



Cumberland Falls, Corbin, Kentucky. Courtesy of americasstateparks.org.

DEEP CALLS TO DEEP

September 2023 Monthly Prayer Retreat

Deep Calls to Deep

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Suggested Schedule

Hour 1: Introduction, Invocation, Grounding and Breath Exercise, Art, and Break


Hour 2: Scripture Meditation and A Walk with God

Hour 3: Break (enjoy unstructured time with Jesus)

Hour 4: Circle of Life, Climbing Tree, Closing Psalm, and Closing Worship

Supplies

Retreat guide, journal for writing, pen or pencil, art journal or blank paper, colored pencils, paints if desired, earbuds or headphones, and a device for listening to guided meditations, worship songs, and gentle background music. Download

[PLAYLIST](#)  and turn your phone to airplane mode.

Introduction

Dear beloved of Christ,

Welcome to the deep, deep love of Jesus, calling you into communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit over the next four hours in a retreat of silence. Deep is calling to deep. The deep ocean of God's love, roaring like a waterfall, raging like a mighty river, is coming to overflow your banks with abundant love. Deep is calling to the deep longings, needs, hopes, questions, dreams, and passions within you. Listen. Listen to the sound of the rushing waters inviting you to drink deeply of Love. Listen to the sound of the trees reaching deep for nourishment and high with praise. Listen to your soul calling out to its Source. Listen to the Shepherd's tender voice.

Then step into the waters and let them flow freely upon you. Reach your roots down deep into the earth and discover life-giving sustenance. Be nourished. Be strengthened. Be refreshed.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul" (Psalm 23:1-3a)

In preparation for this guided retreat, I invite you to find a retreat location in nature, preferably where trees are abundant. This could be a quiet park, a retreat center with walking trails, a preserve, a state or national park, or the nearest tree grove you can find. Before beginning your retreat, listen to the following podcast about forest bathing. Alisa Keeton teaches from a Christian perspective about the spiritual formation and profound transformation that can occur during intentional, extended time in nature. Then find a way to get into nature however you can.

Revelation Wellness: ["Forest Bathing"](#) with Alisa Keeton 

May the One who created you, redeemed you, and called you be your strength, delight, and joy as your Companion today.

In Christ's love,

Julie Meissner
Assistant Director of Spiritual Formation

Invocation and Prayer

"God is Here Too," Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Liturgies from Below: 462 acts of worship*, 38.

Come!
 Come into the place where God listens!
 Where you need no money, no status, no fine clothes!
 Come as you are
 Broken, whole
 Sick, well
 Satisfied or with deep needs
 Come to sing
 Come to cry
 Come to hear
 Come to see
 Come and be ready or
 Come to be made ready
 We are here
 God is here too

Opening Worship

"Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus" by Audry Assad and Fernando Ortega 

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Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
 Vast unmeasured, boundless, free
 Rolling as a mighty ocean
 In its fullness over me
 Underneath me, all around me
 Is the current of His love
 Leading onward, leading homeward to
 Thy glorious rest above
 Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
 'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me
 And it lifts me up to glory
 For it lifts me up to Thee
 Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
 Spread His praise from shore to shore
 How He loveth, ever loveth
 Changeth never, nevermore

Grounding and Breath Exercise

Take 5-10 minutes to become outwardly still and present to God and your surroundings. Feel free to use gentle music in the playlist if it helps you. Become comfortable. Settle in. Breathe.

- Name five things you can see.
- Take a deep, lung-filling, abdomen-expanding breath through your nose (4 counts), hold it (7 counts), and release it through your mouth (8 counts).
- Name four things you can touch.
- Take another 4-7-8 breath.
- Name three things you can hear.
- Take another 4-7-8 breath.
- Name two things you can smell.
- Take a last 4-7-8 breath.
- Name one thing you can taste.
- Breathe naturally.

Now let's take 5-10 minutes to become inwardly still, or even longer if desired.

Read the following from Psalm 1:2-3 slowly, meditatively, breathing the words in and out with the natural rising and falling of your chest. Take your time. Notice what word or phrase seems to choose you and stay with that word or phrase. Continue meditating upon it as you breathe naturally.

...they delight in the law of the Lord,
 meditating on it day and night.
 They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
 bearing fruit each season.
 Their leaves never wither,
 and they prosper in all they do.

Art with the Inner Child

Become aware of Jesus' presence with you. With your blank paper or journal and colored pencils, draw the imagery from the psalmist's description—*using your nondominant hand*. Keep it simple. Talk to the child within as you draw. Place one hand on your heart and the other on your gut as you speak tenderly and invitingly to your beloved inner child. Call her/him by name.

