



Celebrating God's Creation September 28, 2020

Dear friends,

We humans are built for community. During this time of social distancing, it's crucial that we remain connected, holding one another in love and support. It's for this reason that **each week during the COVID-19 crisis, we'll be sending you a short resource** to use in a virtual meeting held over the phone or via video conferencing. This weekly resource is a great tool to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups. It is also a great resource to use individually, or with groups of friends or family to stay connected and engaged in a meaningful way. These reflections will provide a time to pray together, check in with one another, and have conversation around a short passage.

In the meantime, we're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs through videoconferencing. While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while in quarantine, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#). The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to [forward this resource](#) to friends and family!

Thank you for continuing to care for one another during this time of heightened anxiety. Know that we are praying for you!

Stay well,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Mediation (10 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today, through prayer, meditation, and a poem, we'll take some time to celebrate our connection with God's earth. We'll also discuss our responsibility to one another and to Creation. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.

Scripture Reading

Read [Psalm 46](#) slowly, pausing between sentences.

Meditation: Canticle of Creation by St. Francis of Assisi (Adapted)

(Read slowly, alternating between 3 readers.)

Reader 1: O Most High, all-powerful, all good God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor and every kind of blessing.

Reader 2: All praise be Yours my God, for all You have made
and for our Lord Brother Sun,
who brings us the day and the light you give us through him.
How beautiful, how radiant in all his splendor!
Of you Most High he bears the likeness.

Reader 3: What is your favorite place in the sun?
When has sunrise or sunset taken your breath away?

(Pause for silent reflection)

Reader 1: All praise be Yours my God, through Sister Moon and Stars,
In the heavens you have made them
bright and precious and fair.

Reader 3: Where or when has the night sky astounded you?

(Pause)



- Reader 2: All praise be Yours my God, through Brothers Wind and Air
and fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,
by which You cherish all you have made.
- Reader 3: When has weather awed you?
(Pause)
- Reader 1: All praise be Yours my God, through Sister Water,
so useful, lowly, precious and pure.
- Reader 3: What streams, rivers, lakes, or oceans have left their impression upon you?
(Pause)
- Reader 2: All praise be Yours my God, through Brother Fire,
through whom you brighten the dark of night:
How beautiful he is, filled with power and strength.
- Reader 3: When has fire brought light and warmth?
(Pause)
- Reader 1: All praise be Yours my God, through Sister Earth, our Mother,
who nourishes us and sustains us,
bringing forth various fruits, colorful flowers and herbs.
- Reader 3: Where and how do you enjoy Nature's beauty and relish in her bounty?
(Pause)
- Reader 2: All praise be Yours my God, through those who grant pardon
for love of You; and through those who endure sickness and trial.
in peace and patience - you will grant them a crown.
- Reader 3: Where is there a need for forgiveness and healing in this world?
(Pause)
- Reader 1: And all praise be Yours my God, through our Sister Death,
whose embrace no one can escape.
Happy are those she finds doing Your will.
- Reader 3: How has death graced your life?
(Pause)
- Reader 2: We praise and bless you, God and give thanks to you,
as we serve you in all humility.
- Facilitator — *Repeat Psalm 46:10-11:* "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted
among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress." Amen.

Check-In Time (15 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you're by yourself, journal about them.

- Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. Does anyone have any life updates, joys, or struggles they would like to share?
- In the opening meditation, you were prompted to reflect on times when nature has awed you or astounded you. What came to mind?
- Especially given the wildfires our nation is experiencing right now, you may also be reflecting on the ways that nature brings great destruction. Are there ways in which nature inspires fear – or even terror – in your life?

Reflection (15 minutes or so)

A Summer Day by Mary Oliver

Open the Youtube Video "[Mary Oliver reads 'The Summer Day'](#)" (1:30).

Optional: Copy and paste the following link into the chat box, so that participants can read along: <https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/133.html>

Then say:

We will now listen to a poem called "The Summer Day" by Mary Oliver. Regardless of whether this is your first time reading this poem or your five hundredth, listen for how this poem may be speaking to you right now in this moment and in this context. After the reading, we will pause for silent reflection.

