

Family Eco-Camp

This camp was inspired by the friends of the International Environmental Forum dedicated to developing the facility of intellectual and spiritual investigation into the secrets of creation.

This camp is dedicated to the memory of Ruhiyyih Khanum.

Opening game to get to know each other:

Sitting in a large circle hold a ball of yarn up for all to see. Say:

“Let’s take a moment to appreciate the Earth that is our home”. (pause) “Consider the land...the water and the air that support life on our planet”. “We have a bounty to be sitting outside with nature all around us”. “Look at all the amazing things around us”. “Now bring to mind one thing in nature that is especially meaningful to you.”

I am going to hold the end of this yarn and say my first name then tell you one thing I love about the natural world. Then I am going to toss the yarn to another person. “I love lakes especially in early spring when they are cold but warm enough to take a brisk swim”. The person who catches the yarn will repeat my name and what I love and then say their name and share what they love. Then, holding on to the yarn they will

toss it to someone on the other side of the circle. It may get super hard, to remember all the names, the more the yarn is passed but if we connect all our minds, we can help the person remember.

When everyone has had a turn, we will have created an amazing web. Say, “See what we have created, it is symbolic of life on this planet; we are all connected to each other and the natural world. Our lives are woven together with people, plants and animals all over the world”.

“Every time we use something we can think about how it is connected to the web of life. For example, what do you think it took to make this yarn? See if they answer the wool from the sheep, the person who tended the sheep, the food the shepherd feed the sheep, along with the grass, rain, sun, the loom, the factory workers...etc....all the way to God.

“Humanity is one thread in the web of life. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things on this planet are bound together. All things are connected.”

Opening story: I am going to share a story with you before opening prayers and mediations:

The following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, were written in a Tablet dated March 2, 1911. They were addressed to May Maxwell when Mary was just seven months old and were surely the greatest confirmation she had ever received of this blessing.

“In the garden of existence, a rose has bloomed with the utmost freshness, fragrance and beauty. Educate her according to the divine teachings so that she may grow up to be a real Bahá’í and strive with all thy heart, that she may receive the Holy Spirit”.



Her birth name was Mary Sutherland Maxwell, born in New York City in 1910 to prominent Baha'i parents, May and Sutherland Maxwell; she later received her Baha'i title, Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, from Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, whom she married; her name means ("Handmaid of Glory").



Mary was just five years old when this picture of her bursting

thru the daisy beds was taken. This picture reveals almost all of Mary. If we were so developed that we could see the inner things as well as the outer, we would know all about Mary by studying this picture. Here she is in her own world—the kingdom of Nature which she so loves—the sun, the air, the flowers, everything that grows is dear and familiar to her. Most of all the animal world from the tiniest bug to the king of the animal kingdom Mary adores—and this lion king is the favorite of all. Ever since she was a toddling baby Mother Nature has held sway over the passionate love of this child—so that in the even brief years of her life she has learned all about beetles, worms, caterpillars, flies, ants, bees, wasps, hornets, spiders, etc.—where they live, how they live, what they eat, and what changes they undergo. She knows about toads, frogs, lizards, snakes, mud eels, and I don't know what slimy creatures. All this knowledge she has gained at first hand, straight from the source by watching these creatures—catching them—keeping them for a time and feeding them—and then making people read her all about them in books. A Tribute to Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum page 6

During this Eco-Camp we are going to follow in her footsteps and immerse ourselves in the Kingdom of Nature.

The following prayers and meditations guided our planning for this weekend. You might not want to read all of them at this first gathering as they have been sitting long and may already show signs of wanting to get up and move, so perhaps only choose 2 and have the children share their prayers. The

quotes could be integrated into prayer time at lunch and dinner, etc.