- What would you like to draw?
- What colors would you like to use?

Draw what she/he wants to draw using those colors. Let it flow naturally. No need to force anything. When it feels like you're done, simply rest and enjoy this new creation. Ask:

- What do you like about your drawing?
- What do you want to call it?

TAKE A BREAK

Move around, enjoy a snack and drink to refresh your body, wander the grounds, or lay down to rest—whatever feels invited!

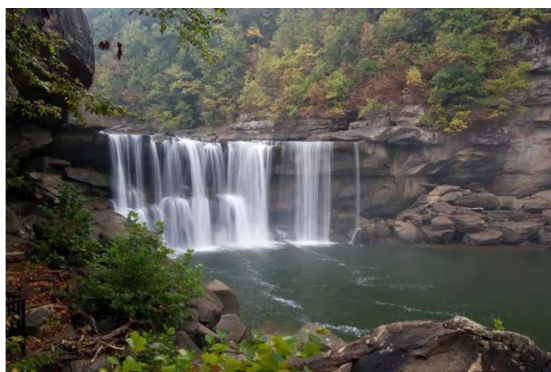


Scripture Meditation

Lectio Divina—Psalm 42, NIV

Contemplatively engage the Scripture reading four times following one or more minutes of silence:

1. Silencio ("silence"): Sit in silence as long as needed to come to inward stillness and awareness of God's presence with you.
2. Lectio ("read"): Read the Scripture passage (aloud or silently). Listen to it as if hearing it for the first time, then simply sit with what you have read for a few minutes.
3. Meditatio ("meditate"): Read it again. What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you, as if you want to return to that word or phrase, like it's shimmering, drawing you? Meditate on that for a few minutes.
4. Oratio ("pray"): Read it again, this time placing yourself within the Scripture passage. What do you feel, see, notice, hear, wonder? Is there a specific situation in your life this connects with? What is God speaking to your heart as you meditate upon this word? An invitation? An exhortation? An encouragement? A question? Journal what you are noticing, hearing, and experiencing. Then respond to God in whatever form you choose—a letter, spoken word, poetry, song, dance, art, etc.
5. Contemplatio ("contemplate"): Read it again, then simply rest in God.




Psalm 42, NIV

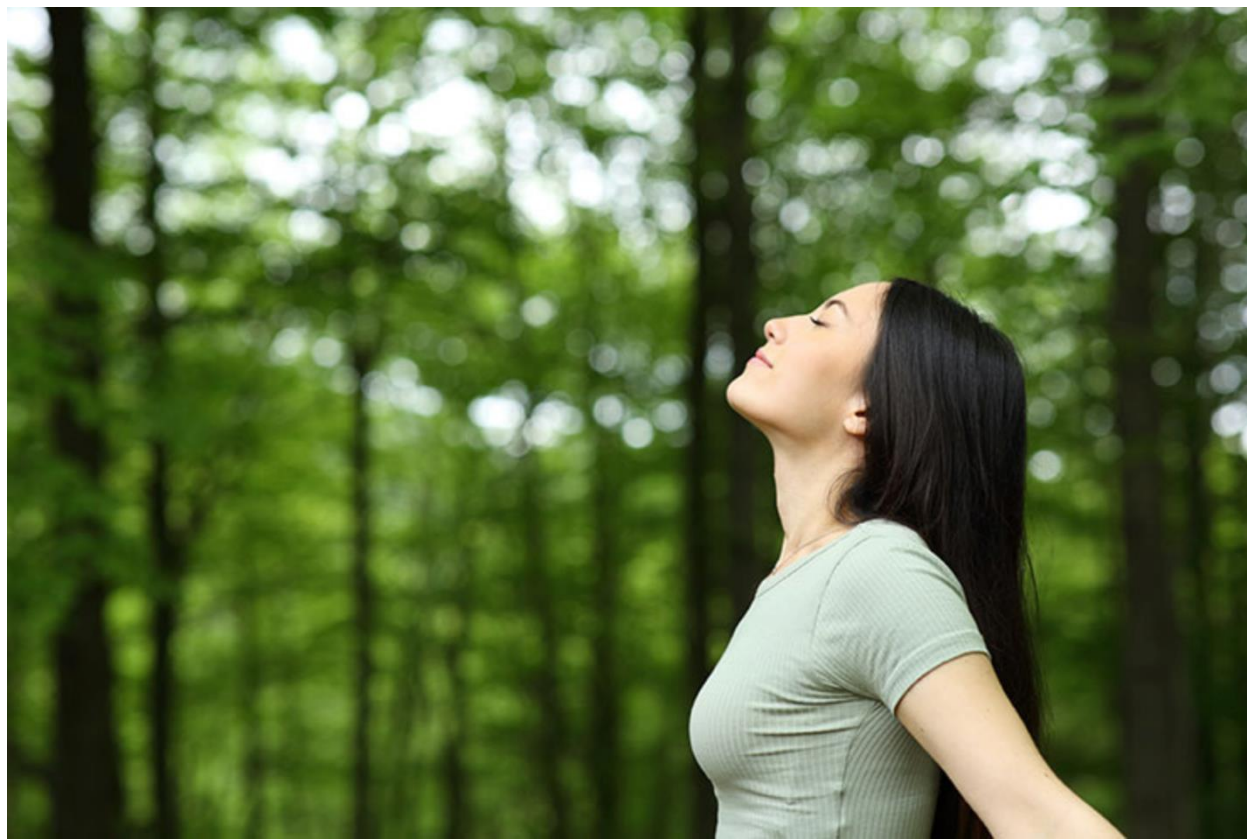
- ¹ As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
- ³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
- ⁴ These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
- ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
- ⁶ My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
- ⁷ Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.
- ⁸ By day the Lord directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
- ⁹ I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
- ¹⁰ My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
- ¹¹ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

