

# TRINITY BUCKINGHAM CHURCH

*Sharing God's love and serving God's people  
with Christ in our hearts and God's work through our hands*



## *CREATIONTIDE*

*Growing our Love  
for the Earth and All Life*



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# *This Holy Earth – Our Common Home*

Our earth is a sacred reality. Every notion we have of the divine has been shaped by our experience of this planet. If we have a wonderful sense of the divine, it is because we live amid such beauty. As the Passionist priest and philosopher Thomas Berry observes, “If we lived on the moon, our mind and emotions, our speech, our imagination, our sense of the divine would all reflect the desolation of the lunar landscape.” Clearly, the earth is our primary instructional and illuminating environment. Our most sacred scripture is the “holy book” of Creation. While indeed distinct, spirit and matter are inseparable. No matter where we immerse ourselves in the stream of reality, we can touch the spiritual source of all that is.

Each year at this time, the Christian community unites for a worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home, marking *Creationtide*. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common role as caretakers of this holy earth. We see that our wellbeing is interwoven with its wellbeing. This year, the global reach of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed our shared human nature and the interconnectedness of our economies, political structures, health care systems, food production chains, energy and transportation systems in devastating ways. It also demonstrated how the entire web is rooted in the earth and limited by the earth’s capacity to sustain our demands.

*Creationtide* unites us as one family in Christ, celebrating the bonds we share with each other and with “every living creature on Earth.” (Genesis 9:10) In these days, we are encouraged to spend intentional time in prayer and reflection, considering ways to inhabit our common home more justly and sustainably, and to lift our voices in the public sphere.

This booklet offers prompts for keeping *Creationtide* alive at home. May you find some blessing in its pages and continue to be a blessing upon this holy earth.

*This Creationtide booklet has been lovingly curated by Martha Dudich for the Trinity Buckingham faith community.*

# Autumn Sabbath



*Welcome, Autumn, arms full of summer's blessings,  
carrying the seeds of life for next year's planting.*

*Enter my home with your golden wisdom: be my guest and share my table.  
O sacred season, be my teacher, as I wish to learn the virtue of contentment.  
. . . May I truly be at peace with what I have given and received,  
knowing that it's enough, that my striving can cease  
in the abundance of God's grace.*

EDWARD HAYS

***There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for those  
who enter God's rest lay down their labors, just as God rested.***

***Let us, therefore, move forward to enjoy this rest.***

HEBREWS 4:9-10

Once again, our planet's perpetual path around the sun has come to the shrine of autumn. While with each day we lean further away from the rays of its heat, the sun continues to warm creation as it embraces this season of completion. Even as pandemic challenges continue, shaping an autumn unlike any we may have welcomed before, there remains reason for celebration, for gratitude, for restoration, for joy. Our landscape displays holiness ablaze at the tip of every branch and alive in every autumn leaf. We have been called to find Sabbath rest, no matter the experience of our days. It is God's deep desire for our welfare. This does not necessarily mean our schedules will alter, that we'll sleep more, or days will look a particular way. Rather, it means a shift in thought, a change of perspective, open to God *revealing* that this time is different. It is leaning into God's peace as we look at and live in the world.

*Blest are you, Harvest of my heart – Source of all life – Delight of my days.*

Whether it's an entire day or any part of it, here are things to consider about "making Sabbath holy" - honoring God with time of personal renewal - in Creationtide.

