

A Call to Sabbath Reflection

Adapted from “Called by Earth and Sky” by the Rev. Linda Tomlinson-Seebach

God’s first act is to create the world - Asher

For most of human history, we have been an agrarian society connected to the land. In the past 100 years, however, things have changed. We have rapidly moved from an agrarian society to a post-industrial society. In our move away from the land, we have not only lost our connection with the earth, but also some significant understandings about how we are connected to each other and God through nature.

Before we were—before there were church buildings, committees, pavement, and cell phones—God was. The Spirit of God hovered over an empty void. God’s first act was to create the world, in and through nature. In creating and creation, God brings something mysterious and wonderful to the chaotic void. God creates, orders, and brings light.

How are we more connected? – Volunteer from Eastside

I often wonder if we haven’t returned to a kind of void and chaos. Instant communications continuously flash images and sound bites at us. Day and night we are bombarded with so much technology and communication that we are drowning our consciousness, distracted to the point that we thought we could drive and text at the same time.

All this happens under the promise that technology connects us more to each other and the world. Does it? We know more about what is happening globally than we ever did before. You would think that would make us more connected to each other. But are we? Does our knowledge of our neighbour’s need across the city or country, or around the world, cause us to respond? If not, how are we more connected?

With advances in technology, we were promised more leisure time and more chances to spend time with our loved ones. Yet despite all our advances, few of us find the time, or take the time, to watch the sun rise or set unless we are glancing from the window at our workplace. All this disconnection from each other and the earth leads us farther away from God.

Mother Gaia - Charlotte

The green earth that for most of history was understood to be our mother Gaia, the hand that fed, nurtured, and sustained us, is no longer understood in those terms. Food comes from the grocery store, not the earth. While 11 percent of the global population remain without access to an improved source of drinking water, water has become, like many other things, a commodity to be bought and sold.

In our technologically advanced society, where life is faster than it ever has been before, many of us have lost touch with this Spirit of God that hovered over creation so long ago and still hovers over us today. We have spun ourselves around our global planet to the point that we have forgotten who we are and where we came from. We are dizzy from the turning.

Joy of Camping Ministry - Callie

The joy of camping ministry is that it reminds us to return to where we began. In going back to nature, we connect with the earth once again. God is there and we can feel the Spirit gently breathing around us, touching our skin, and calling us home.

In the midst of this chaos, returning to the land is all the more important. Where else can we connect again and again to who we are and where we came from? In nature we find simultaneously a retreat from life, a way to return to it, and a path to restoration within it. An experience of "Sabbath" as we step away from society's hectic way of life

Camping ministries can set a direction for the journey of God's people into the future. We are not alone in this work, and stronger when we share best practices and support each other.

The trickle of water - Aethan

The trickle of water as it cascades over rocks—the call of the loon or the owl—can be heard when the televisions, cell phones, computers, cars, and radios are turned off. Not hearing that call might cause us to destroy the very ecosystem that sustained it. The call to Sabbath is no different. Each part of this creation is a part of God. And we, too, are a part of this creation. When one part of this creation suffers, we all do. And creation is moaning because of our indifference.

Water Blessing: Water is a gift of life, a symbol of God's grace in our lives. Water nourishes us. As Christians, we are baptized by water and the Spirit, enfolded into the Christ community. We know there are times and spaces where water is lacking, where water is polluted, where water is commodified, and where water floods. We pray that all of Creation has access to clean, sustaining, abundant water. God of Life, fill this water, fill us with your reconciling love

God is calling us to come home - Russell

God is calling us to come home. We can return. This will happen when we consciously decide to tune out everything else.

So, let's sit outside, together, around the campfire of our imagination. You will realize that the warmth you feel doesn't come only from the fire, but also from your connections with those around you, and a growing understanding of your place in the universe. Your smiles, your songs, your thoughts become a prayer of gratitude to Creator God. And something inside you wants this to last forever.

Do you want to hear the call of the loon again? Do you want to hear God calling you to a deepened relationship with self, creation, and God? Camping ministry is quietly and peacefully calling us back, to return, to come home. Will you join us?