A Walk with God in Nature

From "Pray As You Go"

Get out into nature however you can, whether *walking or sitting*—this is an experience of becoming present to God, creation, and yourself. Once you are ready, get into a comfortable posture and begin. Stay present in your body. Move around by walking, stretching, dancing...whatever feels good. Ask God to accompany you on this walk and show you the delights of nature from the Creator's perspective.

Use this [guided forest walk](#)  led by fellow Christian and forest therapy guide Kimberley Ruffin. (*Note: This is not included in the prepared playlist. Click the link to access.)



TAKE A LUNCH BREAK

Enjoy a slow-paced, undistracted meal in communion with God, being present to the food you are eating and the drink you are drinking. Savor each bite and sip with gratitude. Then continue onto the next exercise...or take a nap. Your choice! Resume when you are rested and ready.

Circle of Life

From the Institute for Integrative Nutrition

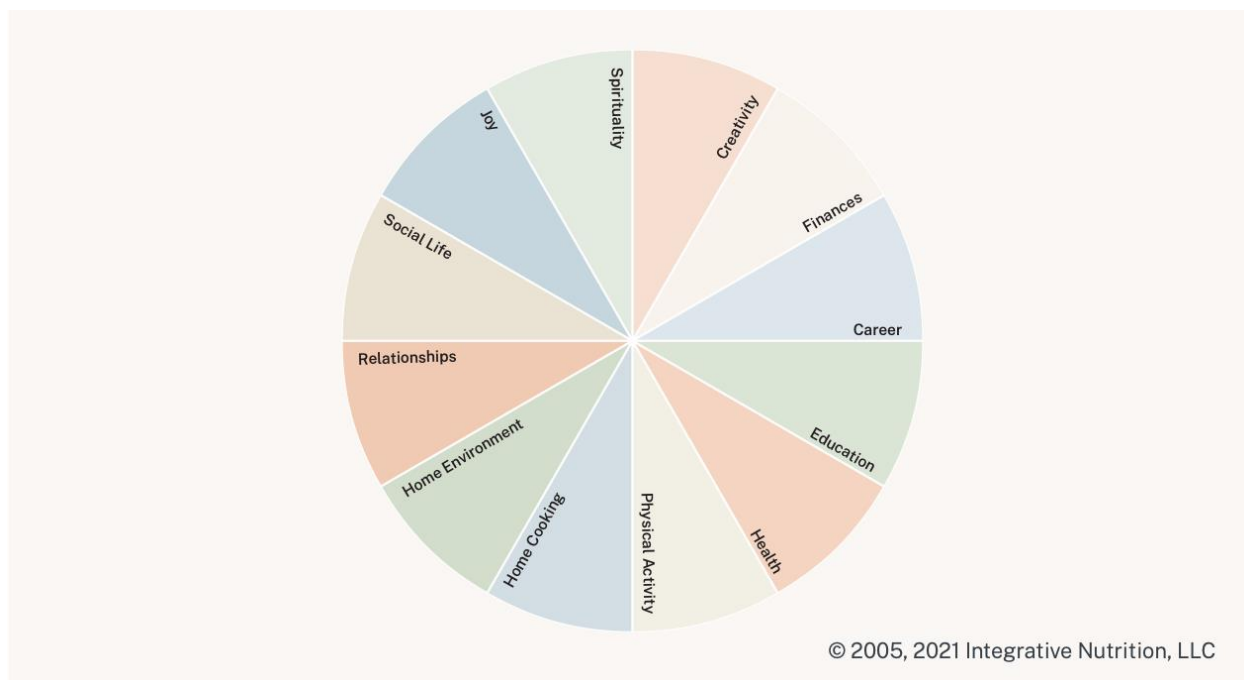
Continuing to stay present to yourself and God's presence with you, explore your unique **Circle of Life** using the following diagram. **The Circle of Life** includes 12 foundational areas of life that affect our overall health and well-being in heart, soul, mind, and body. Attending to these key areas of our lives aligns with Jesus' declaration of the greatest commandment: *"Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **mind** and with all your **strength**" (Mark 12:30).* To love God holistically with all of our being invites our intentionality.

