disturbing the wildlife. What can be found living nearby and in the water?



# The Image of God

Genesis 1:27



# The Image of God

1 John 3:1-3

"Forgetful of who we are, we live out of ignorance instead of wisdom, fear instead of love, and fantasy instead of reality. The more we forget that the image of God is the deepest reality within us, the less we delve into those inner depths for the gift of God. The beauty and dignity of our true self is a gift." *The Book of Creation*, p88

## Care

- Tend to yourself today with loving kindness. Take a long bath and wash your body with loving care. Wash your hair with gentleness. Give thanks for the Divine in you.
- Random act of kindness: what can you do to bring joy to someone today? Maybe a family member or perhaps a stranger?

## According to an old Hindu legend...

..there was once a time when all human beings were gods, but they so abused their divinity that Brahma, the chief god, decided to take it away from them and hide it where it could never be found. Where to hide their divinity was the question. So Brahma called a council of the gods to help him decide. "Let's bury it deep in the earth," said the gods. But Brahma answered, "No, that will not do because humans will dig into the earth and find it." Then the gods said, "Let's sink it in the deepest ocean." But Brahma said, "No, not there, for they will learn to dive into the ocean and will find it." Then the gods said, "Let's take it to the top of the highest mountain and hide it there." But once again Brahma replied, "No, that will not do either, because they will eventually climb every mountain and once again take up their divinity." Then the gods gave up and said, "We do not know where to hide it, because it seems that there is no place on earth or in the sea that human beings will not eventually reach." Brahma thought for a long time and then said, "Here is what we will do. We will hide their divinity deep in the center of their own being, for humans will never think to look for it there." All the gods agreed that this was the perfect hiding place, and the deed was done. And since that time humans have been going up and down the earth, digging, diving, climbing, and exploring--searching for something already within themselves. -- Author unknown

## Reflect

We are conditioned to forget who we are and lose sight of the Divine within us. Systems of domination create these conditions--externally and internally--and so the faith journey is one of unlearning and remembering. What is a recent story of remembering the Divine in you and/or an other? How does this remembrance shift how we live?

## Pray

It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed  
I, I am the spirit within the earth.  
The feet of the earth are my feet,  
The legs of the earth are my legs.  
The strength of the earth is my strength.,  
The thoughts of the earth are my thoughts,  
The voice of the earth is my voice.  
The feather of the earth is my feather;  
All that belongs to the earth belongs to me,  
All that surrounds the earth surrounds me.  
I, I am the sacred words of the earth.  
It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed.  
-Song of the Earth Spirit,  
Navajo Origin Legend

# The Image of God

1 John 3:1-3

## Reflect

“God is like three dancers, graceful and precise. They move to the same music in very different ways, showcasing all of God’s elegance and rhythm in your life.”

*What is God Like*

Being made in the image of God means that we believe that ALL people are part of God's kingdom and vision for humanity. That means people who are fast runners and people who have limb differences, and people who have curly hair and people who learn differently than you.

What are the things about YOU that make YOU made in the image of God?

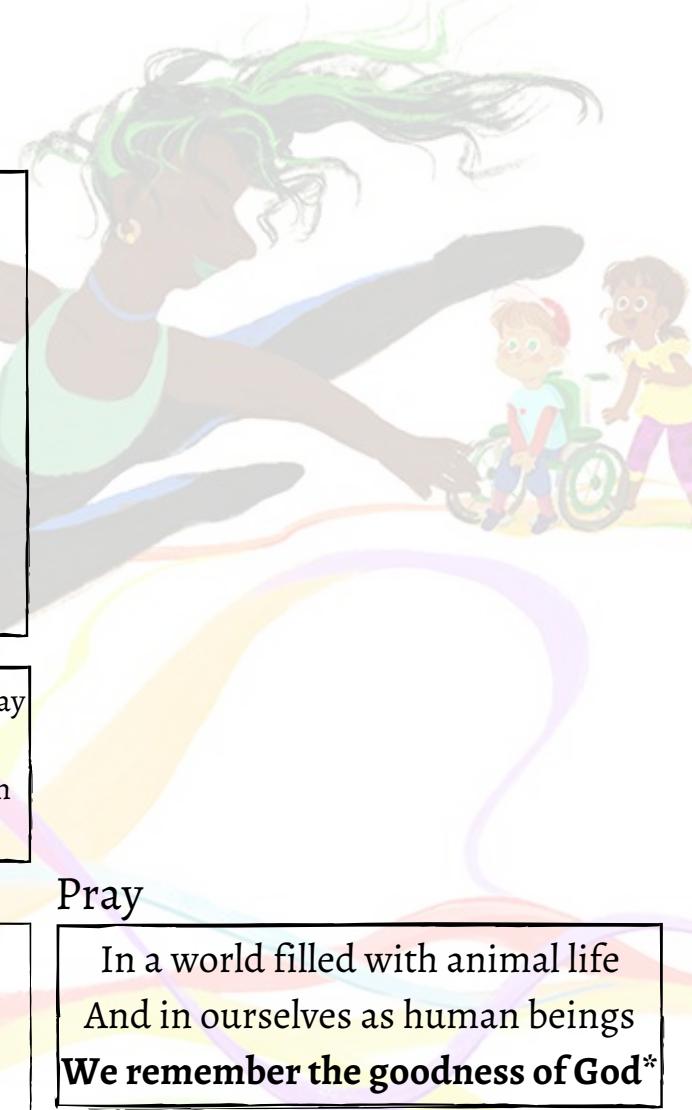
What are the things about your friends that make them of the image of God?