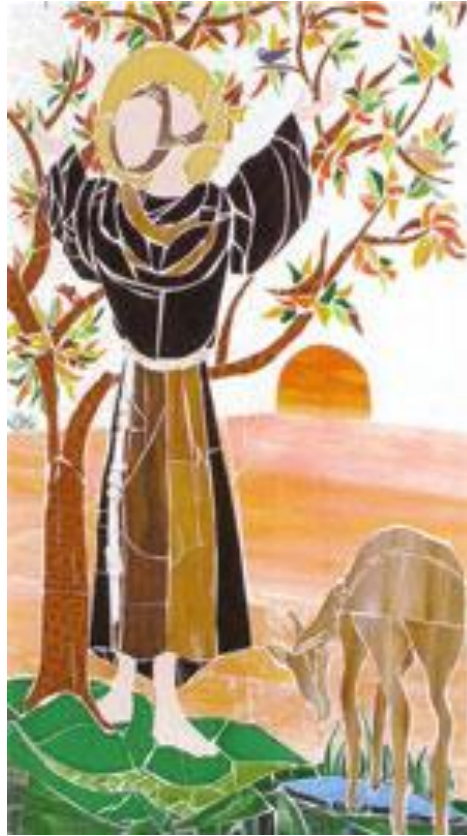
- the Biblical reasons for Sabbath-keeping offer parallel activities of PRAYING (Exodus 20) and PLAYING (Deuteronomy 5) Let your Sabbath time include both, as they deeply congruent, with essential inner connections.
- Sabbath invites us to let go of the ways we want to make things happen or control the people and situations in our lives, attentive to God's guidance and Spirit's movement; we recognize the world is not on our shoulders, neither is our identity wrapped up in the things we accomplish - or don't! It can be God's way of unburdening us from anxiety, ambition and adrenaline, from self-importance, even loneliness. In the green pastures and still waters of the Good Shepherd's grace, it's really true: "He restores my soul." (Psalm 23)
- are you being called to a Sabbath FAST, even for this limited time? A fast from media (except for the Trinity Buckingham Good News, of course!) or a particular food or activity, not in self-denial, but rather restoration
- what would *engage your heart*? quiet meditation? perhaps Lectio Divina? listening to favorite music - intentionally, not as background to another activity? a walk or bike ride alert to the changing landscape of the season?
- Psalm 92 (on the following page) is the only one in the Psalter specifically assigned to the Sabbath. Surprising, perhaps, as there is no clear Sabbath reference in the body of the psalm. Yet it sets praying and playing in tandem, with musicians, animals and sylvan charm. *How does praying with Psalm 92 impact your Sabbath? your Creationtide?*



## *PSALM 92: A Song for the Sabbath*

How good it is to give thanks to our God  
and make music to your name, O Most High;  
To speak of your unfailing love in the first moments of morning  
and rehearse your faithfulness as darkness begins to fall.  
How good it is to praise to the sounds of strings - lute and harp -  
to the stirring melodies of the lyre.  
Because you, O God, thrill me with everything you have done,  
I will sing with joy in light of all your deeds.  
Your works are marvelous and your thoughts unfathomable.  
Yet the weak-minded cannot understand this;  
the foolish are unable to see that evil ones sprout like grass  
and wicked ones flourish, only to be doomed forever.  
But you, O God, are above all forever.  
Those who hate you will perish; evil-doers will be broken and scattered.  
You have strengthened me as a wild ox,  
anointed me with the refreshing oil of your blessing.  
I have seen my enemies defeated, and heard my attackers cut down.  
Those devoted to God will flourish like the budding date-palm,  
they will grow upright and strong as the cedars in Lebanon.  
Those planted in the house of God will thrive, bearing fruit into old age;  
even in winter, they will remain green and full of sap,  
proclaiming God is righteous, our rock, in whom no fault can be found.

## *Praying with Francis of Assisi*



*May God give you peace.* That's how Francis of Assisi began his sermons. These powerful words echo the greeting of the risen Jesus to his grieving and frightened followers: "Peace be with you." Peace is the deepest longing of the human heart. The desire for God's peace draws us into community for prayer and sacrament where we are fed, healed, and changed. Peace is more than absence of violence, though it surely includes that. As Martin Luther King observed, "Peace is not the absence of tension. It is the presence of justice." Peace is God-given wholeness that transforms every aspect of life. God cares passionately about our griefs and wounds, about our painful memories, about our broken relationships. God cares about every detail of our story, and desires to make us whole and free. Peace involves just, life-giving relationships: with our God, with each other, and with the earth. Such relationships are given in creation, distorted by wrongdoing, and restored by grace.



Inspired by the mission of Jesus and his disciples, Francis and his companions gave their possessions to the poor and wandered the Umbrian countryside begging for their daily bread and preaching the Gospel. This was the path of peace Francis embraced as a way to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, whose option was always for those who went without, who stood on the margins, defenseless. For Francis, poverty made possible a profound joy in God and creation. He celebrated the goodness of all God's creatures, whom he called sister or brother. By refusing to call anything his own, he became free to accept everything as God's good gift.

