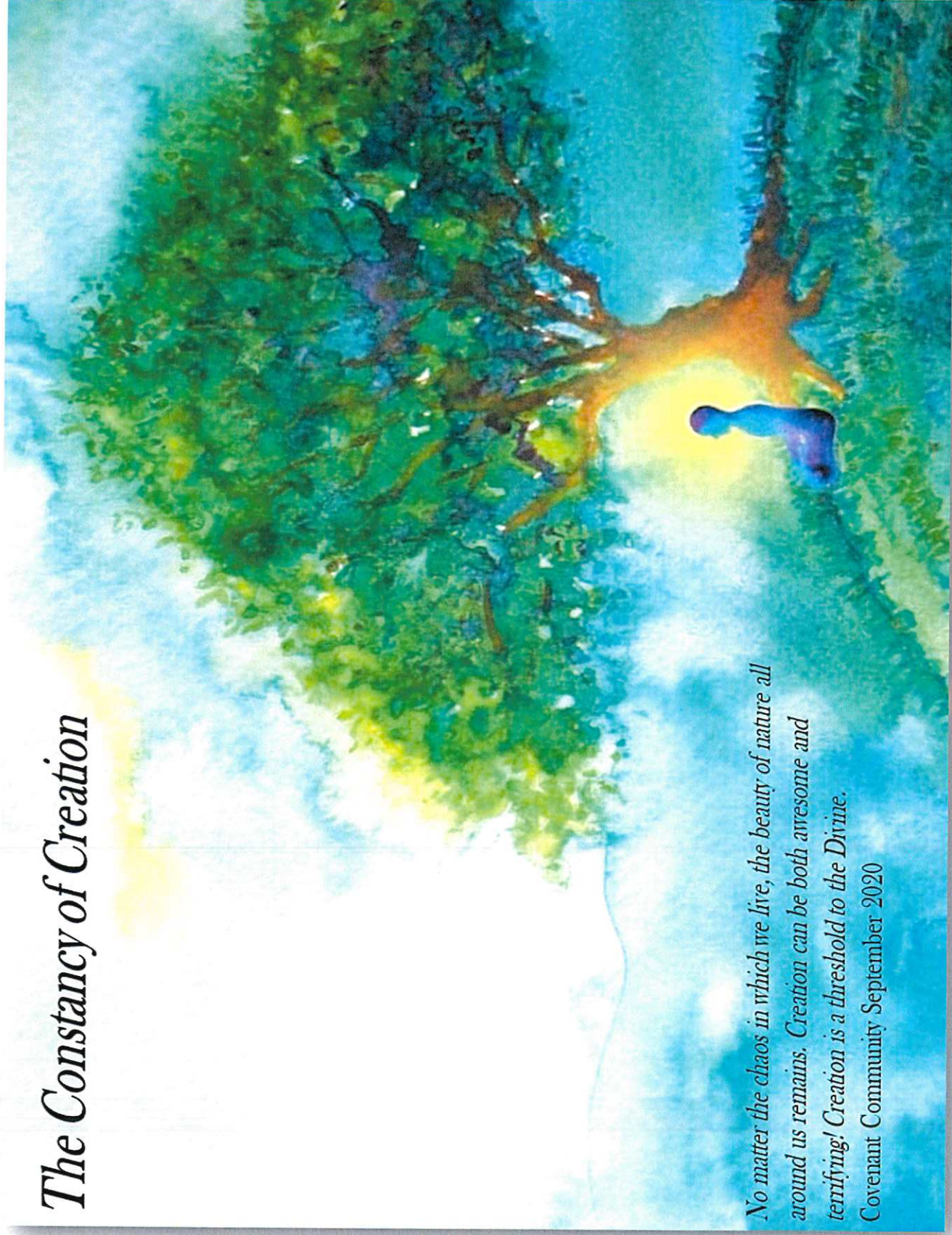


The Constancy of Creation

No matter the chaos in which we live, the beauty of nature all around us remains. Creation can be both awesome and terrifying! Creation is a threshold to the Divine.
Covenant Community September 2020



Great Plains Covenant Community

2020-2021



Rule of Life and Service

The Great Plains Covenant Community is a ecumenical religious order which gathers for times of worship, silence and accountability; then scatters to be in service with the poor, provide mutual support to group members and the community, and grow in relationship with God.

Group Covenant

As a Community Gathered

We Covenant to make attendance at and participation in the Community Gathered a priority in our lives.

The Community will have six retreats this season: August 10-11, September 28-29, December 7-8. 2021: January 11-12, March 15-16 May 10-11

As a Community Scattered

We Covenant to the following:

Daily Order

Pray for all members of the community. Participate in Lectio Divina readings of the daily Psalm starting with Psalm 1 on September 1 & 2 (2 days for each psalm). On Sunday we read the Lectionary Psalm

Social Order

Embodying commitment to service with the poor, individually and as a community.

Spiritual Order

Living with the question,
"When have I experienced Christ in the extending of hospitality?"

