

Faith Formation Resources - Week of 5/17

We had a little taste of “Virtual Camp” this Sunday in worship. The outdoors is an amazing place to experience God. This week’s Faith Formation resources help us do a little more of that!

Day 1: Things to look at!

1. GO OUTSIDE and look at the world around you. What colors do you see? What beautiful things are around you? Try arranging some of the leaves, rocks, sticks, etc. around you in a way that makes you happy. Arrange a bouquet of dandelions and violets, or just blow the seeds off all the Dandelion heads you can find. God created all these good things for people to enjoy!

Need a little inspiration? How about these temporary artworks, created with just leaves and rocks:

<https://www.demilked.com/land-art-installations-dietmar-voorwold/>

2. To really look at nature close up, take a cardboard tube from a toilet paper or paper towel roll and use it to look at a small patch of ground or a single flower. Focusing on a small area, without distractions, helps us to see all the beauty around us.

Hear Jesus’ words: “Look at the wildflowers in the field. See how they grow. They don’t work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that even Solomon, the great and rich king, was not dressed as beautifully as one of these flowers. If God makes what grows in the field so beautiful, what do you think he will do for you? It’s just grass—one day it’s alive, and the next day someone throws it into a fire. But God cares enough to make it beautiful. Surely he will do much more for you.”

- Matthew, Chapter 6:28-30

Day 2: Things to listen to!

1. GO OUTSIDE for a few minutes and listen to the birds singing. (You’ll hear the most birdsong if you go first thing in the morning - birds are early risers!) Wondering which bird makes which song? Here’s a start on learning some basic birdsongs! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xH2GjHKYj0>.

2. If you can, find some running water and sit beside it. Listen to the music it makes. Listening to water sounds - rain, streams, fountains, waterfalls, and ocean waves - can often be calming. Can’t find running water? It’s not quite the same thing, but you can listen to this:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg4kDY_hy6o

3. If you need a little music with your running stream, you can watch this video of a mile-long xylophone somewhere in the woods (it’s a cellphone commercial, but that’s just at the end...)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=167&v=C_CDLBTD4M&feature=emb_logo

Listen also to the words of psalm 104, where the poet praises God for brooks and birdsong:

You send fresh streams that spring up in the valleys,

 in the cracks between hills.

Every animal of the open field makes its journey there for drink:

 wild donkeys lap at the brooks’ edges.

Birds build their nests by the streams,

 singing among the branches.

Psalm 104: 10-12

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Day 3: Things to do!

We are told that Adam and Eve, the first people, started life in a garden - so you know that the skill and art of gardening goes way back! Gardening is a way for people to participate in creation. We change how the world around us looks when we plant one plant, and weed out another. Spring, for a gardener, is a time for planting. So GO OUTSIDE and plant some seeds, and watch them grow! Do you want to plant things to eat? You could go to a nursery for plants or seeds or find seeds at some drug and discount stores. Wear your mask, if you go! (There are also seed catalogs online, but most of them will have delayed shipping because of COVID - 19.) Want to plant flowers? You can find plants or seeds at the same places, or dig and divide flowering plants you already have.

Whatever you do, *prepare the ground* for your new plants, and *care for them* if you want them to grow! If we want something to grow, we need to start it off well, and make sure we pay attention to it as it grows. This goes for people and their lives with God, too!

Listen to Jesus' story of the sower and the seeds:

"A farmer went out to plant his seed. While he was planting, some seed fell by the road. The birds came and ate all that seed. Some seed fell on rocky ground, where there wasn't enough dirt. That seed grew very fast, because the ground was not deep. But when the sun rose, the plants dried up because they did not have deep roots. Some other seed fell among thorny weeds. The weeds grew and choked the good plants. Some other seed fell on good ground where it grew and became grain. Some plants made 100 times more grain. Other plants made 60 times more grain, and some made 30 times more grain. Let those with ears use them and listen!"

"Listen to the meaning of that story about the farmer. What is the seed that fell by the road? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching about the kingdom but does not understand it. The Evil One comes and takes away the things that were planted in that person's heart. And what is the seed that fell on rocky ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and quickly accepts it with joy. But he does not let the teaching go deep into his life. He keeps it only for a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching he accepted, then he quickly gives up. And what is the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching but lets worries about this life and love of money stop that teaching from growing. So the teaching does not produce fruit in that person's life. But what is the seed that fell on the good ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and understands it. That person grows and produces fruit, sometimes 100 times more, sometimes 60 times more, and sometimes 30 times more."

- Matthew 13: 3-9, 18-23

Day 4: Things to read!

Let the Whole Earth Sing Praise by Tomie DePaola <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5fekRQNuZY>

When God Made the World - Matthew Paul Turner <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghjP5KufcI>

The Boy and the Ocean, by Max Lucado <https://vimeo.com/67676294>

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You can also read about this summer's virtual offerings at Templed Hills Camp 2.0! What experience will you register for?

<http://www.heartlanducc.org/all-project-list/outdoor-ministries/>

Day 5: Ways to preserve the outdoors!

We are called to be stewards of creation, to love and care for the world around us. Here's a few things you can do to care for our beautiful world:

1. Go on a cleanup walk! Walk around your neighborhood with a plastic bag tucked in your pocket (you can also wear gloves if it makes you feel safer). If you see trash on your walk, stop to pick it up and put it in your bag. Careful! Don't pick up anything sharp! When you get home, throw your trash away, and wash your hands really thoroughly.
2. Consider creating an area for wildlife in your yard. There's lots of great ideas here, at the National Wildlife Federation's Website: <https://www.nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/certify> You could even get your backyard certified as an official wildlife habitat!
3. Subscribe to The Pollinator - the UCC's Green Justice blog! Archives here:
<https://www.ucc.org/pollinator>

Listen to the words of Psalm 8:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
 the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
 human beings that you care for them?
You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
 you put everything under their feet:
All flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,
The birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea,
 all that swim the paths of the seas.

- Psalm 8: 3-4,6-8

Want a **daily** list of Faith Formation activities to download? Try <https://www.dofaithathome.org/>

Prayer practice to try: Create a prayer garden!

A prayer garden is basically the outdoor version of the sacred space we created a few weeks ago inside your home. It can be as simple as a bench under a favorite tree, or as elaborate as you wish! It's recommended that you have some parts in shade, and some in sun, and pick plants that either remind you of your faith heroes, or have a link to symbols of our faith. (Lilies, anyone?) You may also want to pick a focal point for this area - a statue, a fountain, or just a rock with something painted on it, or etched into it.

There's some photos of prayer gardens for inspiration on the next pages!

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