While few of us are called to the radical poverty embraced by Francis of Assisi, his example nevertheless challenges us to consider the ways in which our personal advantages, attitudes and agendas might distort our sacred relationships with God, with one another and with the earth.

Francis invites us to ask ourselves some hard questions.

- Do I value things (\$) more than human community and the common good?
- How often and how generously do I share with those in need?
- Do my patterns of consumption damage God's creation?
- Is there a "poverty" I could embrace that would allow others to thrive?

Creationtide offers the opportunity to identify possessions, attitudes and behaviors that prevent us from living as brothers and sisters, as followers of Jesus and beloved children of God. In the spirit of Francis, we're encouraged to live lives of love and solidarity with the earth and its creatures - and with every single human being. We can look for ways to simplify our life, so that we might be more open to God's presence and God's desire for us.

*May God give us peace.*



## *Canticle of Creation: All Creatures, One Family*

You may be familiar with images of Francis of Assisi, the brown-robed friar, preaching to the birds. You may know some of the stories of Francis and animals: releasing Brother Rabbit from a trap or letting Sister Raven serve as his “alarm clock” to awaken him for early morning prayers. Historians have credited Francis with composing the first great poem in Italian - a poem or hymn titled *Canticle of Brother Sun* (also known as *Canticle of All Creatures* and, most recently, *Canticle of Creation*). In this hymn Francis invites all his brother and sister creatures - animals, plants, minerals - to praise their Creator, with the conviction that *all creatures form one family*, that we are interdependent.



Use these days of Creationtide to meditate on the Canticle of Francis. It falls into distinguishable segments, allowing you to reflect over time. The first lines are devoted to God alone, our Creator, deserving first place in our reverence and praise. We can do well to imitate Francis by allowing ourselves to be swept up in giving “all praise” and “all glory” and “all honor” to our Loving God.

*Most high, all-powerful, all good Lord God  
All praise is yours, all glory, all honor and all blessing.  
To you alone, Most High, do they belong.  
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.*



In the next lines we focus on the various “brother” and “sister” creatures God has made. As Francis became one with them in a fraternal relationship that resisted domination, we reverence them as members of the one family to which we belong.

*Be praised for all your creation, my God,  
and first for Brother Sun through whom you bring the day and give light.  
He is beauty and radiance and bears splendid likeness to you.  
Be praised through Sister Moon and all the stars in heaven;  
You formed them bright and precious and fair.  
Be praised through Brother Wind, through air cloudy, stormy, serene;  
in all the moods of weather you cherish and sustain what you have made.  
Be praised through Sister Water, useful and humble, precious and pure.  
Be praised through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night.  
How beautiful, how merry! Full of power and strength.  
Be praised through Sister Earth, our Mother who sustains and governs us  
and who produces varied fruits, colored flowers and herbs.*

Francis later added these lines to the original Canticle above. He composed the first part to help resolve a dispute between the mayor and bishop of Assisi, that they might be reconciled. Still later, aware the end of his own life was near, Francis counted even mortality among God’s familiar and familial creatures.

*Be praised, my God, for those who grant pardon for love of you;  
and for those bearing trial in patience; by you they will be crowned.  
Be praised through Sister Death, whose embrace we cannot escape.  
What blessing to be found at last in your arms.  
I give thanks to you, Lord God, and serve you in humility.*

May the one family of Creation continue to lift our hearts in this prayer of praise!

There is a good chance he had nothing to do with these simple lines, yet they have become familiar to many as the *Prayer of Saint Francis*. Though its origin remains mysterious, the prayer had at some point been printed on cards bearing the image of Francis, hence the confusion. In any case, Creationtide is the perfect opportunity to make the prayer a daily practice.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.



O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are  
pardoned,

and in dying that we are born to eternal life.

# *We Ask This in Your Name*

## *Prayers and Hymns to offer in Creationtide*

The sound of the drum is held in each heart.  
We heard its music long before breath or vision.  
Its beat is the pulse of an ancient sea.  
We summon its rhythm to carry this prayer:

As our unshod feet caress mother earth  
let us feel that same tempo, that old affirmation  
that no borders exist between breath and breath,  
no lines drawn on paper can restrain the dawn.

