



## RESURRECTION UNIVERSITY PARISH

### Land Stewardship Committee

#### HEALING POWER OF TREES

Nature can be healing. Whenever we enter the land of trees, almost instantly our mood changes. There is a palpable slowing down of thought and speech. You can hear more and better. You begin to sense with more of your body, and there is even a preternatural settledness that can easily overtake you. Some psychologists now consider this complex of mental and bodily experiences to be an emotion, which they call awe, and it's considered restorative.

In *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate, Discoveries from a Secret World* by Peter Wohlleben, the author unfolds the story of why trees are so magnificent and why they affect us. First off, trees are living creatures - not inert objects merely decorating our world. They live, breathe, eat, rest, make mistakes and learn, communicate, cooperate and compete, as they ceaselessly reach for light and water.

One of the profound ways being amid trees affects us is through the time scale. Youth for many trees starts at 150; old age can be 500 or more. When you spend time around something existing in those kinds of time frames, it can alter your perspective. Perhaps this offers one reason that time spent in the forest lowers blood pressure.

Trees also show us how deeply entrained community is in our surroundings. They network and communicate with each other by exploiting a vast underground system of fungi, warning other trees of dangers and opportunities. Some trees, like aspens, are really not a group of separate entities. They are one organism.

Perhaps the greatest feature of trees is that their power and grace and talent - and indeed their "technology"-can help us reduce our obsession with being the center of everything and expose the folly and selfishness of short-term thinking. They allow us to feel that - as part of a much greater whole- we are both small and large. And while our individual time on Earth is short, our actions ripple through time, and as a human community our life is very, very long.

Carol A. Zeglen

"IF TREES COULD SCREAM  
NO MAN WOULD EVER SLEEP AGAIN"

Rod McKuen (1933-2015)

RESURRECTION

Above is from [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org) "A Movement of Awe: If you think the world revolves around you, try contemplating a tree" by Barry Boyce

In the Mindful August 2021 Kelly Barron has an article titled *In our Nature*. He suggests the idea that the natural world and its processes have much to teach us about the flexibility, creativity, and resilience that's already within us, just waiting to unfurl. For about 3.8 billion years, nature and the millions of creatures who inhabit the planet's humid jungles, sun-drenched deserts, forested mountain ranges, and expansive waterways have devised strategies to endure. We too can apply nature's wisdom to improve our mental, emotional, and physical well-being, learning to adapt, collaborate, and renew ourselves so that we not only live more sustainably on earth, but also - like a towering lodge pole pine - we flourish in the face of adversity.

In the Mindful Special Edition: Your Guide to a Peaceful Mind an article entitled "The Healing Power of Nature: Spending time outdoors makes us happier, boosts our immune system, and increases our attention span" brought out that within five minutes of being outside, your heart rate slows, muscles start to relax, and regions of your brain involved in decision-making and emotions shift from boil to simmer. Simply put: Just a few minutes of respite in a natural environment can have a huge payoff in our day-to-day lives in terms of productivity levels and well-being. It was also noted that Japanese researchers studied the physiological and psychological effects of "forest bathing" or spending time among trees and found that it significantly improves immune function, lowers stress and reduces hostility and depression. Medical doctors have begun to prescribe forest bathing as a remedy to reduce anxiety, elevate mood and boost energy levels.

In *The Healing Power of Nature: An article by Alexandra Sifferlin titled *Spending More Time in the Great Outdoors May Be the Ultimate Natural Remedy**, the author noted that the researcher, Quing Li, a professor at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo, found that trees and plants emit aromatic compounds called phytoncides that, when inhaled, can spur healthy biological changes. In his studies, Doctor Li has shown that when people walk through or stay overnight in forests, they often exhibit changes in the blood that are associated with protection against cancer, better immunity and lower blood pressure.

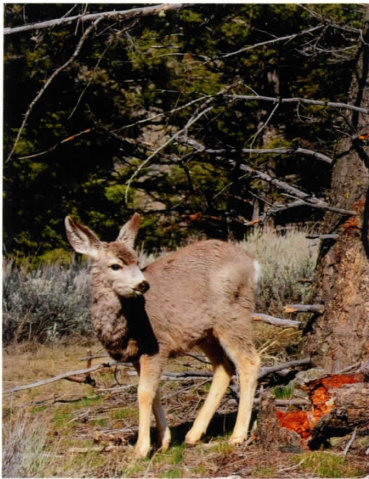
Can this all be poor science or raving emotionalism? Maybe not. We are certainly at liberty to explore and determine for ourselves. Maybe Jesus was on to something when he went into the desert to pray. This word, which our translators have most frequently rendered by "desert," is accurately "the pasture ground." It is most frequently used for those tracts of waste land which lie beyond the cultivated ground in the immediate neighborhood of the towns and villages of Palestine, and which are a very familiar feature to the traveler in that country. It is not a sandy waste land.