We will engage this tool using the Ignatian practice of Examen, a practice involving awareness of feelings of **consolation** and **desolation**. **Consolation** involves an experience of interior joy, seeing God's presence in everything. It strengthens faith and hope and even the ability to do good. **Desolation** involves an experience of unrest and disquiet, becoming unsettled because God feels far away. The soul in desolation struggles to pray and wonders why it even should pray. Notice that these descriptions are two extremes of a spectrum. While there are times in our lives that we fall at one or the other of these ends, most often, we fall somewhere between them on this spectrum. We can use the insightful feelings of *consolation* and *desolation* as a discernment tool for the following areas of our lives.

Prayerfully consider each area, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and help you discern your level of contentment within each area. For instance, *"God, where am I with relationships?"* Be still. Wait for God's response. Listen to your inner knowing the Spirit gives. Notice how and where you feel it in your body, what emotions arise, and even the color, smell, or flavor of it. Then place a dot within that area based on the interaction you and God are having about that area of your life. (Note that no two people's circles will look the same at any given time, and your own will change over time.)

How to use the Circle of Life Tool

1. Place a dot in each section to indicate your level of contentment in that area. A dot toward the periphery indicates contentment, and a dot closer to the center indicates discontent. For example, if your health is feeling great, place a dot toward the outer edge of the circle.
2. Connect the dots to see *your* Circle of Life.
3. With God, identify your current areas of focus (1-3 max). Notice where God is inviting you to recalibrate with intentionality over the next few months to cultivate joy and peace.