Let us remember the first lullaby we danced before birth  
that beat of first life, that great tide of first peace.  
Creator of all, nameless One and known by a thousand names,  
let our sacred songs carry wide between earth and sky,  
like the wings of the eagle drumming the wind.

prayer from the Abenaki Nation

God, in your form of Beauty and Sorrow be with us.  
May our hearts be broken. May our prayers be sufficient to feel the  
heartbreak of God, carrying the burden of universal sorrow.  
These are our tasks. Let us learn the flight patterns of birds, the syllables  
of wolf howl and whale song, the moving pantomime of branch and leaf,  
the long sentences of ants moving in unison, the combinations of clouds,  
the codices of stars. Let us, thus, reconstitute the world, sign by sign  
and melody by melody, singing the world back into the very heart of God.

Deena Metzger



## CONFESSION (based on Leviticus 25)

We praise you, God, for the Earth that sustains life. Through days and season, renewal and growth, you open your hand to give all creatures our food in the proper time. In your wisdom you gave Sabbath for land and life to rest. But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits, our demands are exhausting our world. We have not allowed the land to lie fallow, and the Earth is struggling to renew. And so we confess. God of mercy and justice,

- You tell us the land must rest, free from the burden of production. *We confess our demand that the earth produce beyond its limits and our bondage to desire more.*

- You call us to leave enough fruit on the vine and in the fields to feed our neighbors, animals, and replenish the earth. *We confess our failure to share what we receive from the earth.*

- You affirm that our security is found in enough. *We confess our lack of courage to resist the myth of endless growth.*

- You tell us that the land must not be taken over permanently, because the land is yours, and everything in it. *We confess to thinking of creation as given, instead of gift.*

- You call us to fairness and justice. *We confess our lack of faith, not loving you with our whole heart and mind and strength, or all living neighbors as ourselves.*

Turn us from fear and mistrust, and free us to imagine a life reconciled to the Earth and to all creatures, through the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.



I vow to myself and to each of you:

I commit myself daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings.

To live on Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products and energy I consume. To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth, the ancestors, the future generations, and my brothers and sisters of all species. To support others in our work for the world and to ask for help when I need it. To pursue a daily practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart, and supports me in keeping these vows.

A BUDDHIST PRAYER

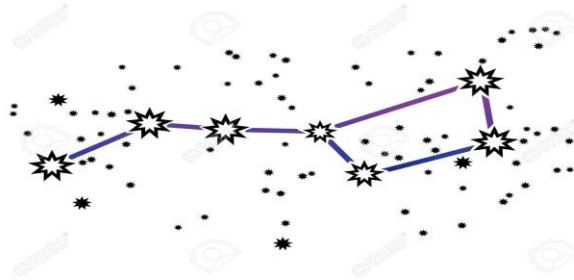
Both these hymns can be sung to any Common Meter Double tune, eg. KINGSFOLD, FOREST GREEN, CAROL (*I Heard the Voice of Jesus, O Little Town of Bethlehem, I Sing the Mighty Power of God, It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*)

### **We Still Can Save Our Planet, Earth**

We still can save our planet, Earth, if we resolve to share  
the energy and food we waste with creatures everywhere.  
Creation struggles for its life, while our false needs increase.  
Redeeming God, convert our will to act for justice, peace.

In Jesus we see nothing less than Your own love expressed,  
and we are called to show such love to all the world's oppressed.

Free us to open wide our hearts; our apathy decrease.  
Redeeming God, convert our will to act for justice, peace.



### **The God Who Set the Stars in Space**

The God who set the stars in space and gave the planets birth  
created for our dwelling place a green and fruitful earth;  
a world with wealth and beauty crowned of sky and sea and land,  
where life should flourish and abound beneath its Maker's hand.

A world of order and delight God gave for us to tend,  
to hold as precious in his sight, to nurture and defend;  
but yet on ocean, earth and air the marks of sin are seen,  
with all that God created fair polluted and unclean.

