

A Blessing of the Trails

Loving, Living God, we gather in your name, giving thanks for this place and each other, to ask your blessing upon these trails and upon all those who seek them.

What is a trail? A trail is where we walk, made by taking one step at a time. A trail is a way in the wilderness. A trail is a co-creative act between a place and a traveler. A trail is a witness to those who have come before, evidence of relationships past. A trail transforms itself and the traveler each time it is walked. A trail is one way of knowing, changing every day.

How do you find a trail? When we first arrived on this land, the visible human trails here were leftover tracks of skidders and logging trucks, where people had chosen a way based on efficiency and utility, not pausing to enter into conversation with the land more deeply than to ask how we could take what we wanted. Now, not only humans but deer, bear, fox, moose, coyote, turkey, and many others walk these same paths.

How different it is to ask, and to listen! To find, over years of relationship, that we are invited; that a way suggests itself, offers itself, to those to continue to show up, seeking gently. These are the trails we come to bless today: both the tracks of devastation which are transformed into new life as a way into sanctuary, and the trails that open for those seeking peace.

Any trail has at least two parts: the outer surfaces we walk upon, surrounded by the living world, and the inner path that is made by our journey. It inscribes itself on our hearts with each attentive step, building relationship and opening connections. May we treasure these inner paths and the chances they offer to listen deeply. May we act as loving stewards of these trails, respecting the myriad gifts they give.

Celebrating these trails, we celebrate the receptiveness of God's love: how, when we come seeking, we are met. Recognizing this, let us now join our voices in prayer:

O Great Creator, you make all your creatures in love, and each shares in your mystery. Let all who walk these trails know the blessed kinship we share with all the living earth.

We come seeking a place where we can hear you, see you, feel you in our midst, and we acknowledge with gratitude and humility the gifts of relationship offered in these trails. May we care for them with wisdom and sensitivity, as they care for us.

The trails trace the land, enlivened by prayer and seeking spirits. We pray that you would bless trails and seekers alike in your loving-kindness.

We give thanks for the abundance of your love, shining forth in diversity. The countless forms you have made, and our capacities to perceive them, sing together the songs of wonder. May all our senses, lovingly attuned, help open our hearts to your presence in this place.

Teach us, as we walk these trails, that each step matters. Surprise us out of our routines; stop us in our tracks and teach us with stillness. Challenge the thoughts that keep us paralyzed; awaken us from insensitivity. Help us learn to recognize the movement of your Spirit in this community, and recognize ourselves in service and belonging.

For you have woven the years together in the seasons, and we know that we, too, will be transformed. May the changes in this place and in the wider world, and the changes in our hearts and our relationships, all find their place in the path of your unfolding grace.

The mystery of new life shines through every leaf and stone and sky, and lies hidden in roots, buds, and dreams. As we celebrate these trails, and walk them in the years to come, may they bring us all more closely into your loving embrace.

Amen!