Play [the video](#). Then pause for 30 seconds of silence.

Reflection:

- What phrase or word stood out to you from the poem?



- “I don’t know exactly what a prayer is. I do know how to pay attention....” What does this phrase mean to you? Does it resonate with your understanding of prayer? Why or why not?
- “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” Obviously, this is a huge question that requires a lot of thought! But how might you begin to answer Mary Oliver’s question? What are your initial thoughts?
Invite participants to continue to reflect on this question throughout the week.

At the conclusion of the discussion, say to participants:

This fall, JustFaith Ministries will be releasing the first 8-session program of a three-part series on eco-justice. This first program will be called “Sacred Land: Food and Farming,” and it is available for virtual audiences. Here is a summary of the program:

Sacred Land: Food and Farming, the first program in JustFaith Ministries’ Eco-justice Series, explores our connection with the land and our responsibility for it. Together, small groups learn how food and farming practices affect the climate crisis, marginalized communities, and their own health and spiritual wellbeing. Participants explore practical ways to support, advocate for, and implement sustainable food and farming practices in the communities and the institutions of which they’re a part – whether it’s their workplace, congregation, apartment complex, or neighborhood. Each participant works toward a plan of action: for example, this could be starting a composting program with their nextdoor neighbors, building a community garden with their congregation, or advocating for local and national policies that support sustainable food and farming practices. Books for Sacred Land: Food and Farming are *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Earth Prayers* by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, and *Laudato Si* by Pope Francis.

Let participants know that more information will be released very soon on the [JustFaith Ministries website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

Announcements (10 minutes-ish)



- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. In order to support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called “Acting for Justice While Sheltering in Place,” in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer tips for taking action during COVID-19. Visit the [JustFaith Ministries Facebook page](#) for more information on times and topics.
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice. One idea is to host a community prayer service or event around creation care, using the [Season of Creation](#) guidebook. You can copy/paste the link to this resource into participants’ chat box: <https://seasonofcreation.org/celebration-guide/>

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Find someone to read the “one” part of the closing prayer. Have everyone turn themselves off mute to read the “all” part of the closing prayer, or you can find a second person to read that part. Then say:

Our closing prayer is called “The Lord’s Prayer and Creation Care: A Litany of Confession” and was written by Revs. Bruce and Carolyn Gillette for Limestone Presbyterian Church. Carolyn is a Presbyterian minister and has written many hymns on the theme of faith and justice, which are [available through her website](#).

Before we begin, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds

Let’s pray.

Pause for silence.



One: Loving God, we remember that Jesus taught us to pray saying, “Our Father...”

All: You created us, you made this world, and you called your creation very good. Yet often we forget that you are our loving Parent who continues to bless your world.

One: Jesus told us that you are “...in heaven...”

All: Yet we fail to live in awe of you. We take you for granted, and we don’t see the awesome beauty of the world you have made.

One: We pray, “Hallowed be your name...”

All: We confess that our reverence for you does not always lead us to care reverently for your earth, sky and sea.

One: We pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”

All: We confess that we often put our own interests first-exploiting your creation, and living for our own convenience and self-interest.

One: We pray, “Give us today our daily bread.”

All: We confess that we consume more than our share of the world’s resources, while billions go hungry every day and your whole creation suffers.

One: We pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

All: We confess that we see these words only in spiritual terms, while the Bible is filled with teachings about economic justice and creation care.

One: We pray, “Save us from the time of trial.”

All: Help us to resist the temptations of spending more, using more, acquiring more, and wasting more.

One: We pray, “Deliver us from evil...”

All: Free us from greed and self-centeredness that separate us from you and others.

One: We pray, “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.”



All: Help us to know that in caring for your wonderful world, we are working for your kingdom, being good stewards of your creative power, and giving you glory.

One: We pray, “Amen.”

All: We end our prayers with “Amen,” a word that means “let it be so.” We know we can be faithful disciples by your grace. Amen!

*This prayer was found at the Earth Ministry website:
<https://earthministry.org/worship/prayers/>*

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.