O Thou kind Lord! These are Thy servants who have gathered in this meeting, have turned unto Thy kingdom and are in need of Thy bestowal and blessing. O Thou God! Manifest and make evident the signs of Thy oneness which have been deposited in all the realities of life. Reveal and unfold the virtues which Thou hast made latent and concealed in these human realities... Thou art mighty. Thou art powerful. Thou art the Giver, and Thou art the Ever Bounteous. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“All-praise to the unity of God, and all-honor to Him, the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, Who, out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things, Who, from naught, hath brought into being the most refined and subtle elements of His creation...”.
Baha’u’llah

“...the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together. Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all created things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influence by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom either directly or indirectly. Baha’u’llah

“Man is organic with the world; His inner life molds the environment and itself is also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.” Baha’u’llah

“Every created thing in the whole universe is but a door leading into His knowledge, a sign of His sovereignty, a revelation of His names, a symbol of His majesty, a token of His power, a means of admittance into His straight Path,” Baha’u’llah

“Bahai scriptures teach that, as trustees of the planet’s resources and biological diversity, humanity must seek to protect the “heritage [of] future generations; see in nature a reflection of the divine; approach the earth, the source of material bounties, with humility; temper its actions with moderation; and be guided by the fundamental spiritual truth of our age, the oneness of humanity. The speed and facility with which we establish a sustainable pattern of life will depend, in the final analysis, on the extent to which we are willing to be transformed, through the love of God and obedience to His laws, into constructive forces in the process of creating an ever-advancing civilization.”

Let us strive to utilize our time in nature to look for signs of Oneness in every eco-system we encounter. We have a huge banner where we can record our findings in pictures and/or in writing.

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified. Baha'u'llah

Self-Guided group Hikes!

The following hikes are offered to participants. Share a short overview of each hike then let participants form groups according to what theme of hike they are interested in. Before sending them out let them each take a journal, a pencil and a magnifying glass.

Hike One: Finding a huge, beautiful tree!

Your hiking group will be looking for a beautiful tree; one that catches your eye. Consult with your group and collectively identify a tree that you would like to explore together.

- 1. Touch the tree. Notice where its branches are; is the bark smooth or rough?**
- 2. Does the tree have leaves yet? Sometimes in early spring certain trees are not leafed out.**

- 3. Take some time to hug the tree. How old do you think the tree is? Make some guesses.**
- 4. You could estimate how old the tree is, but you have to work together. First hold up your hands. Each hand span equally about 5 years. See how many hand spans are needed to reach around the trunk of the tree. Add these up in multiples of 5 to estimate how old the tree is. How many people were needed to do this?**
- 5. Now think about how tall the tree is. Stand with your back touching the tree. Take a few giant steps away from the tree. Now put your head down between your legs to look behind you. Try to see the top of the tree through your legs. Can you see it? If not stand up and take a few more giant steps. Keep doing this until you can see the tip of the tree while looking between your legs. When you see it count your paces back to the tree. Each pace should be around three feet long. Now you can make an estimate. If you had to make 20 large paces back to the tree, 20 times 3 (the length of your pace) equals 60! Your tree is approximately 60 feet tall! WOW! Now sit under your tree. Listen and look.**
- 6. What do you hear? What do you see? Is there sunshine on the tree? What plants are there around the tree? Look at the soil around the tree. Is it hard, soft, moist, or dry?**
- 7. Write down or draw what you see. Allow yourself to become part of the tree. There is a world of nature around this tree. The natural world is magical. Throughout the weekend come back to your tree and try**

to see and hear new things. Approach your tree as quietly as possible, you want to blend in with nature take a deep breath and relax.

8. Collectively name your tree. It could be its real name like maple or oak along with a silly name that you make up. Write the name on the recycled paper provided. Write the names of your group. During this weekend take your friends to visit your tree. When you go back to camp finish drawing the tree and what you saw.
9. Before you leave, say a special prayer below and think about how God is telling us that when we make mention of God anywhere on this planet it becomes blessed. So, you all have made this spot blessed by saying a prayer and making mention of God!

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.

Baha'u'llah

Hike number 2:

A fallen Log Forest Adventure:

A Log's Life:

Our forest adventure today is to find as many fallen trees as we can. We will use our investigation skills to explore why the tree may have fallen, what animals may have made the tree their home, what insects and bugs are living in the tree. We can also try to guess how old the tree was when it died. Are there fungi, moss, molds or mushrooms living in the rotted part of the tree? How does the tree feel? Are there parts of the tree that are hard, are some parts spongy feeling? Do the spongy parts of the tree feel like it rained recently? Does it look like a bird was enjoying pecking bugs from the bark? Are there parts of the tree that look more like dirt?

