



Wild Cathedrals

**The Ministry of Camp & Conference Centers in Gathering, Formation,
and Worship through a Creation Care Lens**

Jerusalem Greer



Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation



2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community



- *“Approximately half of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness, with some of the highest rates among young adults.” - Surgeon General’s Report on the Epidemic of Loneliness*
- *This startling fact is not referring to the kind of loneliness that is a passing emotion or an innocuous state of being that is slightly unpleasant but ultimately harmless. Instead, in this report, Dr. Vivek Murthy and his team are addressing an epidemic that affects mental, physical, and social health. This means that no*



- In 2020, only 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque. This is a dip below 50% for the first time in the history of the survey question.
- Religious or faith-based groups can be a source for regular social contact, serve as a community of support, provide meaning and purpose, create a sense of belonging around shared values and beliefs, and are associated with reduced risk-taking behaviors. A consequence of this decline in participation, individuals' health may be undermined in different ways.
- Thankfully, the advisory report does not leave readers hopeless; a tre



Outdoor activity is the common ground for spiritual fulfilment

TOP THREE BY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION:

Which of the following activities do you personally find the most spiritually fulfilling?

Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Other Protestant	Other Christian	Other religion	Not religious
 Being outdoors	 Being outdoors	 Prayer	 Prayer	 Being outdoors	 Being outdoors
 Prayer	 Prayer	 Attending religious worship	 Attending religious worship	 Prayer	 Giving to charity
 Giving to charity	 Giving to charity	 Being outdoors	 Being outdoors	 Giving to charity	 Listening to or participating in music or singing

Q8. Which of the following activities do you personally find the most spiritually fulfilling? Please select three.

Base = All respondents (Catholic n=686, Mainline Protestant n=472, Other Protestant n=491, Other Christian n=464, Other Religion n=503, Not Religious n=503)



While religious affiliation and how people connect are simultaneously changing, so is how U.S. Americans – religious and non-religious – experience their spirituality. At the end of 2021, a poll entitled Jesus in America looked at American opinions and habits regarding religious life. One surprising piece of data revealed that most everyone, regardless of religious profile, agreed that being outdoors or in nature is spiritually fulfilling.



It is at the intersections of these emerging realities - the decline of U.S. American mainline churches, the epidemic of loneliness, and the increased desire to connect with God in the very place which we have neglected most of all-the Earth and her natural bounty - that an opportunity for the Body of Christ to reclaim and proclaim the Good News of the Triune God who is relational, creative, and deeply in love with all of Creation. Norman Wirzba, a leader in this area says: "from soils, waters, and clouds to earthworms, fish, and people" God makes Godself know.

Worship movements such as Wild Church, Farm Church, and Hiking Church have already begun to sprout up across the country and denominations, rising to this challenge. People are no longer just meeting God



There is significance in this trend since, according to Priya Parker, a gathering researcher and facilitator, how we gather shapes how we think, feel, and make sense of the world. “Gathering”, according to Parker, is the conscious bringing together of people for a reason. Parker believes that, ultimately, her call as a writer and practitioner in this area is to “help people experience belonging.” Like Jesus with the disciples in the garden, or with the multitudes on the shore, shouldn’t the Church be about the work of bringing people together for a reason, such as new life in Christ, and to help people



Cathedrals are within a geographically ecclesiastical location, where they are meant to serve the “community as the mother church of its area and the seat of a bishop” (CoE website).



In our tradition, cathedrals are meant to enhance a community’s spiritual life, root the Church to a place and its people, and contribute to the social and economic activity of the larger community beyond its walls.



The Very Rev. Canon Gary Hall, former dean of Washington National Cathedral wrote the following in an article entitled “The Purpose of Cathedrals” for the Anglican Theological Review in 2014:

“Cathedrals do have a potential for reaching constituencies not normally served by parish churches. Their spaces, their programs, their function as community gathering places can draw a range of people (devotees of the arts, skeptics, the spiritual but not religious, those who doubt the credibility of the institutional church, to name a few) who would never consider going to a local parish





As a newly appointed Interim Executive Director of an Episcopal Camp & Conference Center, I have begun to wonder if perhaps Camps are also uniquely positioned to engage both the church and our communities in a similar manner, connecting folks - to God, each other, and the great outdoors as a relational, spiritual and formational experience.

