



GOD'S BACKYARD: DO WE HELP OUR YOUTH EXPERIENCE IT ENOUGH?

Go on a nature walk in the dark. Climb a tree. Play in the rain. A British charity has created a bucket list for kids - a collection of 50 things they should do before they turn 12 - activities like burying someone in the sand, or making a mud slide.

It started me thinking, in the weekend after Earth Day, how often we take our youth outside to experience God's Backyard. Many of our youth events, and Sunday schools are composed of classroom activities and indoor discussions, but we may be missing an opportunity to shake things up by taking them outdoors.

Perhaps a quiet nature walk even if it's just around the neighborhood. Or planting flowers outside the church. Or it may just mean holding your Sunday morning class outside, under a shady tree.

You could also make sure you get as many youth as you can attending one of our church camps this summer where they are guaranteed to have a chance to climb a tree, or sleep under the stars. On May 6th churches across the Eastern Synod are invited to participate in God's Backyard Sunday. The worship materials on the following pages are meant to help your community of faith discover concrete ways God comes to us through our Eastern Synod Camps. You can find more information about our camps here:

Camp Mush-a-Mush: www.campmush.ca

Edgewood Camp and Conference Centre: www.edgewood-camp.on.ca

Lutherlyn Camp and Conference Centre: <http://camplutherlyn.zxq.net>

After all, Earth Day shouldn't just be about turning off the tap and sorting the garbage. To really take root in our youth, it has to be about inspiring them to appreciate, on a truly personal level, the natural beauty around us.

To read more about the "bucket list" follow this link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/parenting/young-children/children-health/bucket-list-for-kids-50-things-to-do-before-theyre-12/article2409207/page1/>

I hope you take advantage of these materials and lift up an area of ministry within the Eastern Synod that does so much for our youth and young adults.

Thank you for your partnership in ministry,

Rev Joel Crouse, Eastern Synod Youth and Young Adult Ministry Director



SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MAY 6, 2012 WORSHIP:

- 1) Announce the date, theme of the service, and the annual Synod Camp Appeal offering several weeks in advance.
- 2) Display the “God’s Backyard “ article from the April 2012 edition of Eastern Synod Lutheran -- and other information from your nearest Eastern Synod camp prominently. Make special offering envelopes available. Remind people of the envelope that was inserted in Eastern Synod Lutheran.
- 3) Find people of all ages with camp experience to participate in the service as readers, ushers, offering presenters, assisting ministers. Take special care to include children and youth in these roles.
- 4) Have one or two people (perhaps a youth and an adult) share a story of how their experience at a church camp has shaped their faith understanding and their discipleship.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

(The following is an edit of the ELW Thanksgiving for baptism. It includes a congregational response throughout, and a section that refers to the water in your community. Here are some suggestions for how to use the prayer 1)Pour water into the font as the prayer proceeds. A number of children could pour water, each during successive stanzas. 2)Individuals or sections of the congregation might read the various stanzas. 2)Children might sprinkle the congregation with evergreen boughs dipped in water during the last two sections. 3)Gather by a body of water that is important to your community.)

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God, (L)

The fountain of living water, (C1)

The rock who gave us birth, (C2)

our light and our salvation.

AMEN

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, (C1)

We are clothed with God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Let us give thanks for the gift of Baptism saying:

Blessed are you, God of Life

We give you thanks, O God

(C2)



For in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters
And by your Word you created the world,
calling forth life in which you took delight.

Blessed are you, God of Life

Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family. (C1)
Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.
At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit
By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons,
making us heirs of you promise and servants of all.

Blessed are you, God of Life

(In the following section, include references to the water at the synod camp closest to you , and/or the water closest to your community. Frame your references in the context of how this water creates and shapes the nature of your community.)

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, (C2)
and for its presence here in this place; the Eramosa River which feeds the Grand, and
Lake Erie
Blue Springs creek and its pristine beauty,
The Edgewood Pond and its vibrant life.

Blessed are you, God of life

We praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. (L)
Shower us with your Spirit as you shower the earth with rain
And renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace and love.

Blessed are you, God of life

To you God of Life, be given honor and praise (L)
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
In the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen**

Submitted by Rev Fred Ludolph

Sermon

If you had the chance to go to summer camp as a child, you probably remember it as a magical time. It was a place where you made best friends overnight whispering in the dark in your cabin. You learned to paddle a canoe. You had competitions over who could make the biggest cannonball from the raft in the middle of the lake. Camp was this



spirited place away from what was familiar, where you learned to share tight living quarters, and to find your voice in a larger group, without your parents to prod you along. Ultimately, camp was what you chose to make it. Camp meant freedom.

In the New Testament, we also learn about freedom – a freedom that guides us in our faith especially as Lutherans. The foundation of our church is built on this freedom. We are reminded, in Romans, that when we live by faith in Jesus, God marks no difference among any one of us, by bringing us freely to God's grace. That line in Romans is essential to how we relate then to God: *For we maintain, that we are justified by faith apart from observing the law.*

As Lutherans, we often interpret this as what we don't have to do. We don't have to keep a score sheet of good deeds to win God's favour, losing points every time we make a mistake. We don't have to compete against each other to be the best Christian. We don't have to fear God's wrath, or that God might find us wanting because we have, as human beings, messed up along the course of our lives. Instead, the God we follow becomes the Awesome God our youth sing about – who embraces us, who stands beside us, who asks that we do our best to follow Christ, not to curry favour, but because it is the right thing to do. In our faith, we find freedom – not unlike the freedom away from your parents that you might remember from those days at camp.