Fallen trees, even though they are dead, provide wonderful spaces for plants and animals. As they decompose, they make rich soil.

Look for smaller fallen logs that you can turn over and see what kinds of fungi and invertebrates (worms, centipedes, roly-poly's) you can find. The little insect magnifying glasses are great for getting a close-up view. You can explain that these creatures are helping to turn the tree back into soil. They are nature's clean-up crew!

This little community is a perfect example of what Baha'u'llah tells us that the “...signs of oneness are manifest in all the realities of life”.

God made trees a gift to the forest, the animals, insects, people and the planet. Before you end this walk say some special prayers that you have learned from heart to bless this sacred spot.

Third hiking option, Birdwatching Hike!

On this hiking adventure we need to keep our eyes open and our ears attentive to the song of the birds as we walk. The exciting thing to do for this particular hike is to use the free Merlin App since it picks up the bird songs and gives you a picture and description of the bird. It is like time is frozen so everyone on the hike can see the bird and become accustomed to its call.

Meantime you can set the stage for your walk by explaining that they will see birds high up in the sky, in trees and in the forests, in the meadows and on the ground. This hike will enable us to slow down, connect with nature, and attune our

senses to the world around us as we watch and listen for the birds.

A little background info to share on the hike:

Looking high into the sky they may see raptors! What is a raptor?

Raptors are birds of prey; they are birds that hunt for food from the air. They have exceptional sight that allows them to spot prey from a great distance. In fact, birds of prey have the keenest eyesight in nature with rapid focus and superior depth perception.

Some examples of birds of prey include hawks, vultures, and eagles. They tend to have large, curved beaks and sharp talons that are very powerful to actively catch other vertebrates (mainly mammals, reptiles and other smaller birds).

Many raptors get help in flight by hitching a ride on rising currents of air called thermals. A thermal forms when the sun heats up the ground in the morning; Air near the ground heats up as well and rises. A raptor can spread its wings and float upwards on this air, soaring effortlessly in circles. It can travel for miles by riding one thermal after another, hardly ever flapping a wing.

Find a Red-tailed Hawk



Red-tailed Hawks soar above open fields, slowly turning circles on their broad, rounded wings. Other times you'll see them atop telephone poles with their eyes fixed on the ground to catch the movements of a vole or a rabbit then swooping down to capture his prey in his talons. The Red-tailed Hawk has a thrilling, raspy scream.

Find a Red-shouldered Hawk:



Red-shouldered Hawks soar over forests or perch on tree branches or utility wires. Its rising, whistled *kee-rah* is a

distinctive sound of the forest. They hunt small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles either from perches or while flying.

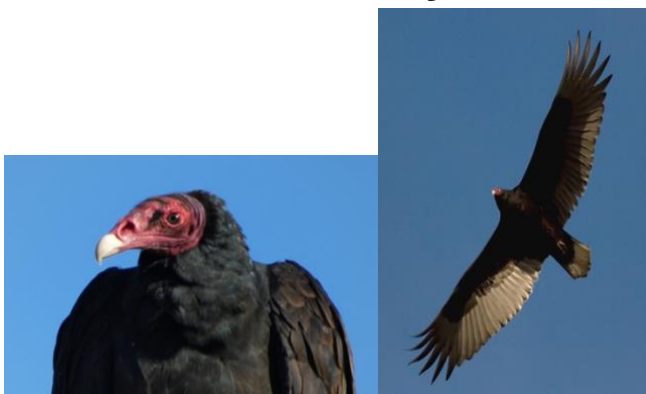
Find an Eagle:



Eagles can fly up to 30 m.p.h. and can dive at speeds up to 100 m.p.h.

- Bald eagles develop the characteristic white head and tail feathers by 4-6 years of age.
- Fledgling eagles learn to fly at three months of age.
- Eagles live can 30 years or more in the wild.
- Male bald eagles are smaller than females.

Find some Turkey Vultures!