With intentionality of vision and purpose, rooted in a theological understanding of God that is deeply relational, I believe Camps can become a new kind of Christian community, one centered around shared identity and purpose that is different from a secular camp, - an identity and way of being that is rooted in the love of Jesus and



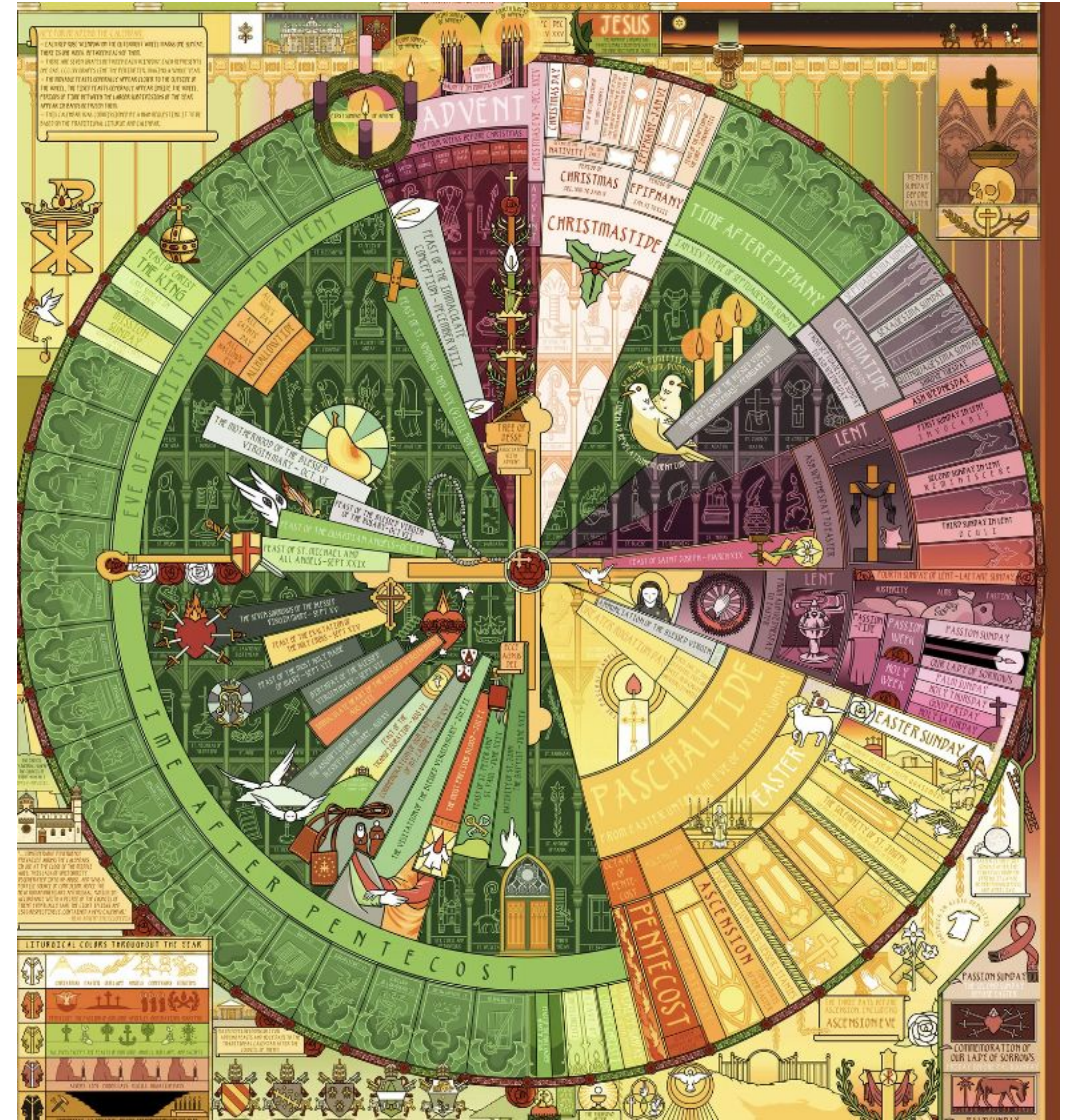
Could Camp and Conference Centers, as a ministry of the church, informed and inspired by the mission and history of Cathedrals, become intentional communal centers for relationship building in the likeness of the Trinity, creating a sort of Cathedral in the wild, answering the call to remove aloneness care for creation



Start with our lowest-hanging fruit...