But in this covenant with God, there is still something required of us – and this is a part on which we sometimes neglect to focus. We must have faith. That means turning to God in our daily lives, and trusting that God is with us when we least feel God's presence. It means making God our compass. That is not easy, especially these days when there are so many other forces tugging at our loyalties. But we are told in the Gospel about the fate of the person who chose to build their house on sand, because it was easier – and lost it to the rain and wind. But the one who build their house on rock, though it required more work and strength of character, saw it hold fast against the storm and it did not fall. Jesus, of course, is the foundation of rock upon which we are called to build our lives. But the task still falls to us to shore up that foundation, to plug the cracks created by doubt and despair and distraction.

How do we do that? How do we shore up our faith in these times when people seem more intent at worshipping their Ipods? How do we teach our children the lesson that God cares for us no matter what happens in these times when success at all costs has become the holy grail? For starters, we gather to worship. We pray at home, giving thanks for the gifts we receive. We read the Bible. But sometimes we are a bit too serious about things – we forget to feel the joy of faith, to laugh in our conversations with God. This is important for our children to see, so that they might begin building their foundations of rock. And especially so that their faith flourishes not because of the law



laid down by their parents, but because of an honest love for God. Too often, we turn to God mainly when we are in trouble – we think of shoring up that foundation only when God helps us get through it. We forget to rejoice with God when life is grand. But as the teachers of the next generation, as much as for ourselves, we must remember that God doesn't just want to console us, God wants to laugh with us. God wants our children dumping glitter glue on their masterpieces in Sunday School. And chasing their friends around the church hall. And getting a taste of grace and faith at places outside of church like camp.

That is why it is so important for us maintain and protect places like Camp Edgewood, Lutherlyn and Mush-a-Mush – beautiful corners of nature far from all the hubbub of daily life, where families can go to commune with God in a joyful space, and our children can learn, on their own, that their faith is something to have fun with. It is not only about church on Sunday, or grace at dinner. It is about shouting those crazy songs at the campfire. It is about performing the stories we mostly only hear preached in formal language from the pulpit. It is about celebrating God's love for us.

Camp is a place where that celebration unfolds naturally – and it is wonderful thing to watch. Wouldn't it be something if we could work harder to hold on to that joy in the real world of bills and disappointments and family squabbles? God sets us free to dance – by constantly offering us the gift of new life. God wants us at the campfire, giggling, clapping our hands, and shouting so loud it echoes across the lake: My God is an Awesome God.

Submitted by Rev Joel Crouse

Prayer of the day -- adapted from Easter 5, Series B:

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Help us to understand that all creation, human community, our church and individual lives of faith are all nurtured by Jesus' resurrection -- so that we may bear the fruit of love to all the world, and live in the fullness of your joy. through Jesus Christ our risen saviour and Lord. Amen.

Eucharistic Prayer

(This Eucharistic prayer is adapted from "Eucharistic Prayer G for Celebrations with Children" as found in the ELCIC resource Gathered for Worship. The prayer is of United Church of Canada origin. The prayer is especially suited to celebrations



involving children, - camp settings, day schools, retreats – though it may be used at any time with all of God's people.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We thank you God.

From the beginning you made the world and all its creatures;

You made people to live for you and for each other.

You created Adam and Eve and gave them a garden;

You showed Noah a rainbow;

You gave Moses strength to free his people and taught Miriam to sing;

You gave courage to Esther and loyalty to Ruth;

You gave David a harp and a voice to sing your praise and vision to lead your people.

Yet some forgot your gifts and your ways of love and justice,
even as we sometimes do.

But you did not forget.

You sent Jesus into the world to show how much you love us
and to bring us back to you again.

He came as one of us,

born an infant, grew as a child,

matured as a youth, and worked and served others as an adult.

Jesus rejoiced with those who rejoiced and wept with those who wept.

To the despairing, he spoke a word of hope.

To the sick, he gave healing

To the hurting, he was a friend.

Again, people forgot your ways of love and justice.

Some became angry with Jesus and nailed him to a cross.

But you lifted him from the grave and restored him to life,
so that he might be with us, and we with him,
alive for ever more!



Therefore, with all the saints of every time and place,
we join the angels in their song of praise:

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

On the night before he died,
Jesus had supper with his disciples.
He took bread, thanked you, broke the bread, and gave it to his friends, saying:
“Take this, all of you, and eat it.
This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

After supper, he took the cup of wine, thanked you,
and passed it to his friends, saying:
“This cup is the blood of the new covenant shed for you and for everyone
for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Remembering his death, and celebrating his resurrection,
we await his coming again
to bring love, justice and peace to the earth.
Together, we shout the mystery of our faith:
Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.
We pray, God of Love, send your Holy Spirit
to us and upon what we do here
that we, and these gifts of bread and wine,
touched by your Holy Spirit,
may be signs of love, justice, and peace among us
and to the whole world.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours,
O God most holy, now and forever.

Amen

Submitted by Rev Fred Ludolph