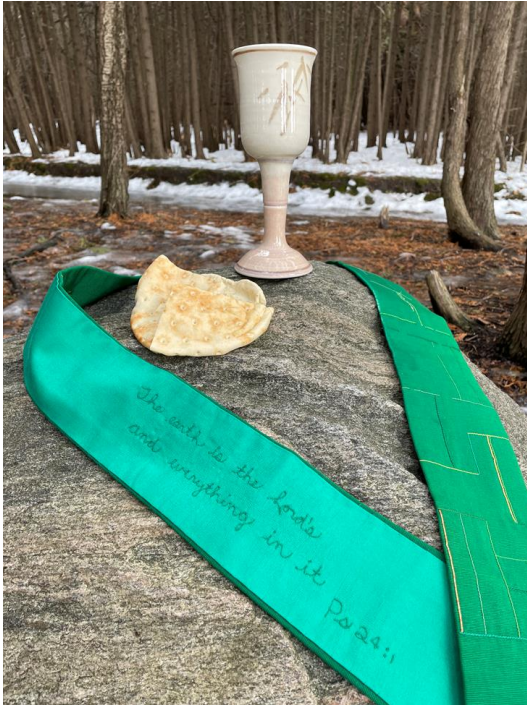


The Bishop's Committee on Creation Care
for the Diocese of Toronto

Hiking Church Guide



Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*

We are delighted to introduce you to hiking church, an experience of walking and worship in creation.

In this leaflet, you will find a template for a hiking church experience, and a liturgy. We encourage you to adapt it to your community and your place.

Our model is a two-hour experience as follows:

- Gathering at a meeting place for welcome and orientation
- Walking in silence for 20-30 minutes
- Worship for 30 minutes
- Return walk in conversation inspired by a question
- Closing blessing and snacks.

Where should you do it?

The image that pops into our minds when we say hiking church is a forest trail. Our hope is that hiking church events happen in many different environments: rural, suburban, urban. The idea is to connect with creation – noticing signs of life where creation is flourishing, where it is stressed. We have walked and prayed in the inner city, along a suburban rail trail, and in a forest. It's amazing what you begin to notice when you pay attention.

Plan your route

It's a good idea to scout out your route and time it, with the capacity of your hikers in mind. The pace you set must work for the slow walkers. Choose a walk that is safe, enjoyable and accessible for the people with whom you hope to share the experience.

Keep it simple

We recommend a hands-free experience for participants without a leaflet, so that people can focus on creation. We do bring some leaflets in case there are people who have difficulty hearing, or request one. We have found that having at least two and ideally three leaders works well.

We found that a backpack with bread, water, wine, and a purificator for communion, a charged up cellphone for emergencies and photos at the end, extra leaflets and a first aid kit can be carried by one person.

The worship location

It's good to think about how and where you will set the table. We have set the table on a rock, and on the snow. We used a gluten free loaf of bread, which makes things easier and more inclusive.

Gathering and re-gathering

We offered snacks and drinks at the end for refreshment with a view to minimizing waste.

Let us know how it goes

We would appreciate hearing your experience, adaptations and suggestions for this liturgy so that what we send out to parishes will be inspiring and helpful. You can reach the chair of the Committee at Revsusan77@gmail.com (905) 683-7981



A Liturgy for Hiking Church

- We have found that having three leaders works well. One person can lead the hike, another can bring up the rear, and one can travel in the middle of the pack.
- We found it helpful to have someone who is not the celebrant leading the music and the readings, as well as giving the directions. It is also helpful to have someone assist with setting the table.
- We chose to think of the earth itself as the table, so we set the chalice and the bread wrapped in a cloth on the ground. You could also use a plate or paten.

Gathering in Community

Welcome and orientation

Welcome people and tell them about the route, what to bring or leave behind (cell phones and cameras), offer bug spray and sunscreen, talk about how we will share communion, and that our pace will be guided by what's comfortable for everyone.

Gathering Song

A list of suggestions is included in the appendix (separate document). The song leader teaches the song. We enter into worship with the song and then the prayer.

Gathering Prayerⁱ

Clear our heart, O God,

that we may see you.
Clear our heart, O God,
that we may truly see ourselves.
Clear our heart, O God,
that we may know the sacredness of this moment
in every moment
seek you
serve you
strength you
as the Living Presence in every presence.
Clear our heart, O God,
that we may see.
Amen.

