

Of course! The path to heaven

doesn't lie down in flat miles.

it's in the imagination
with which you perceive
this world,

and the gestures
with which you honour it.

My name is Kim Varey, and those of you who know me know that I have a deep and abiding passion for the outdoors. In conversation with David I happened to mention what an intricate role wilderness played in my spiritual life and how often I had taken novice hikers out to introduce them to the large rockpile to our west. Be careful what you mention to David!

After several conversations and much prodding, he convinced me to discern whether a small ministry existed here. And he even came up with the name: Sacred Places in Spring: An Outdoor Adventure with God. It is a wonderful name, and I only hope I can begin to fulfill its promise.

Because it makes it sound like I have some kind of wisdom to offer you and I do not. I can only tell you this: when I am outside, whether beside a rushing creek marveling at the smooth-sculpted rock; struck dumb by the beauty of the wildflowers right now; watching, as I did yesterday, the sleek magnificence of a black bear foraging across an avalanche slope; smelling the tang of spruce buds in the air; or feeling the warmth of new sun on my skin when the river has not yet cracked through its icy winter mantle. When I am outside I am stilled enough to feel the spirit of God and feel God's presence in my life. I have no wisdom, but you need only be there and pay attention to fill your heart; this has never failed.

So here we are! Sacred Spaces through the seasons. Outdoor Adventures With God.

I propose we start very small and see where we are lead. (the way I truly have stumbled all through my life – and I have been lead marvelous places!) On Wednesday, June

20th (the day before solstice, so I have squeaked past David's "spring" deadline!) we'll meet at the church at 6:30 p.m. and head west for approximately 45 minutes to Sandy McNabb Recreation Area. The trail is tiny (1.8 km of relatively level ground). The Sheep River is in view and we may venture down to its banks; perhaps spot a dipper or two flinging itself into the fast-running water. There will be a reading or two from some of my favourite authors (the poet, Mary Oliver, the essayist, Annie Dillard, the mystic Rumi, the poet David in the Psalms). There may be some natural history if you have a question or two that I can answer – we may spot a lovely Calypso Orchid. There most definitely will be silence; because how can you listen for the voice of God in your life if there is not time spent in silence?

We will spend an hour or so and then return home. To participate you should have the ability to walk about 2 km in town, comfortable and warm clothes, comfortable walking shoes, a bottle of water or thermos of tea, something to sit upon, bug spray, and an adventurous spirit.

Sacred Spaces in Summer – you knew this was coming, didn't you??? I meet with David tomorrow and I'm quite sure he won't let me off the hook. What we do then depends on where the group would like to go. We can stay very simple with Wednesday night small journeys. Or we can venture to short hikes after church on Sunday or major adventures in mountain passes through the year. Or perhaps all of the above. It will depend on your interest and truly, where the spirit leads us.

An e-mail message will be sent out this week from the Church. Please respond to Melanie by noon on Wednesday, June 20th if you are interested. My e-mail address is vareyk@shaw.ca and my phone number is 652-3420. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have. However I'm out of town most of this week and likely won't respond until next weekend. Be patient; I will get back to you.

Where will we go as we explore sacred spaces, both in our mountains and in ourselves? I don't know. But I do know God calls us to be present with him in his creation and I'm glad to offer myself and my love of his wilderness to you. Please join me.

As Annie Dillard said so succinctly:

“We are here on the planet only once – we might as well get a feel for the place!”