## Look

- Find a full tree with lots of branches and leaves. Sit or lie beneath and watch the leaves and branches sway and dance in the wind. Can you dance like you see the trees dancing?
- Watch a bird swoop and dive in the air and notice the rhythm and precision they use. Then pay attention to a group of birds all relying on each other for give and take as they work together.

## Care

- As we are made in the image of God, so is the earth part of God's creation. The flowers that we have planted are wild flowers which birds and bugs and bees pollinate and use as food sources. If you have seeds left, ask your parents if there is a place in your yard where you can plant the remaining seeds, or a place in your community that could use some beauty by way of wild flowers.

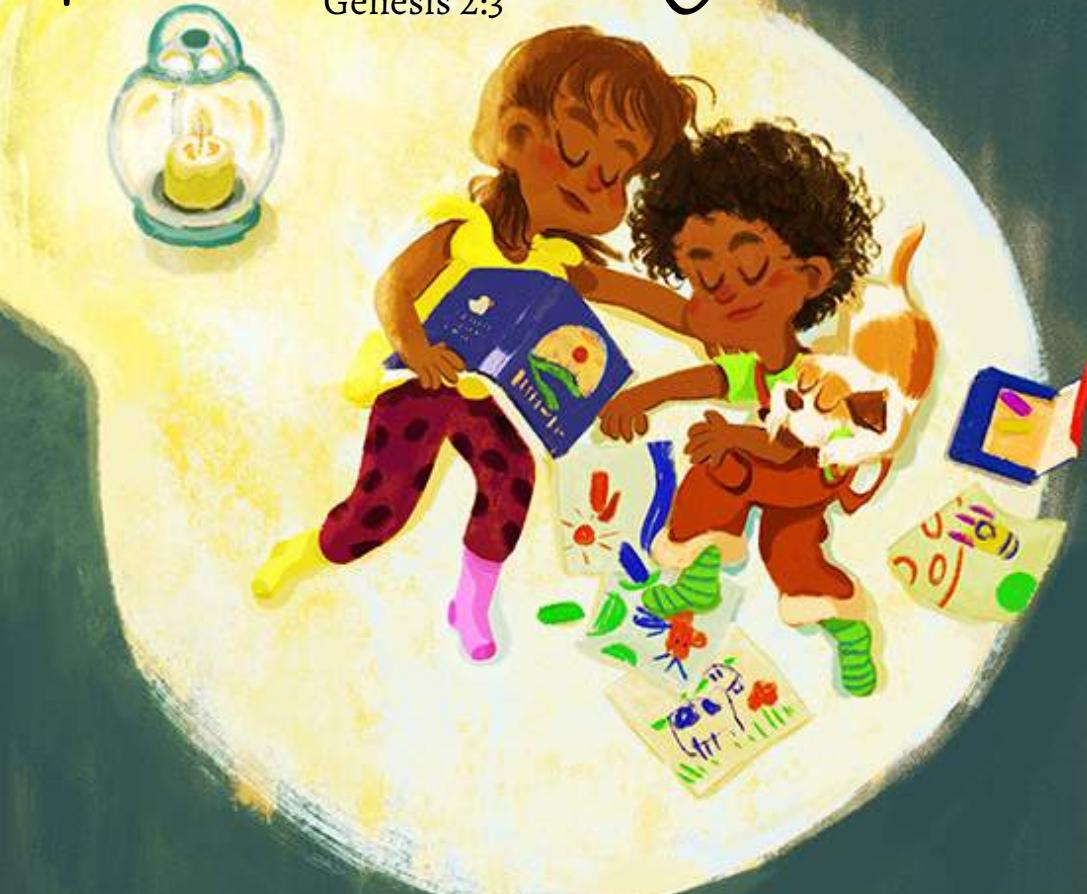


## Pray

In a world filled with animal life  
And in ourselves as human beings  
**We remember the goodness of God\***

