***In Nature at LCOC***

Dear LCOC Family Member ~

If you’ve never spent time in any of the outside sanctuaries surrounding our church, you are missing an opportunity to feel God’s awesome peace and His presence. It is a dreary, rainy winter morning, but it feels balmy compared to the last couple of days that have been extremely cold and windy. The weather has been somewhat fickle this month, even for Virginia, but we are thankful to get outside for a walk. Even in the drab conditions, the beauty of God’s beautiful creation comes shining through in this sacred space:

* The beautiful red berries of the Heavenly Bamboo pop out on this dismal morning.
* We learned from Stihl Cadets that one of them spotted an Owl earlier today sitting atop one of the Bluebird Houses. How exciting!
* All of the Leyland Cypress branches (the trees that border the drive into the outer sanctuary) look frozen and quite sad.
* The trees in the nearby wooded area look noble as they stand at attention prepared for whatever the rest of the winter brings. If we had been here not quite two weeks ago, we could have recited one of Robert Frost’s most famous poems “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”.
* Some of the Ornamental Grasses in the landscape remain upright and gallant, while others are quite frazzled from the recent snow and strong winds.
* As we stroll by the area along Cloverdale Road, we are not surprised to see Daffodils poking their heads out of the soil. Not to worry, they do this every year!
* In the corner of the Memorial Garden, a colorful golden shrub reminds us that even on a grey day, we can find a bright spot.
* The bird feeder is busy as usual as there is less food in the natural landscape for our feathered friends to eat.
* We end our walk right where we started – near the patio. The bright branches of the Gold Rider Cypress Tree and the delicate boughs of the King Cypress Shrub are so bright it almost appears as if the sun has come out.

You are encouraged to take a self-guided tour through our wonderful landscape here at LCOC. But be ready – you are going to experience God’s peace and presence – so enjoy this special time with our Creator! What a blessing to be able to walk through the space on a rainy winter day. We are reminded that winter will be at its midpoint on February 2nd which is right around the corner.

**“Anyone who thinks gardening begins in the spring and ends**

**in the fall is missing the best part of the year . . .**

**for gardening begins in January, with the dream.”**

**Josephine Nuese**