

Week 7– Forests

“Religious traditions demonstrate our very human need to locate our spiritual yearnings in the things of this world—a wall of stone, a piece of bread, a sip of wine. Perhaps our time calls us to extend that yearning to the trees. To find God not only in the bread and wine, but in the bark and branch, the soil and mycelium. To notice the intercessory work of forests, breathing their invisible sighs from every copse, stand, and canopy. If we lose that, we lose not only shelter, medicine, the source of springs, and sequestered carbon. We lose part of our imaginations.”
– Fred Bahnson, *Church Forests of Ethiopia*

In your time outside, you are invited to befriend a tree:

1. Find a tree that you feel drawn to: perhaps in your yard, on your street, in a nearby park.
2. Try not to refer to the tree as “it”.
3. Take a moment of quiet for yourself. Let go of your thoughts, be in the moment. Here you are, here is the tree. Let that be enough for now.
4. Allow the tree to introduce itself, in whatever way that tree is able. Rest your hand on the tree’s bark, pick up a fallen leaf, stretch your arms around the tree’s girth, perhaps put your face right up close and take a deep inhale through your nose.
5. Sit or stand beneath the tree. Notice the colours, textures, aromas and shapes around you.
6. Move away from the tree, and try to see it in a new way. Where does the tree take you? What thoughts, memories, feelings are brought up for you? What might God be saying to you in this moment?

You may return to this tree again over the course of the week, month or year. Try to notice something you hadn’t before. Notice how your perspective is shifting.

(Adapted from *Emergence Magazine*, *The Practice of Befriending a Tree*)

BONUS ACTIVITY: Watch the short video called [*The Church Forests of Ethiopia*](#) and read the accompanying article for insight into how our fate is tied to the fate of trees.