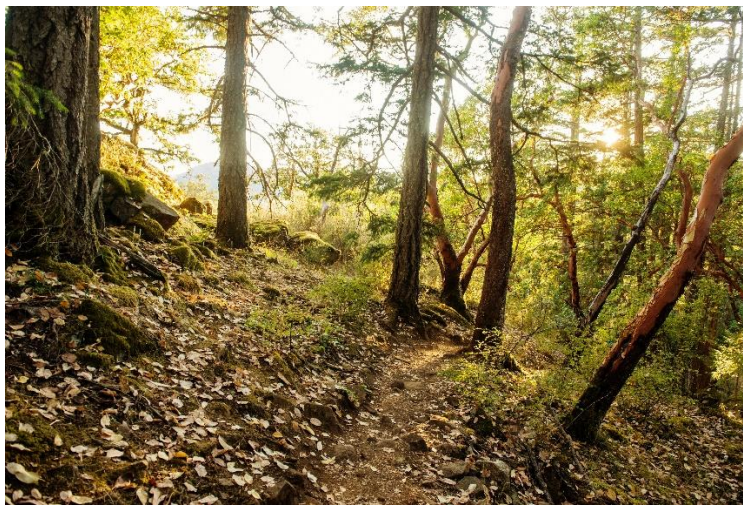


Engage our local ecology through this Earth Examen

An examen is a way of beholding a piece of scripture, an object or a being in prayerful wonder. Some of you may be familiar with this spiritual practice when reflecting on a scripture passage. Through questions, you are invited to reflect on God's presence and the goodness of that which you behold. During this Season of Creation, consider contemplating a part of our local ecology. Familiarise yourself with the theme. Prepare by taking time to consider how you can best open your senses to listen to the voices that praise God, and draw our hearts to God's presence in that place of contemplation. This is an exercise that you can choose to do alone, or with a group.



Pick a natural or agricultural place to contemplate. It could be a forest, a river, a natural area on your street, a local park, a farmer's field, a backyard or even a container garden or photograph. Find a comfortable place to rest in or near this place. Enter into prayer in whatever way is natural to you. Invite Holy Wisdom to open the eyes of your heart. When you are ready, reflect on the following questions:

1. Become aware of God's presence in a natural or agricultural place that you are contemplating.

How is God present in this place? How does all the life you see exist in God's spirit? How do you feel knowing that the Holy Spirit has filled this place for geological ages, with every plant, animal, organism and mineral that has called this place home in the deep past, makes its home here with you now, and will live here with creatures in this place in the future? How do you feel knowing that you, earthling, belong to this place, are made of the same carbon, breathe the same air, are nurtured by the same cycles and life processes, and are enlivened by the same Spirit of the Creator?

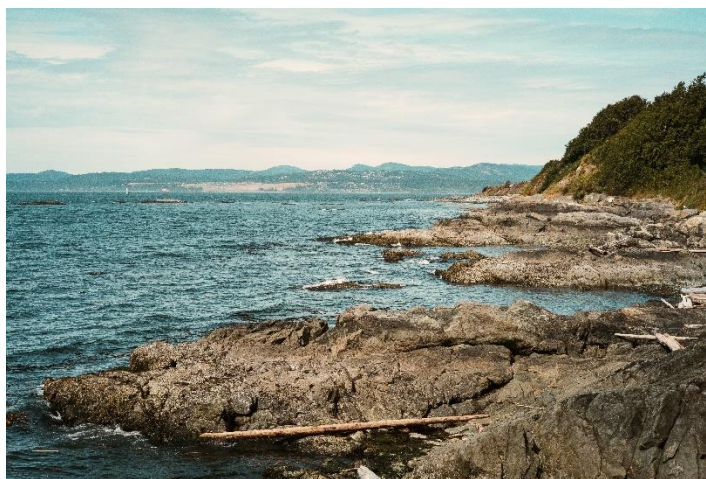
2. Reflect on the ecological cycles of this place with gratitude for all that it provides.

What nutrient cycles are supported by this place? Is this a watershed that filters water? Is this a rainforest (tropical or deciduous) that fixes nutrients? Is this a meadow or field that fixes nitrogen? Is this a green space that absorbs CO² and cleans the air? What plants,

animals, microbes and minerals are sheltered here? How do they serve the whole earth in their being? For all that this place provides to nurture you and all that belong to this place, let a feeling of gratitude fill you.

3. Listen for the voices that speak in this place, and pay attention to what you feel as you contemplate the health of this site.

Fill your lungs with breath. Be attentive to what you feel (the air, grass, sand, soil, sun, rain) on your skin. Open your eyes (or close them and open the eyes of your heart). Open your ears to listen to the voices of creation in this place. Who are they? What do you hear them saying? Who is missing or lost from this place? What does their absence tell you? Is this ecosystem healthy? How is this ecosystem at risk of illness? What are the keys to sustaining the equilibrium and balance of this place? What niches and diversity must be protected to maintain the health of this habitat? What are the sources of stress that threaten the balance of this particular ecosystem? Do those stresses drive your co-creatures from their home in this place? How do you feel when you consider the fragility of life that depends on the health of this place? What is your effect on this balance?



4. Choose one feature of the site and pray for it, its rest and its renewal.

When you consider the ways that this place is under stress, what does it need for rest, restoration and renewal? What needs to be conserved for this site to heal itself? What features need to be reclaimed? What creatures need to be restored to their rightful home here so that their voice can be heard? Pray for this site, and the wisdom to care for it.

5. Look toward your response. What can you do to ease demands or promote the rest of this ecological site?

Based on your examination, how do you identify with this place? What have you discerned is required to care for this place? Whose voice from among this place will you seek to amplify? What will be your act of compassion to promote rest for this common home?

(Adapted from *Season of Creation Celebration Guide 2022: Listen to the Voice of Creation*; Season of Creation Steering Committee, World Council of Churches, 2022. For more information about the Season of Creation, go to [https://seasonofcreation.org/.](https://seasonofcreation.org/))