O God, by whose redeeming grace the lost may be restored,  
who stooped to save our fallen race in Christ, creation's Lord,  
through him whose cross is life and peace to cleanse a heart defiled  
may human greed and conflict cease and all be reconciled.

Our God, who set the stars in space and gave the planets birth,  
look down from heaven, your dwelling place, and heal the wounds of earth;  
till pain, decay and bondage done, when death itself has died,  
creation's songs shall rise as one and God be glorified!

Praise wet snow falling early.  
Praise the shadow my neighbor's chimney casts on the tile roof  
even this gray October day that should, say, have been golden.  
Praise the invisible sun burning beyond the white cold sky,  
giving us light and the chimney's shadow.  
Praise god, the unknown, that which imagined us,  
which stays our hand, our trembling or seizing or outstretched hand,  
and gives us still, in the shadow of death, our daily life,  
and the dream still of common goodwill, of abiding peace.  
Praise flow and change, night and the pulse of each new day.

DENISE LEVERTOV



*from the Book of Common Prayer*

God our Father, you never cease the work you have begun and prosper with your blessing all human labour: make us wise and faithful stewards of your gifts that we may serve the common good, maintain the fabric of our world and seek that justice where all may share the good things you pour upon us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. AMEN.

Creator God, you made the goodness of the land, the riches of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons; as we bless you for the abundance you have created, may we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

*A meditation from Thich Nhat Hanh*

Behind and within the depth of the phenomenal world, there lurks the divine presence. Stay awake to this miracle. Our true home is in the present moment. The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the holy earth in the present moment. Like the Buddha, Jesus taught that humanity has to awaken to a new way of seeing, a new way of behaving - gratefully, hospitably, respectfully, humbly - to realize how close to heaven we already are. Our relationship to Creation is a test of that wakefulness. The one who knows God most truly is the one who can find God equally in all things.



# Praying with the Poets

To look and to listen are the first tasks of the poet. This requires a “sacramental language,” one that pays homage to the messiness of things physical as well as the solace of the spiritual. Any number of poets have expounded on their love for the natural world and the powerful connections among all living things. Here are several writings that prompt reflection. PLEASE: *Do your best to release any “interpretation anxiety” you may hold. There is no right or wrong way to make meaning with these writings. There is simply your way.*

## CAN YOU IMAGINE?

For example, what the trees do  
not only in lightning storms or the watery dark of a summer night  
or under the white nets of winter  
but now, and now, and now - whenever  
we’re not looking. Surely you can’t imagine they just stand there  
looking the way they look when we’re looking; surely you can’t imagine  
they don’t dance, from the roots up, wishing to travel a little,  
not cramped so much as wanting a better view, or more sun, or just as avidly  
more shade - surely you can’t image they just  
stand there loving every minute of it; the birds or the emptiness,  
the dark rings of the years slowly and without a sound  
thickening, and nothing different unless the wind,  
and then only in its own mood, comes to visit, surely you can’t imagine  
patience, and happiness, like that.

MARY OLIVER



**from *On Thy Wondrous Works I Will Meditate***

Every morning I want to kneel down on the golden  
    cloth of the sand and say  
some kind of musical thanks for  
    the world that is happening again - another day -  
from the shawl of wind coming out of the  
    west to the firm green  
  
flesh of the melon lately sliced open and  
    eaten, its chill and ample body  
flavored with mercy. I want  
    to be worthy of - what? Glory? Yes, unimaginable glory.  
O Lord of melons, of mercy, though I am  
    not ready, not worthy, I am climbing toward you.

MARY OLIVER

**FROM THE BOOK OF TIME**

I rose this morning early as usual, and went to my desk. But it's spring, and the thrush is in the woods, somewhere in the twirled branches, and he is singing. So, now, I am standing by the open door. And now I am stepping down onto the grass. I am touching a few leaves. I am noticing the way the yellow butterflies move together, in a twinkling cloud, over the field. And I am thinking: maybe just looking and listening is the real work. Maybe the world, without us, is the real poem.

MARY OLIVER

**MY BRILLIANT IMAGE**

One day, the sun admitted  
I am just a shadow.  
I wish I could show you the infinite incandescence  
That has cast my brilliant image!  
I wish I could show you,  
When you are lonely or in darkness,  
The astonishing Light  
Of your own Being!