Schedule

A * indicates we are gathered at "The Place of Grace.

Monday

- 1:45 - 2:15 p.m. St. Benedict's Community check in
- 2:15 - 2:30 p.m. * All Retreatants Log In "Place of Grace"
- 2:30 - 3:00 p.m. * We gather and meet each other
- 3:00 - 3:45 p.m. * Opening Worship
- 3:45 - 4:00 p.m. Bio break
- 4:00 - 4:30 p.m. * Content Time
- 4:30 - 5:45 p.m. *Silent reflection*
- 5:45 - 6:30 p.m. Evening Meal
- 6:30 - 7:00 p.m. Group reflection
- 7:10 - 8:30 p.m. * Covenant Groups
- 8:30 - 9:45 p.m. Social Time and Evening Prayer.
- 10:00 p.m. The Great Silence

Tuesday

- 6:45 - 7:00 a.m. * "Place of Grace" opens
(please join in silence)
- 7:00 - 7:15 a.m. * Centering Prayer
- 7:15 - 7:30 a.m. * Morning Prayer
- 7:30 - 8:15 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:30 - 9:15 a.m. Lectio Divina & Silence
- 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. * Covenant Groups
- 10:15 - 10:30 Retreatant's at St. Benedict's
Community check out of their rooms.
- 10:45 - 11:15 a.m. * Exploring Spiritual Exercises
- 11:15 - Noon * Community Discernment
- 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 - 1:30 p.m. Silent Reflection
- 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Closing Worship

Theme and Content Presentation

The Constancy of Creation

"The universe is the primary revelation of the divine. The primary scripture, the primary locus of divine-human communion." (Thomas Berry, as quoted in *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*. Copyright © 1983, by Bear & Company, Inc.)



One of the elements that draws retreatants to St. Benedict's is its natural setting. During breaks and times of silence, many people move out of doors to walk the path around the pond or the trail that leads through the Stations of the Cross. We also sit outside to meditate, journal, or sketch.

We find it easier to tune our souls to the Divine revealed in nature when we are removed from the normal distractions of our everyday lives. No matter when we come to St. Benedict's, we can be assured that, barring some grave natural disaster, the hill upon which it stands will be there as well as the trees, the ponds, and the birds. It is a constant in a chaotic and changing world.

Nature itself is a constant, a constant we need in this time of pandemic, divisive politics, and social injustice. Birds sing, flowers bloom, and younglings frolic unburdened by the cares of the world. We see the cycle of life, death, and resurrection of Christ mirrored in the seasons of the year.

During our content time, we will examine ways in which creation provides constancy in our lives and can give us hope in times of uncertainty. Video clips, songs, and words of wisdom from contemplatives will be used to reveal to us how nature attests to the faithfulness of God. A good example of this attestation is found in the third verse of "This is God's Wondrous World":

This is God's wondrous world: O let me ne'er forget
that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is God's wondrous world: Why should my heart be sad?
Let voices sing, let the heavens ring: God reigns, let earth be glad!

(From Upper Room Worshipbook: Music and Liturgies for Spiritual Formation, Copyright © 2006 Upper Room Books)

Content Time Reflection

The Constancy of Creation

- Consider your ecological story.
 - How do you feel connected to creation? In what ways are you disconnected from it?
 - How have you contributed to the destruction/healing of the planet?
 - Express your ecological story through journaling, a sketch, or poetry.
- George Macleod, founder of the modern-day Iona Community in Scotland, proclaimed that "Christ is vibrant in the material world not just in the spiritual world."
 - How can this proclamation ground you in times of chaos and uncertainty?



COVENANT GROUPS

Please maintain the guiding principles for respecting privacy include safe space, mutual respect, confidentiality, common sense and discretion in the groups and presented in the August Packet.

Circle 1

Ann Sherer
Jamie Nowrich McLennan
Barb Maynes
Judy Dye
Samm Johnston

Circle 2

Kelly Karges
Carla Gunn
Tom Hyde
Anne Gahn

Circle 3

Jim Brewer
Amalia Spruth-Janssen
Chuck Reichwein
Becky Potter
Doug Gahn

Circle 4

Janice Farrell
Pat Norris
Sally Ruggia-Haden
Larry Adams

Circle 5

Pat Joy
Cat Cole
Adam Lassen
Bonnie McCord
Amy Warner

Circle 6

Dale Coates
Cheryl Somers-Ingersol
Mark Richardson
Michelle Reed

Circle 7

Jeff Adams
Jeanette Fagerberg
Doug Olson
Susan Davies

Circle 8

Jim Bendorf
Carol Roettmer Brewer
Todd Karges
Teri Lucas

Psalms for Praying Nan C. Merrill

Bless the Radiant One, O my Soul! O Heart of my heart, You are so very great!
You are clothed with justice and mercy, arrayed in Light as your fine attire.
You stretch over the heavens like a tent, Your Radiance covering the waters;

You shine through the clouds, and ride on the wings of the wind;
The wind, like the Breath of Life, carries your Voice, Fire refines the dross of our souls.