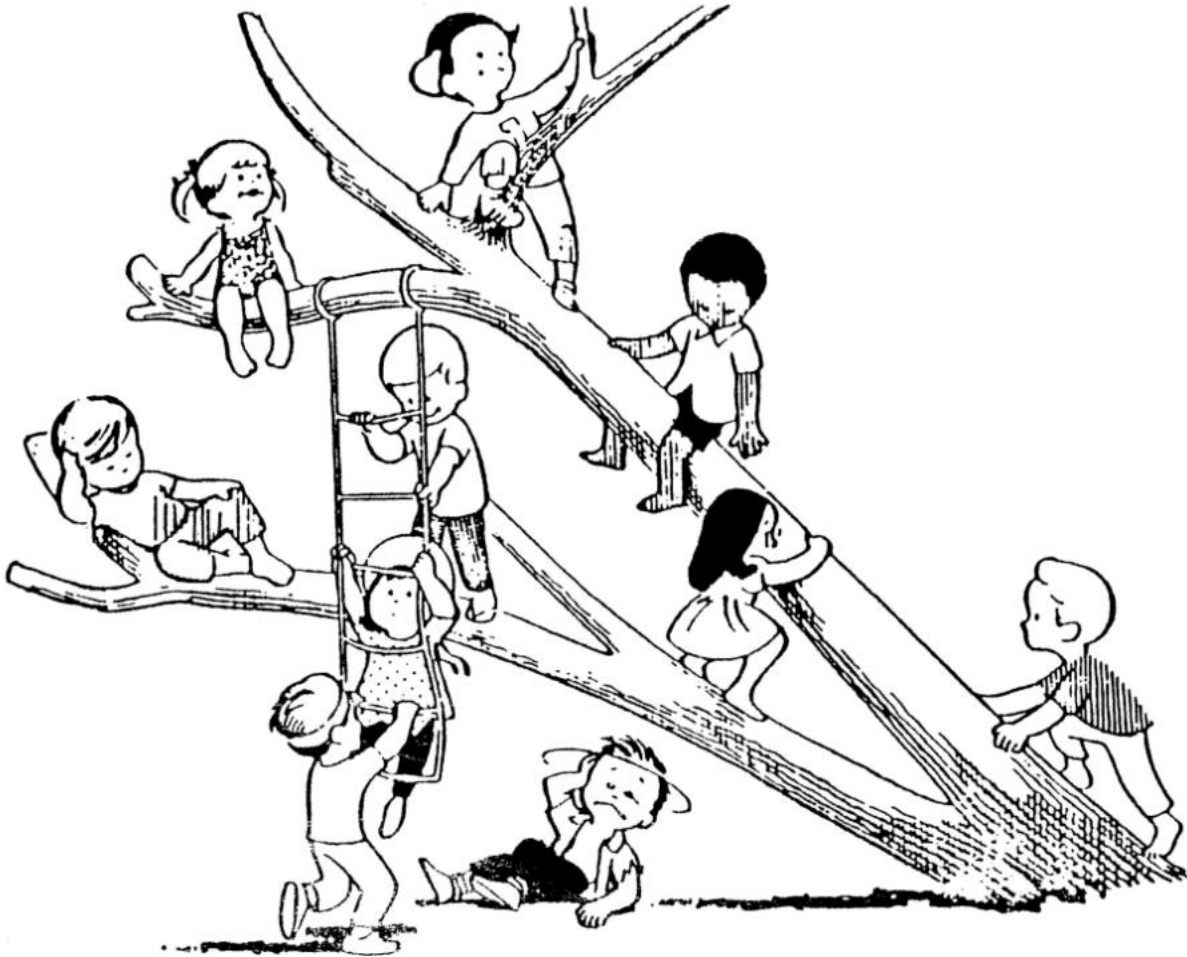


Have a conversation with Jesus about your Circle of Life. Are there some flat sides to your wheel? Most likely there are areas of great contentment and joy juxtaposed with areas of discontent and disappointment. Be real with yourself and Jesus here. Which one to two areas (max) do you feel led to focus on in the coming month(s)? How would you like to *feel* in these areas?

Give yourself grace in these one or two areas that are not yet what you want them to be. If there is any unconfessed sin affecting these areas, bring that to God now in repentance to receive forgiveness. If there is anyone you need to forgive in these areas, do so now in God's strength.

Ask Jesus to give you the courage to address these one to two areas in the coming months by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Journal your thoughts, feelings, prayers, and anything else coming up for you.

After completing the Circle of Life exercise, how are you feeling? Which child on the tree below do you most relate to?



Color, outline, or circle the child you connect with most right now based on how you are feeling. Don't overthink it. Who are you drawn to?

Now color the tree and the ground. If you like add a water source nearby, or anything else you desire to add.

Take in the colored picture. What prayer rises within you?

What is Jesus saying to the child you most connected with? Hear these words and receive them. Write them down.

Closing Psalm

Psalm 103:1-5

- ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Closing Worship

Dance your joy if you feel like it!

["Look Up Child" by Lauren Daigle](#) 

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Where are You now
When darkness seems to win?
Where are You now
When the world is crumbling?
Oh I, I-I-I, I hear You say
I hear You say
"Look up child", hey
"Look up child", hey
Where are You now (Where are You?)
When all I feel is doubt?
Oh, where are You now
When I can't figure it out?
Oh I, I-I-I, I hear You say
I hear You say
"Look up child", hey
"Look up child", hey
"Look up child", hey
"Look up child", hey
"Look up..."
You're not threatened by the war
You're not shaken by the storm

I know You're in control
Even in our suffering
Even when it can't be seen
I know You're in control
Oh I, I-I-I, I hear You say
I hear You say
"Look up child", hey
"Look up child", hey
"Look up child"
I hear You say, You say, You say (Hey)
"Look up child"
I hear You say, You say, You say (Hey)
Look up, look up, look up, look up
"Look up child"
I hear You say, You say, You say
"Look up child"
I hear You say, You say, You say
Look up, look up, look up, look up
"Look up child"
I hear You say, You say, You say
I hear You, I hear You calling my name, oh
I hear You say, You say, You say
"Look up, look up child", hey
"Look up child", hey
Look up

Go dancing in peace and with great joy! Thanks be to God!!!