HAFIZ

*from the SABBATH POEMS of Wendell Berry*

You worked many days no one will ever see;  
Now rest. Go to the woods where what is made is made  
without your thought or work.  
Sit down; begin the wait for small trees to grow big,  
feeding on earth and light.  
Their good result is song only winds must bring, that trees  
must wait to sing, and sing longer than you can wait.  
Soon enough you must go. Now wait.  
Rest in this praise of what you can and cannot be,  
all you did and did not do.

No, there is no going back.  
Less and less you are that possibility you were. . .  
Now more than ever you can be generous toward each day  
that comes, young, to disappear forever, and yet remain unaging in the mind.  
Every day you have less reason not to give yourself away.

So every day do something that won't compute. Love the Lord.  
Love the world. Work for nothing. Love someone who does not deserve it. . .  
Ask the questions that have no answers.  
Plant sequoias.  
Say that your main crop is the forest you did not plant, that you will not live to harvest.

Put your faith in the two inches of humus that will build under the trees  
every thousand years.  
Listen to carrion – put your ear close,  
and hear the faint chattering of songs that are to come.  
Expect the end of the world. Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful  
though you have considered all the facts.

Be like the fox  
who makes more tracks than necessary,  
some in the wrong direction.  
Practice resurrection.

But don't neglect your garden.

## WELCOME MORNING

ANNE SEXTON

There is joy in all:  
in the hair I brush each morning,  
in the Cannon towel, newly washed,  
that I rub my body with each morning,  
in the chapel of eggs I cook each morning,  
in the outcry from the kettle that heats my coffee each morning,  
in the spoon and the chair that cry “hello there, Anne” each morning,  
in the godhead of the table that I set my silver, plate, cup upon each morning.

All this is God,  
right here in my pea-green house  
each morning  
and I mean, though I often forget,  
to give thanks, to faint down by the kitchen table  
in a prayer of rejoicing  
as the holy birds at the window peck into their marriage of seeds.

So while I think of it,  
let me paint a thank-you on my palm  
for this God, this laughter of the morning,  
lest it go unspoken.

The joy that isn't shared, I've heard, dies young.



## Nothing Gold Can Stay

Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf's a flower;  
But only so an hour.  
Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay.

*God of all that is Bright & Beautiful:  
In this season of Creationtide, grant us Courage  
to observe a Sabbath for our planet.  
Strengthen us with the Faith to trust in your Providence.  
Bring Healing to our lives,  
that we might Protect the world & not prey on it,  
that we might sow Beauty & not destruction.  
Inspire our hearts with a Holy Imagination,  
to Rise, freed from the demands to produce & consume  
to imagine a just, sustainable way of living,  
where all know Fullness & Sufficiency, and all may be  
Restored.  
Arouse us with the Creativity to share what we have been  
given.  
Teach us to be Satisfied with enough.  
Open our eyes to the Worth of each thing,  
to be filled with Awe & Contemplation,  
to recognize we are profoundly United with every creature  
as we journey to our Eternal home in your Light & Love.*

*(adapted from A Prayer for the Earth, Pope Francis)*

# *Deepen Your Relationship with Creation*

*Ideas to cultivate a relationship of care, even in these challenging days.*

- Take a safe walk in a park or along the shoreline to inspire reflection on wise stewardship. Plant a tree. Spend a few more moments of intentional silence that connects us to the songs of creation.
- De-center yourself by thinking of your property or your neighborhood as a piece of earth that you share with other living things (even if you're the one paying the taxes!)
- In Isaiah 55 we read, *The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands*. Consider the earth around you as the sanctuary and imagine yourself among the community praising God by their existence.
- Stop to think about the ways your daily choices affect the life around you: lawn care, car and furnace emissions, consumption, waste, etc. Seek to change decisions that generate a harmful impact. Consider delaying an upgrade to your cell phone or laptop.
- Enjoy your food with care and with gratitude. Try to buy local and seasonal and fair-traded food. Drink less bottled water. In your table blessing, pray not just about the food “for our use” but that animals and plants may thrive for their own sake and be treated with care.