You set the earth on its foundations, strong and secure.
You covered it with the deep like a garment, with many waters that life might come forth. At your Word, the waters divided, becoming rivers and lakes and mighty oceans; storms came to ensure the balance and to renew the earth.
The mountains rose, the valleys became low in the places that You did appoint.
You brought harmony to all the earth, that life might spring forth in abundance.

You created springs to flow into the valleys; they flow between the hills,
Giving drink to every creature of the field, quenching their thirst as your Living Water quenches ours.
With the air, You have given birds their habitation; they sing among the branches.

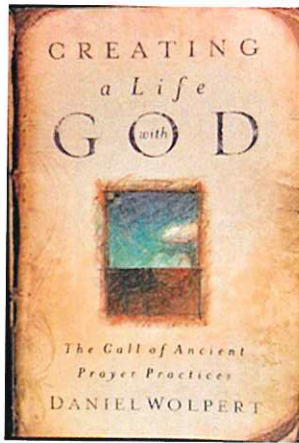
Through your Love, grass came forth for the cattle, and plants for us to cultivate,
that we might have food from the earth, and wine, the fruit of the vine, oil and healing herbs of many varieties, and bread, our daily sustenance.
The trees are watered abundantly and with the sun, provide the air we breathe.
Every living creature has its home: the birds nest in trees, the wild goats upon the mountaintop; even the rocks provide protection.

You neared the moon to mark the tides and seasons, the sun, that rises and sets in beauty. In the darkness, when night comes, the creatures of the forest roam the earth. They eat their fill, each according to their need; You provide their food.
When the sun rises, they disappear from sight And lie down in their dens.
As your people go forth to their work, You are there to guide them.

You, who know all hearts, how manifold are your works! In wisdom You have created them all; the earth is filled with your creatures.
We look to the seas, great and wide, which teem with life innumerable, helping to maintain the balance. O, that we might receive your gifts, taking only what is needed with grateful hearts.

All of creation looks to You, to give them food in due season. When we are in harmony with You, the earth provides; yes, a bountiful harvest to be shared with all.
When we misuse what You have created for us, we blame You for the famine and destruction that ensues, and feel alienated from You. Even so, You continue to send forth your Spirit, And the earth, though not without turmoil, is renewed.

The glory of the Radiant One endures forever, For the works of Love are sure.
You are ever-present to us, even as the earth trembles, even as the mountains spew forth ashes and smoke! I will abandon myself into your hands as long as I live;
I will sing praise to You while I have breath. May my meditations be pleasing to You, for I rejoice and am glad in You. May all who feel separated from You open their hearts to new Life! Praise the Creator of the Universe!
Bless the Heart of my heart, O my soul!
Amen.



Resource - Wolpert, Daniel. *Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices*. "Praying in Nature: Contemplation and Creation" p. 137-147, 187-188.

Three Different Variations on the Practice of Praying in Nature:

General Prayer with the Natural World

Purposely turn your attention to God when you are outdoors, either to focus on a specific item like a sunrise or blooming flower or to dwell on the natural setting as a whole.

Notice your thoughts and feelings.

Be aware of the power of the natural world and God's hand in its creation.

Ponder your place in and responsibility toward nature.

Thank God for God's good creation.

Determine if God is calling you to action in the world as a result of your time in prayer with the natural world.

If you are drawn to this prayer practice, intentionally schedule time to be spent in nature.

Combining Other Prayers with Natural Settings - Prayer in Nature can be combined with other types of prayer practices, such as breath prayer, walking an outdoor labyrinth, or journaling.

Deep Examination of Natural Item

This type of prayer can be practiced indoors or outdoors

Select a natural item for use during the prayer practice. This item could be a feather, a flower, a rock, or anything from nature that speaks to you. Even a photograph or video of the natural world will suffice.

Choose a specific length of time for the prayer.

Focus your attention and your prayer time on this single item.

Things to ponder

Why did you choose this item?

How does this item represent the unity and the diversity of creation? Where does the item fit in the web of creation?

How does this item reflect the power and/or goodness of God?

Thank God for the natural world.

Determine, to the best of your ability, how God is speaking to you through your chosen item. Is God calling you to action in the world as a result of your time in praying in nature?

Community Discernment

- New Information
- Financial Commitments
 - Cost Reminders: St. Scholastica \$20
 - St. Benedict - \$72.50 Single
 - \$130 Double
- December Retreat
 - December 7-8, 2020
 - Team Members:
 - Michelle Reed, Amalia Spruth Janssen, Sally Rugga-Haden
 - Jeff Adams, Jamie Norwich McLennan, Barb Maynes
 - Please have Materials to Adam on or before November 16th, 2020 Due to Thanksgiving and Advent
- Reminder that if someone is missing the individuals Covenant Group will send a card/greeting on behalf of the community. Those who are absent this time are: