

JUNE

Standing on Holy Ground

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OVERVIEW

This worship gathering invites us into the story of Moses and the burning bush, a story in which Moses encounters God in an unexpected way. He is invited to take off his sandals, acknowledging that he is standing on holy ground. Wendell Berry Farmer, poet, and theologian, has a line in a [poem](#) that states: “There are no sacred and unsacred places; there are only sacred and desecrated places.” Let this service remind you that you are standing on sacred/holy ground. Or, perhaps, if you are meeting in a highly developed place (i.e., on pavement or concrete) you might want to reflect on the difference between sacred and desecrated places.

See the [Introduction](#) to this series of worship services for further insights into planning an outdoor worship service.

GATHERING & GROUNDING

Take a moment for welcome and introductions. Begin by naming the watershed you are gathered on, and offer a land acknowledgement, naming the first peoples who lived in this place, and also saw it as holy ground.

We are standing on holy ground. As we enter into a time of contemplative worship together, I would like to invite us into a time of grounding ourselves in this time and place, and will close with a prayer.

Take a good look around you, at the sky, the trees, the people around this circle, and the earth itself. (pause) This is our worshipping community today! Now, close your eyes, so that you can focus more fully on your other senses.

Tune into your breathing and allow it to slow down and deepen. As you breathe, imagine your breath connecting you to the Breath that has breathed life into all that is. (pause) As you breathe, see if you can notice your sense of smell, and any smells of summer in the air.

Take a moment to listen to the sounds of this place - both human sounds and more-than-human sounds. What do you hear that is far off... what can you hear that is close? (pause)

Now focus on the sensation of the sun (or rain) on your skin, or the breeze on your face. Notice what it feels like to be touched by the sun and wind. (pause)

Notice the feel of the weight of your body against the earth, and of your feet firmly planted on the earth. Feel solidarity with the earth and gratitude for the way it holds and sustains you. Your feet connect you to the holy ground of this place; wiggle your toes, and imagine your feet having roots that stretch deep beneath the surface, providing a strong anchor, providing nourishment, providing a connection with the rooted plants and trees who call this place home. (pause)

Having attuned each of our senses to this place, let us also focus our attention to God's holy presence among us.

Pray:

God, who speaks in burning bushes, in the birds of the air, in the stars and heavens: we offer you our attention this morning. We pray that you might help us to notice you in new ways. We pray that we might be open to the various ways you speak to us. May this be a numinous time, infused with your Spirit, and a time of blessing and rest for our souls. Amen.

READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Exodus 3:1-6, Romans 1:20, or other scripture of your choosing

*“Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God.
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.”*

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The miracle isn't that the bush is burning, or that the ground is holy - it is that Moses noticed. Moses paid attention, followed his curiosity, listened, and encountered God. All the earth is sacred ground, and we, too, are invited to notice and listen.

Todd Wynward, in his book [*Rewilding The Way: Break Free to Follow an Untamed God*](#), notes that it is significant that Moses' encounter with a God happens on the far side of the desert. There, he is deep in uncolonized, undomesticated space, and there God shows up elemental and untamed. This encounter transforms Moses. It is a recurring theme in the

Bible that the wilderness is the space where humans find liberation, renewal, identity, and new life.

WANDERING & WONDERING

Invite participants to go out and wander on *this* holy ground. Pay attention for bushes that are afire with God! Settle into God's presence guiding you as you wander, listen, and reflect... See what happens during this time of intention. Try not to talk to others, but to focus on the angel of God speaking through sacred earth. And, if you wish, take off your shoes!

Return here at _____ for a time of sharing around the circle.

SHARING

This is the opportunity to share together in community a thought or observation that came to you during this time of reflection and paying attention. We will give everyone a chance to speak - please start with sharing your name, and then you can pass if you have nothing you'd like to share. Let's listen with open hearts.

SENDING

May our Holy God walk with you
as you go out from here,
and may you remember
there is no place you can go
where God is not.
Amen.