What would it look like to take a collectivist approach to celebrating the Liturgical Calendar?

Calendar?
In an era of re-formation and changing congregation sizes, what would it look like for Camps and Conference Centers to host gathering space for liturgical observances?





Epiphany Lantern Walk & Guided Star Gazing



Ascension Day Kite Flying

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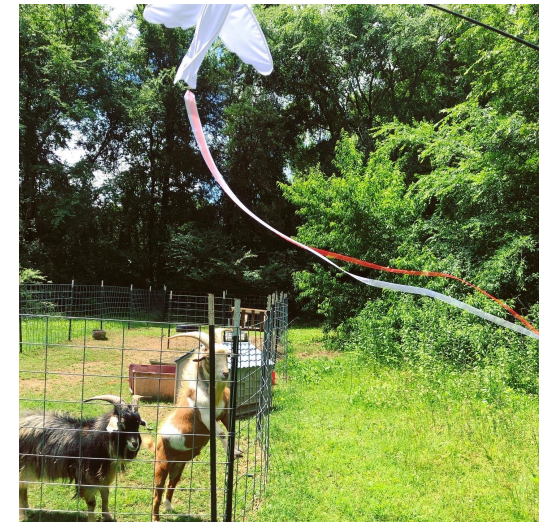


EASTER VIGIL CAMP-OUT or OVERNIGHT





**Pentecost picnics
With outdoor dove
flying.**



Foraging for Advent Wreath Making & Liturgy





Feasts for Saint's Days





Workshops that teach ways of caring for creation are connected to liturgical faith practices at home.



Host Rogation Day for Diocese or Region.

Invite every congregation to bring soil, seed, water, or produce from their community to be blessed and taken back.



Be Intentional - Plan for connection, formation, and evangelism

Identify Gathering: Ascension Day Picnic/Kite Flying **Date:** May 11

Location: Procter Camp **Demographic:** Families and Grandparents **Church Season:** Easter **Budget:** \$200

Attendance Fee: \$10

What is the Formation purpose of this event? To celebrate and educate regarding the Ascension and to launch/promote No-Mow May

How will we Gather? We will gather for a picnic in the pavilion and kite flying at Procter by Lake Leo. We will begin our time with a collect and a song (maybe Let's Go Fly a Kite, and Praise Ye the Lord, or Open the Eyes of My Heart).

How will we Listen?

We will read Luke 24:44-53 (get a youth or child volunteer) and hear a short lesson on the Ascension. Farmer Ryan and Danielle will share why we aren't mowing in May and why it matters for our flying pollinators.

What will we Do? Prayer of confession after the lesson, then Fly kites and eat the picnic! Possibly do a hand-made kite or windsock craft.

How will we Go?

Send everyone home with a windsock, printed prayer for pollinators with a copy to share with neighbors. Hand out No-Mow May Goodbye Pollinators Hand Sign



Verna J. Doizer, an African American female lay theologian, believed that “the dream of God is that all creation will live together in peace and harmony and fulfillment—all parts of creation. And the dream of God is that the good creation that God created -- what the refrain says, 'and God saw that it was good' -- be restored,"

When Christians take hold of this dream, and understand Creation as being in and through the Triune God when we understand ourselves as being part of this good act, made both in the image of God and from the dust of the Earth, *imago Dei*, and *Imago mundi*, we can name and own the transformative and transcendent truth that we have been both created within the context *of* relationship, and we have been created *for* relationship; relationship with God, each other, and all of creation.

This identity invites us to participate in God's ongoing work and presence in the world (John 21:15-18) and motivates us to proclaim the Good News in ways that people can see, feel, hear, and know. Ways that bring about healing, restoration, and hope. Which, as we move forward, might take place at Picnic Church, Fishing Church, or Beach Church, or at Wild Cathedrals - where we can continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, alongside and within the homes of