# The Stillness of God

Genesis 2:3

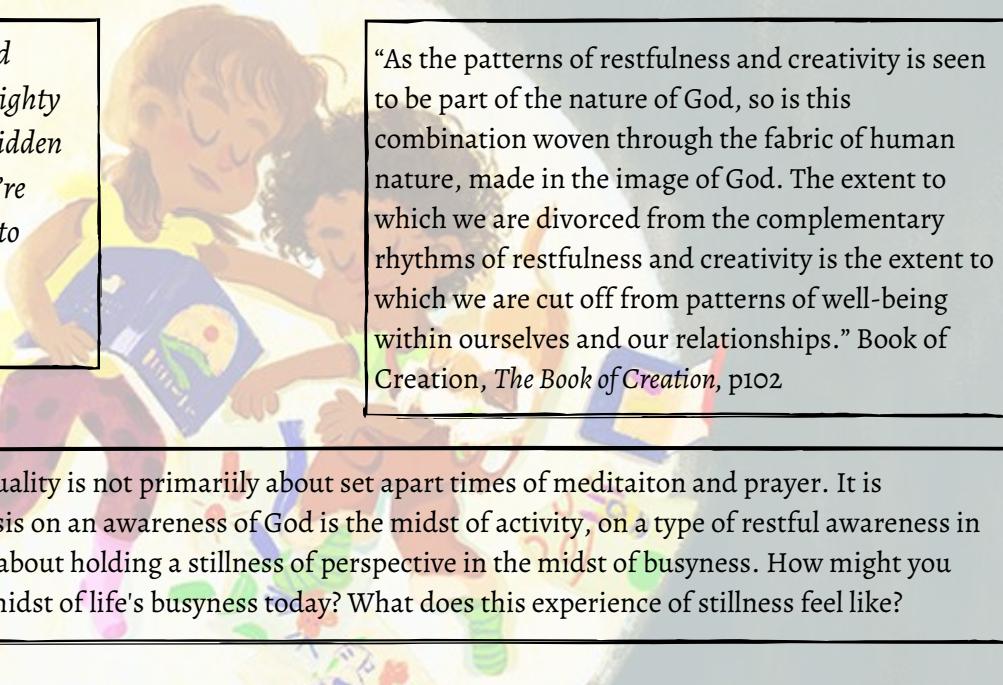


# The Stillness of God

1 Kings 19:11-13

*"God is like a fort, strong and secure with walls that are mighty And safe. Inside, there are hidden Places to hold you when you're Scared or need a quiet place to rest."*

*What is God Like*



*"As the patterns of restfulness and creativity is seen to be part of the nature of God, so is this combination woven through the fabric of human nature, made in the image of God. The extent to which we are divorced from the complementary rhythms of restfulness and creativity is the extent to which we are cut off from patterns of well-being within ourselves and our relationships." Book of Creation, The Book of Creation, p102*

## Reflect

The practice of Celtic spirituality is not primarily about set apart times of meditation and prayer. It is distinguished by its emphasis on an awareness of God in the midst of activity, on a type of restful awareness in everything that we do. It is about holding a stillness of perspective in the midst of busyness. How might you experience stillness in the midst of life's busyness today? What does this experience of stillness feel like?

## Care

- Rest. Rest is one of the seven spiritual practices of the Way of Love. Enjoy a form of rest today—maybe a nap, watching a favorite movie, reading a book, ordering dinner in.
- How might you offer rest to another? Perhaps it's doing an errand for someone or simply letting someone know you appreciate their work.

## Pray

*Excerpted from The Book of Creation:*

Some of the most beautiful prayers in the Celtic tradition are night benedictions. Their intimate inclusion of the Trinity indicates a reverencing of sleep. Rest is viewed almost in sacramental terms:

I lie down this night with God  
And God will lie down with me;  
I lie down this night with Christ,  
And Christ will lie down with me;  
I lie down this night with Spirit,  
And the Spirit will lie down with me;  
God and Christ and the Spirit  
Be lying down with me.

