

Bringing Nature to Christian Education: Ideas, Resources, and Attempts



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Introduction – All About Me!

- Nurture Coordinator at Jubilee Community Church, Asheville, NC
- Ph.D. in Psychology
- Lutheran grade school; Catholic high school
- Job description
 - Raise money for summer trips
 - Attend Board meetings
 - Hire and train Sunday School staff
 - Make apologies
 - Write Curriculum

What's Nature Got to Do with It?

- Creation Spirituality
- 12 Guiding Principles (originalblessing.ning.com)
 - The Universe, and all within it, is fundamentally a blessing
 - In Creation, God is both immanent and transcendent. This is panentheism which is not theism (God out there) and not atheism (no God anywhere)
 - Our inner work can be understood as a four-fold journey involving:
 - Awe, delight, amazement (known as the Via Positiva)
 - Uncertainty, darkness, suffering, letting go (Via Negativa)
 - Birthing, creativity, passion (Via Creativa)
 - Justice, healing, celebration (Via Transformativa)
 - Ecological justice is essential for the sustainability of life on Earth.

Nature-Based Activities

- For Fun
 - Snow tubing
 - Corn maze
 - Backpacking
 - Sweats
 - River tubing



www.moonshinemountain.com



www.fieldsoffun.org/Fields_of_Fun/Welcome.html



Nature-Based Activities (Cont'd.)

- As community service
 - Adopting our street and picking up trash
 - Volunteering at no-kill farm animal shelter
 - Picking food at a local farm to feed the hungry
- Summer Trips
 - Mountaintop Removal
 - Pine Ridge Indian Reservation
 - Heifer Ranch
 - Costa Rica

Nature-Based Activities (Cont'd.)

- Other Summer Adventure Possibilities
 - Timberlake Farm
 - Genesis Farm
 - Nature-Based Camps
 - VBS

Nature-Based Activities (Cont'd.)

- Congregational Projects
 - Community garden
 - Food pantries
 - Recycling program
 - Carbon-footprint awareness
 - “Don’t drink water out of plastic bottles” drives
 - Fair trade products
 - Roots and Shoots

What Nature Can Teach Children

- Feeling Connected
- Achieving Humility
- Recognizing the Sacred Mystery
- Striving for Balance
- Appreciating the Cycles of Life

What Children Can Teach Us

- Life is full of mystery
- Nature is amazing and wonderful



www.greeningfamilies.com/green-news/nurtured-by-nature



www.layoutfashion.com/graphics/c/6/Nature%20Backgrounds.html



www.cssnz.org/flowers.php

Incorporating Nature on Sunday Mornings

- Seasons

- Seasonal Change

- Solstices and Equinoxes

- Creating seasonal altars

- Engaging in metaphorical discussions/rituals

- Cross-Quarter Holidays (Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasad)



Incorporating Nature on Sunday Mornings (Cont'd.)

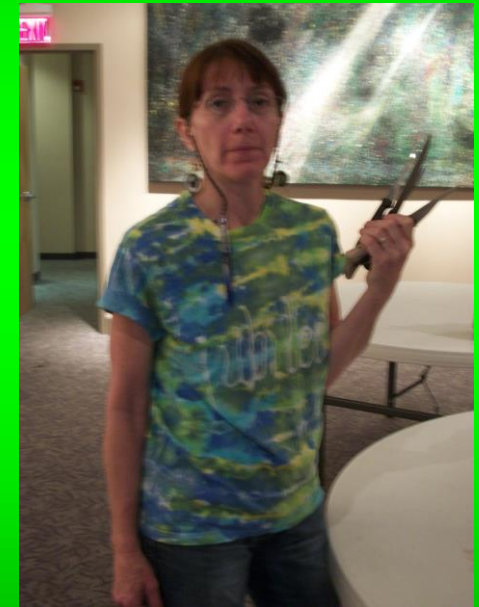
- Nature-Based Crafts
 - Little things
 - Earth-friendly supplies
 - Natural supplies
 - Recycled supplies

Incorporating Nature on Sunday Mornings (Cont'd.)

- Other Sacred Traditions and Nature
 - Holidays with Earth Lessons
 - Rosh Hashanah
 - Sukkot and Shavuot
 - Pongal, Onam, Holi, Makar Sankranti
 - Calendars
 - Lunar
 - Solar
 - Lunisolar

Incorporating Nature on Sunday Mornings (Cont'd.)

- Sustainable Food
 - Cooking
 - Dietary Laws



Summary

We're doing a lot,
but there's always more we could do!