
Holy Hacks: September 27, 2019

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

My six-year-old is a big fan of reptiles. I am not. So I had to steel my nerves recently when Margaret asked me to do a funeral for the deceased lizard she found on our back steps. Picking up the carcass and stroking it lovingly, she eulogized: “You were a good lizard, I can tell. You were a really pretty color. I bet you caught lots of bugs. I hope you enjoyed this nice sunny day. Okay, ‘bye!”

One of my favorite parts of our baptismal service is the prayer that asks God to give the newly baptized “a sense of joy and wonder in all God’s works.” Joy and wonder—children tend to possess these in spades. Things we adults walk right by without an ounce of curiosity or delight (and sometimes with a sense of revulsion), children squat down and adore as if they have unearthed a treasure.

This is a wonderful time of year for helping children deepen their experience of the God who shows his love for us in nature. Participants in Godly Play the past few weeks have heard about how God created everything that is and called it good. Families can build on this message by getting outside and marveling over what they see. You might go on a short nature walk, bringing along a box for collecting leaves, acorns, rocks, or pieces of tree bark that you find especially beautiful. You might wonder aloud why God created each thing you discover and what purpose it serves in our universe. Following the example of 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, you might find a specific way for your family to engage in “creation care.” This could mean simply discussing how recycling shows our love and thanks to God and our good stewardship of what God has made. Or it could mean taking part of a Saturday to help clean up a local stream or writing a family letter to your elected officials asking them to support climate change legislation.

The refrain to the hymn “All things bright and beautiful” (See above) is one that even small children can memorize and sing as a prayer before meals or at bedtime. Older children can learn the lovely stanzas about “purple headed mountains” and “rivers running by.” However you do it, I hope you’ll take some time to join your little ones in enjoying the goodness of the earth and the love of God, who made it all. Happy Fall!