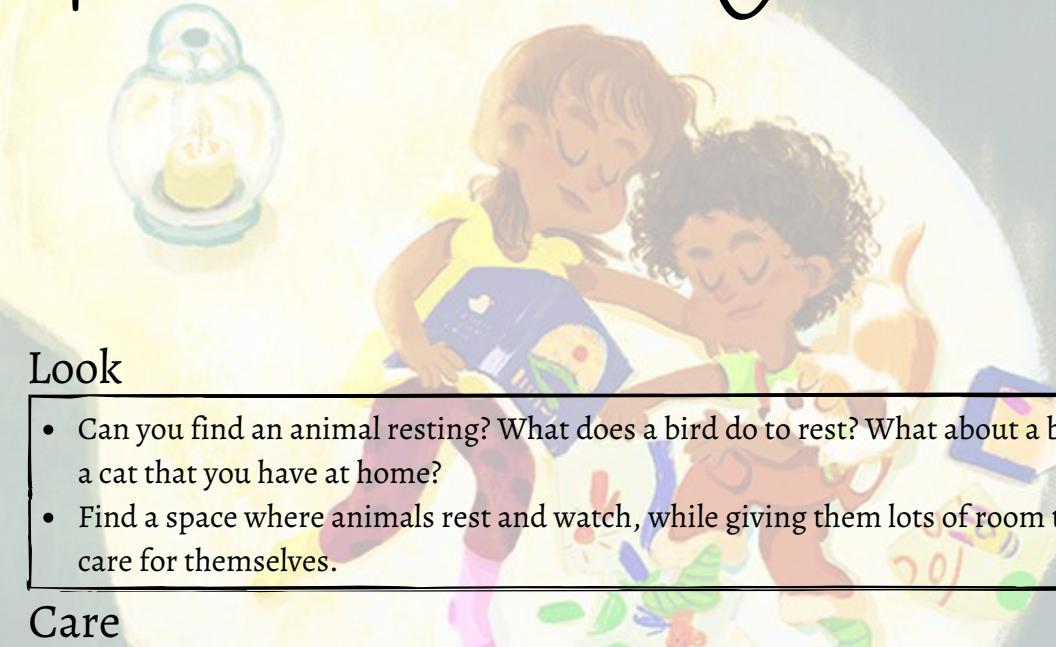
*---Carmina Gadelica, III, p.333*

The prayers are unusual in their portrayal of God as One who rests...God is present to us and to the whole of creation in our times of stillness. Dimensions within us are renewed. Restoring energies are given to us in the night and in darkness.

*The Book of Creation, p103*

# The Stillness of God

1 Kings 19:11-13



## Look

- Can you find an animal resting? What does a bird do to rest? What about a butterfly? What about a dog or a cat that you have at home?
- Find a space where animals rest and watch, while giving them lots of room to feel safe. Observe how they care for themselves.

## Care

- What are your planted seeds doing today? Set them outside in the sun and let them bask in the light and soak in the sunshine.
- Is there a place in your home where you can see your plants resting in the sunlight? Spend some time looking out the window and resting your body as you watch the sun highlight your flowers.
- Now spend time resting your body. Build a fort and enjoy a quiet space. What is your favorite way to rest when you are tired?

"God is like a fort, strong and secure with walls that are mighty And safe. Inside, there are hidden Places to hold you when you're Scared or need a quiet place to rest." *What is God Like*

## Reflect

What are the people and places that make you feel most safe?  
How can you be a safe place for someone you care about?  
And for a neighbor that you haven't met yet?

## Pray

And God looked and saw all that [God] had made, and indeed it was very, very good.

In rest and reflection, in wonder and worship

**We remember the goodness of God.\***

# Resources and Citations

\*All prayers from this litany are borrowed from The Church of England's *Creation Care Prayers*. More prayers in this series can be found here, <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/9-prayers-leeds-diocese.pdf>

## The Book of Creation:

Newell, J. Philip. *The Book of Creation: The Practice of Celtic Spirituality*. Canterbury Press, 2004.

## What is God Like:

Evans, Rachel Held, et al. *What Is God Like*. Convergent Books, 2021.

### The Biblical Citations for the Creation Story: The Light of God

And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. (Genesis 1:3)

### The Wildness of God

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' (Genesis 1:6)

### The Fecundity of God

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:9-10)

### The Harmony of God

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky...to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. (Genesis 1:14-16)

### The Creatureliness of God

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures'. (Genesis 1:20)

### The Image of God

God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

### The Stillness of God

God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:3)