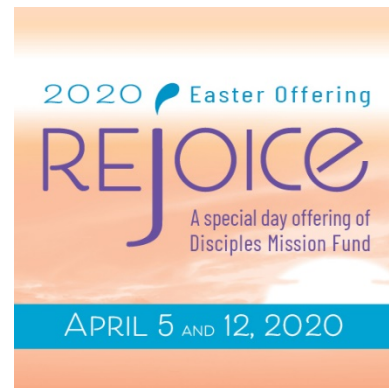


## Communion Meditation

*By Rev. Scott Hardin-Neiri, Associate Minister of Green Chalice*

*“You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.” - Isaiah 55:12*

In almost every setting in which I have the privilege of speaking, teaching or preaching I have found that people have found awe or mystery in nature. When asked, “When is a time you have experienced God in nature or an awe moment in creation?” people respond with a variety of heartfelt stories. The locations vary: forest, mountain, field, stream, ocean, backyard, church camp, or forest. The main characters are diverse in character and species; dolphin, bird, waves, sunset, bear or flowers.



As we go around the rooms in my mind, I can hear the laughter, the sighs and awe of listeners of these stories of grace. The tellers of these creation care stories and the hearers of these stories express common reactions to these memories in the moment. They share words like gratitude, reverence, sacred, joy, compassion, sadness, and delight. These are the words they experience in the room, sanctuary or classroom, days, weeks or years departed from the ecological experience described and yet the power is palpable.

Somehow God is present in those stories and makes a comeback in very real ways when we call them forth. “Do this in remembrance of me...” Like the words of institution at our common Table within our worship space, we connect with a saving love and work of Christ remembering the ongoing work of God in the past, present and future. Is it possible for God’s creation to praise God? Is it possible for God’s creation to remind us to praise God? The writer of Isaiah 55 seemed to think so. I don’t know exactly what it means to go out in joy and to be led forth in peace, but I have seen reflections of an incredibly creative God in the stories of my neighbors. I wonder if it seems a bit quiet to God these days. Does the rejoicing of creation seem subdued with less pine needles, acorns, nuthatches and dolphins bursting into a cacophony of song by both being themselves and echoing the goodness of God?

I can’t imagine that the vastness of God’s creativity and beauty should be squelched, and yet it seems that the monoculture of anonymous consumeristic ideals and the wholesale rollback of creation care policies and practices threaten to silence the choir of God’s making.

What would it look like to ask friend, neighbor or common pew sitter about a time they experienced God in nature? Would you find common ground for a moment? Beyond red and blue could you go out in joy and be led forth in peace for a moment? In a time when friends, family, church, and neighborhood are fragmented into silos or echo chambers, perhaps this passage from Isaiah can grow in us a capacity for joy and peace. Perhaps it can enlarge the Table of remembrance to include the harmonizing sounds of creation alongside the communion of saints. And may we seek to protect the creatures and ecosystems that offer joy, peace and a standing ovation for our incredible God.