

THE CYCLE OF THE SEASONS NATURE QUEST

Listen...what is nature teaching you?



On our life's journey, it is good now and again to find a place where we can pause and look back at the landscape of our lives and the journey we have been on.

For the last eight months we have journeyed together in the Seasons of Our Lives track. We have done this primarily by spending time in nature, listening, observing, and allowing nature to teach us and to heal us. We have tried to respond to this with sacred questions, or with art, poetry, and reflection. We have been exposed to music, meditations, readings, articles, psalms, poems and more to expand our experience of being in nature. The seasons of nature are a metaphor for our lives. This ongoing cycle resembles a circle. Circles have no beginning and no ending. Circles are a symbol of unity and wholeness.

Our journey has taken us to this webinar today. And today we are taking time to begin looking back on this journey. We will do this by having a mini nature quest using the four seasons as our guide. We may not finish our reflection but it will be a good start for us to continue over the course of the month.

INSTRUCTIONS: Before beginning the nature quest, make sure you have the instructions and worksheets, journal, pen, pencil, crayons, hat, water, and something to sit on. Find a place in nature nearby, e.g. your back yard, a park or garden. Don't go very far and go on foot. Settle into a comfortable place.

SETTLING IN: Begin by bringing your awareness to the present. Take a few deep, cleansing breaths. Bring your whole being into this space. Look around you and notice. What do you see? Is there a distinct smell or aroma in the air? What do you feel where you are sitting? Is it soft, hard, crunchy? What can you feel on your face and/or body? Is the air cool, warm; windy or calm? Can you feel the warmth of the sun, or is it cloudy? Pay attention and be with what is. Sit and observe for a period of time (about 15 minutes), whatever feels right for you -- eyes open or closed. Then read the following prayer.

FOUR SEASONS PRAYER: Sacred Seasons of Earth, as you sweep over our lands and through our hearts, you wear the face of the divine. How deeply we feel the effect of your many moods. You whisper death chants to us, then lovingly sing out blossoms. You call us into nesting places that we might ponder all that needs to be reborn in our lives. You tell us stories of life and death, transformation and rebirth, stories of waiting, patience resting and hope. You enfold us in fruitfulness, then strip us bare. You grow up in us and season us with your temperamental personalities. O Seasons of the Earth, bless us with your gracious ability to surrender at the slightest invitation from the Divine Spirit. As we contemplate the seasons in our lives, open our eyes, open our minds, our hearts, and our entire being to all the lessons you have been teaching us over the last eight months. *

THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE

As you reflect on the landscape of your life and of the Seasons of Our Lives track, allow yourself to go back to the experience you have had the last nine months. You may want to review the summary of the seasons below. When you are ready, ask yourself how this journey has been for you. You may want to use the questions below as a guide. Or you may want to simply journal, write a poem, or draw a picture. Do what works best for you.

- What insights have I gained about myself, others, the divine, and life in general?
- What has been affirmed for me, about myself, others, the divine and life in general?
- What am I most grateful for in each season of my life?

SEASON OF AUTUMN

Direction – West (the direction of the setting sun)

Interior - Gratefulness, Harvest, Surrendering, Letting Go

SEASON OF WINTER

Direction – North (the direction of the low sun in the sky)

Interior - Darkness and Solitude, Forgiveness

SEASON OF SPRING

Direction – East (the place of the rising sun)

Interior - New Life, Emergence, New Beginnings

SEASON OF SUMMER

Direction – South (the place of the sun high in the sky)

Interior - Savoring, Beauty, Abundance

IN SUMMARY:

My key 'gleanings' from this track are ...

My greatest challenge from this track is ...

My greatest reward from this track is ...