## SHINRIN-YOKU

By Paul Gore, editor

Shinrin-yoku is a Japanese word meaning there are physical and mental benefits to just sitting out in nature and thinking about something, or better yet, nothing.

It interprets loosely as "forest bathing." The concept of being in the forest for no other reason than just enjoying time and the world passing you by is becoming more common. West coast newspapers offer "retreats" or forest therapy, which means paying money to have someone take folks into the woods and allowing them sit there while somebody stands by.



In my life, *Shinrin-yoku* dates back quite a while. I practiced that in the Everglades National Park as a young teenager. It was practically my daily life at the University of Notre Dame while taking the one mile hike through the woods from the law school to married student housing. I have always enjoyed walking in the woods, sitting in the woods, just immersing my self in the woods.

After coming to the Yellowstone environ area, it is now even more so a daily experience. My favorite memorable moments come from just listening, in fact, closing my eyes and trying to identify how many sounds I hear. In autumn, I can hear the elk bugling on top of the ridge overlooking Greenhill Ranches. On my front porch I can hear chickadees scolding, chirping, and on several occasions actually making melodious songs heard only by fellow chickadees. A crow winging overhead with its raucous "caw-caw" is also a common sound here as is the "conk-a-ree conk-a-ree" of the red-winged blackbirds both in Spring as they journey north and in the Fall when they journey south.

Walking in the woods with no intent to trap, hunt, kill or maim, I believe to be one of life's premier experiences. I don't think that I would ever become desperate enough to pay for it, because the commercial aspect, in and of itself, would be a negative veil cast across the experience.

Here at Wi-coti-wa-ste, the good camp, I can enjoy fresh water, good grass and a growing habitat that is supporting a multitude of the creation critters. Watching each in its turn is an education—a virtual book on biology or botany.

All of this brings to mind Wendell Berry's poem from "Timbered Choir" where he says,:

"I go among the trees and sit still. All  
my stirring becomes quiet around me  
like circles on water. My tasks lie in  
their places where I left them, asleep  
like cattle."

## JUNE 30



*PSSST.* As Will Wright's last day "on campus" approaches there is still no news about a replacement for the leader of the Creation Care Committee. This distressing news highlights the general lack of volunteers for various ministries and duties at Resurrection University Parish (RUP). There is an old axiom in Catholicism that parish is a people *who*, not a place *where*. Experience is testing that axiom.

Leann Koon ([lfoxkoon@gmail.com](mailto:lfoxkoon@gmail.com)) and Mark Burr ([markburr1949@gmail.com](mailto:markburr1949@gmail.com)) will head up the community vegetable garden—good news there.

Paul Gore ([paulagore@att.net](mailto:paulagore@att.net)) will handle anything to do with eco-spirituality and general administration of the email list. He will also call together a meeting for people interested in helping reorganize Creation Care/Land Stewardship and continue to publish the Green Leaf and administer the on-line presence of environmental activity at [hoechoka.com](http://hoechoka.com).

If there's a particular niche you are interested in, please let it be known. The skills and talents that RUP has is great. Let's put it on display and make the parish the poster child for the Diocese of Helena in environmental care, teaching, and promotion.

**GREEN LEAF AND LAND STEWARDSHIP** are planning for the "*New Look*" of Resurrection University Parish. Land Stewardship ministry is forming up its part in this plan with a list of speakers and programs, including book reviews, zoom sharing sessions and the like for the parishioners and student body all centered on ecology, environmentalism, and the spiritual dimension of the Good Earth. Native American aspects will be a significant part of the written and spoken presentations. And the "old timers" of the parish are not to be forgotten and will be a major focus also.

### —Employment Opportunity—

The Land Stewardship Committee has a one time 20 hour employment opportunity for a member of Resurrection Parish. The job is budgeted for \$30/Hr. Applicants must be skilled in Word and Excel, be self motivated, and have writing skills. Journalism background is helpful but not required. MSU students are encouraged to apply.

**Paul Gore 406-587-2001**