

**ENCOUNTERING GOD IN THE OUTDOORS
PAYING ATTENTION TO SMALL SPACES**



Photo by Robert Lukeman on Unsplash

First read through the whole of the activity, and choose your place.



If you are able, you may wish to walk or cycle somewhere a little further from home. Equally, you can do this activity very close to home, in a small yard or on a tiny balcony.



You may like to arrange with others to do this activity at the same time one day, and then afterwards, share some of what you have each discovered about encountering God in the outdoors.

1. Choose a space no bigger than a medium size garden ... maybe no more than 6m² or 20 sq. feet maximum. You may prefer a smaller area ... then limit yourself to that space.
2. Decide how long you could spend outside depending on the temperature, the weather, your own health and well-being, as well as the time you have available. 15-30 mins is probably enough to start with. Make sure you allow yourself some time back indoors to reflect on what you have discovered and even to share this with someone else by phone or online.
3. Gather the things which might help you reflect ... perhaps pencil and paper, a camera, a magnifying glass, something waterproof to sit or lie on. Hopefully, you are all ready!
4. So now pause and prepare yourself in prayer. You may like to use the words below or whatever helps you best to become aware of God's presence with you, and your being in God's good creation ...



***Holy God,
Here I am.***

You are here too.

Be my companion as I pause in awe.

***Help me to keep all my attention on the wonder of this small space,
just for now.***

***Heighten my senses, so that I become aware of all that surrounds me.
Shift my perspective, so that I see those things I would usually pass by.***

***Help me to become small in this space,
so that I can notice the intricate detail around me.***

***Help me to become gentle and still in this space,
so that the other living things here will not be afraid of me.***

Accompany me in this space, so that I in my turn will not be afraid.

Shall we explore now?

For the time you have committed,
allow yourself to focus entirely on your small space

Move slowly ... explore ...

Look carefully ... notice what catches your attention ... wonder ... pause in awe ... allow yourself to be curious

If you can, bend low to look closely at the ground ... or stretch up to look at the sky ...



Listen ... what can you hear? Do more sounds become audible as you focus your attention?

Touch ... what feels rough? What feels smooth? Do you resist becoming grubby or relish it? Dare you get earth under your finger nails?

Notice what you can smell around you ... are the aromas pleasant or not? Do they evoke memories?



As you breathe in, is the air damp or dry? Cold or warm?



You may choose
to write, draw or take photographs
to help you focus on the space,
but the most important thing is
to give attention to what is around you.



What draws you?

What do you avoid coming close to?

What might God be saying to you in this space?

What might this space enable you to say to God?

Perhaps you might choose something – literally or metaphorically – to take from this space to remember or to share with someone else.

Think about the words you might use to describe it in the greatest detail possible ...

Now is the time to go back indoors and take a few moments to reflect on your time outside, and to share what you have experienced with someone else if you choose.



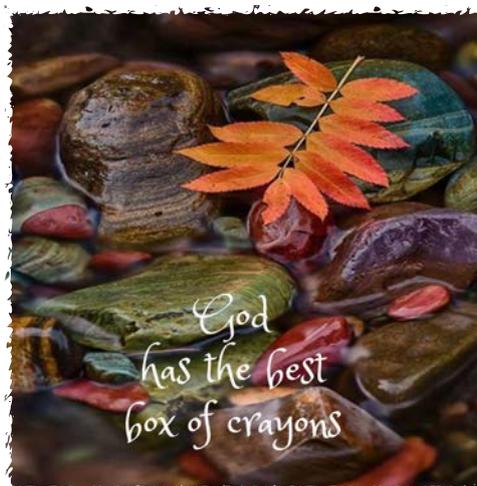
You may also like to put a comment, or a poem, or a prayer on our Circuit Facebook page.

Pause and pray ... in these words or in the words which help you best to give thanks for the experience you have just had.

***Holy God,
Here I am.
You are here too.***

***Thank you that you have been with me in this time,
as you are with me at all times.
Thank you for the things I have seen, heard, touched, smelled
... for all that I have noticed in your company.
Thank you especially for ...***

***Help me to keep my eyes, my ears and my heart open to you
and to all that is around me,
as I return to the things of this day.
Amen***



This material is produced for the Leeds South & West Methodist Circuit in recognition of, and in response to, the way we have felt close to God in the outdoors during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020.