One of the leaders invites the people to walking in silence with awareness. You may want to invite people to pick something up along the way as an offering for the altar, stressing that it is not appropriate to pick wildflowers or break branches, or pick up stones that may be habitat for small creatures. A small pebble, an acorn, or a leaf from the ground might be an appropriate offering.

Walking in silence (20 – 30 minutes)

We arrive at the place of the celebration in silence.

Celebration

The table is laid and during the song, people can bring their offerings.

Table Laying song

Scripture Reading

See the Appendix (separate document)

Short Silence

Eucharistic Prayer

Presider The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Presider Lift up your hearts.
People **We lift them to the Lord.**
Presider Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Presider It is right in all times
and in all places ⁱⁱ
to give you thanks and praise.
We praise you here ...
where city and farm, wilderness
and industry are side by side.
We praise you at a time
when the body of earth
is broken again and again.
We give thanks for our place
in the story of salvation.

Our ancestors
journeyed with you
in creation and migration.
They depended on the land,
were displaced from the land
and displaced others from their lands.
They knew you in tents and cities,
on mountains and by wells,
in families and in dreams,
and through wilderness prophets
who spoke of Cedars
and listened to Ravens.
Together with Angels and Ancestors,

You might add the name of your watershed, For example, "We praise you here where Duffin's Creek flows into Lake Ontario" or "We praise you here where granite meets limestone" in the southern edge of the Canadian Shield.

Heron and Bass,
Sumac and Sugar Maple,
we join our voices with all creation
in this ancient honour song:

All

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth
are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One
who comes in the name of the Lord,
Hosanna in the highest.**

We give thanks to you for Jesus,
whose first bed was a feed trough.
He was baptized in the Jordan,
tested in the wilderness,
he traveled in fishing boats
and told parables of famers and
seeds, labor and wages, yeast and bread.
On the night before he died,
Jesus took bread,
food of the poor,
the work of field and hearth,
he gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his friends
saying: Take and eat, this is my body, given for you,
do this to remember me.

Again, after supper he took the cup of wine,
fruit of the land, gave thanks
and gave it to his friends saying:
This is my blood, which is shed for you.
When you do this, do it in memory of me.

Remembering Jesus' life, death and resurrection
and awaiting his coming kingdom,
we offer you this bread and this cup.

Creator, send your Spirit on these gifts
so that we know Jesus in them
and are gathered together with everyone
who shares this sacred meal of justice and
community.

Fill us with the courage and love of Jesus,
that we may strive for justice and peace,
respect the dignity of every human being,
and safeguard the integrity of creation.
Bring us with all your saints
to your commonwealth of sparrow and lily,
child and beggar which is both now
and yet to come.
All honor and glory are yours,
Creator, Christ and Spirit,
now and forever.

Amen

A moment of silence.

The Lord's Prayer (*in whatever language or form is most familiar to you*)

The breaking of the bread (in silence)

Presider The gifts of God for the people of God.
All **Thanks be to God.**

We offer bread to one another. The bread is gluten free/gluten free bread is available. You may say "The body of Christ, the bread of heaven" as you give it to one another. If you would like to receive a blessing instead of the bread, come to the presider, who will pray for you.

We offer the chalice of wine to one another. You may say "The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation." If you don't want to drink the wine, you could just touch the base of it as a sign of reverence.

Prayer after communion

Faithful God in the wonder of your wisdom and love you fed your people in the wilderness with the bread of angels, and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life. We thank you for feeding us with this bread. May it strengthen us that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may embody your desire and be renewed for your service through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

Invitation to walk back engaging with this question: What will you take with you from this experience?

Re-Gathering and Sending

Poem – See Appendix (separate document)

Closing Blessing and Dismissal

A note about the Salal and Cedar Eucharistic Prayer.

The policy of Salal + Cedar is that we welcome folks to use our eucharistic prayer and modify it for their local/watershed context. We ask that we be credited and that for compensation you make a financial contribution to Indigenous land and water protectors in your local area.

The Rev. Laurel Dykstra

ⁱ Clear our Heart (John Philip Newell, from Prayers from the Earth)

ⁱⁱ Salal and Cedar Eucharistic Prayer (adapted) Used with permission.

<https://salalandcedar.com/resources/liturgical-resources/eucharistic-prayer/>