

Detailed Order of Service for NOVO - TREE
February 15, 2012, Pam Blevins Hinkle

Instrumental Music

Invocation/Chalice Lighting

Now we gather ... to fire the mind and heart of this faith.

Now we gather ... to rekindle the warmth and the wisdom of sacred community.

Now we gather ... to enlighten and deepen our journey toward wholeness.

Now we gather...here in this glowing and guileless space ... a place where love
blazes forth to save the world.

Chant – Gather Us In

Reading:

I'm talking about the wisdom of trees tonight, and I'd like to share a poem you may well know by Joyce Kilmer:

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree,
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the sweet earth's loving breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair.
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Chant

Reading: This second reading is from a book written by Matthew Fox, an Episcopalian priest (ex-communicated Catholic and founder of the Creation Spirituality movement). In his book "Creativity: Where the Divine and the Human Meet," he makes 15 suggestions for more fully connecting with the divine. Among these recommendations he says: Let us Learn to Praise the Trees. *Reading from book...*

Chant

Silence

Homily

I love trees. I love them in every season, and particularly now in the winter, when we can see their naked supplication. How I marvel at their beauty ... the bark smooth... or rough

and deeply grooved ... the branches uniform and orderly like the yellow wood ... or like the sycamore, whose splotched limbs squiggle with random abandon.

Since I was very small, trees have been teaching me, guiding me ... talking to me. I would spend hours finding, climbing, and sitting in trees on the campus of Franklin College, in Franklin, Indiana.

My favorite was a particular pine right behind the science building. Climbing it was tricky because the branches were very close together and even closer as I neared the top. But it was worth the scratches and the palms sticky with sap when I reached the top...where I could feel the wind and hear the rush of my own blood and the beating of my racing heart...where the pungence of pine filled my nostrils and I could dance ... dance with the wind... me and that tree spirit.

Years later, when I was long past tree climbing ... a pity really ... Tree helped me dance again. I was director of Sweetwater Art Center in Sewickley, Pennsylvania (just outside of Pittsburgh). One day, I was in a STATE, if you know what I mean. People, and things, and plans, and budgets...NONE of it was going MY way.

Now my way was—and sometimes still is—to PUSH PUSH PUSH, to keep at it, to hang tough and keep in there until people come around to MY way. But it wasn't working and I didn't know what to do. So I turned my office chair around to look outside. (breath) I needed. To. Calm. Down. Outside, five poplars were swaying in the brisk winter wind. And... I noticed something. I noticed that the tallest poplar, the oldest one, bent the furthest in the wind. Ahhhhhhhhhh ... there is *strength and maturity* in bending. (repeat) This was revolutionary news to my 28-yr old brain.

It was not the first time, nor would it be the last time, that I needed a lesson in bending, a lesson first taught to me as child by that blessed pine in Franklin.

Now, I make a practice of **listening** to Tree. The Standing People, as they are called by many American Indians, have a lot to say **if** we are awake to their silent songs.

And Tree is a great listener, too...like the Taoists said: "Absorb, Absorb, Absorb, that is the secret of the tree." Perhaps you've read the comic strip Rose is Rose, in the Indianapolis Star? It's one of my favorites. Rose has a tree she calls the "Let Things Be" tree. She tells her troubles to the tree, and when she leans against it, she can just let things be. Yes. Tree also teaches us acceptance, to let things be.

Let us imagine for a moment, how it might be ... to be like Tree ... to just (breath) let things be... What would that be like?

To simply wait for nourishment ... using only what comes our way.

To willingly be a shelter...not just for the saplings below, but to be a harbor for EVERY stranger that happens by. How would it be?

To let the full measure of each season work its magic upon us. To stand with resolute and undaunted strength amidst storms, knowing that our roots are strong. How would it be?

To be patient with the invisibility of each day's growth. To suffer injury and still refuse to stop growing. How would it be?

To be quiet enough to hear the rustling of our own leaves as they shimmer and dance. How would it be? How would it be, to be like Tree?

Chant

Prayer

Benediction