Globally, the species is made up of several million birds. They feed predominantly on carrion (dead and putrefying flesh). Most turkey vultures live for 10–16 years in the wild; some can live as long as 30 years in captivity. While most birds are not known to have a keen sense of smell, the turkey vulture's large nostrils, sensitive to minute amounts of ethyl mercaptan, lead them to rotting corpses a mile away.

Find a Wild Turkey:



When more settlers started showing up in Wisconsin in the 1800s, they cleared huge swaths of land for farming, leaving wild turkeys without the forest cover they needed to survive. They're not able to fly very far (less than 100 yards), turkeys roost in trees each night to keep away from the bobcats, foxes, coyotes, and owls that hunt them. By

about the early 1900s, turkeys were nearly extinct from the state, Between 1929 and 1938, the state of Wisconsin released nearly 3,000 pen-raised turkeys into the wild, but the flock soon disappeared. In the 1950s, another batch of turkeys from Pennsylvania was released and did well enough to hold some limited hunting seasons, but still didn't restore the species across the state. One problem appeared to be the lack of "wildness" in the flocks they released. The birds raised in captivity didn't have the same survival instincts as wild turkeys and couldn't seem to grow their flocks on their own. Since that initial group of 39 turkeys was set loose — with hundreds more added in the following years — the population has grown to more than 350,000. They pretty much inhabit every single county now."

Find a Henslows Sparrow.



Henslow's Sparrows live among dense grasses and spend much of their time on the ground so they can be a tough bird

to find. While the short, insect like song does not stand out in any way, it's still the best way to zero in on this species in their habitat of wet weedy pastures. Watch closely and try to spot them sitting just below the tops of grass stalks and small shrubs, giving the impression of a particularly plump cluster of grass seeds.

- The Henslow's Sparrow has the simplest and shortest song of any North American songbird, a thin *tze-lick* that David Sibley has described as a "feeble hiccup."
 - Henslow's Sparrows sing most actively at dawn and dusk, but sometimes sing all night long.
 - Henslow's Sparrows take flight only with great reluctance so don't forget to look in tall grass rather than in a tree.
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Find a Kentucky Warbler



Kentucky Warblers are birds of the forest understory; find gap

where light penetrates into the forest and look at the ground rather than up in the trees. The only song this bird sings is a series of 4-8 loud, rich, rolling notes "preet, preet, preet, preet." Can perch high when singing, otherwise he stays near the ground.

Hike Reflections: At the end of your hike read and reflect on the following true story:

Out of His infinite love, God has given us laws and teachings to live by. These laws and teachings are like lamps that illumine our path. Through their light, we are able to see how it is that God wants us to live. As we obey His commandments, we draw closer to Him; otherwise we would find ourselves in darkness and we lose our way. So it is that out of our love for God and our desire to attain His good pleasure, we obey the laws and teachings He has so graciously given to us. Love for God moves us to act in ways that are pleasing to Him.

Haji Muhammad learned a big lesson from Baha'u'llah. He became illumined, enkindled and strong in faith. Haji Muhammad was an excellent marksman. His bullets never missed their targets. He could even hit a small bird in full flight while galloping on horseback. One day, with his rifle on his shoulder, he came upon a group of Baha'is who were on an outing with Baha'u'llah and decided to join them.

When Baha'u'llah saw that Haji Muhammad was going to use his rifle, He told him not to kill innocent birds. Haji Muhammad did not pay any attention to what Baha'u'llah said because his mind was on shooting, which he loved very much. So, he continued shooting at every bird he saw. But he was quite surprised to find that none of his bullets hit. He shot once, he shot twice, he shot many times - but did not bring down even one bird. He shot at big birds and at little birds, without any success.

The group was returning from the outing when a large, beautiful, white bird caught Haji Muhammad's eye. It was so big that it could not fly quickly, and Haji Muhammad thought that surely it would be easy to hit this one. His first shot missed. Then he fired four more times, but he missed every time. In a panic the frightened bird flew near them. Haji Muhammad thought that now he could not possibly miss. He fired two more shots, but the bird escaped.

Haji Muhammad was astonished, and he began to think about the whole incident. All of sudden, he understood something very important. He realized that Baha'u'llah had given him a clear command, but in his preoccupation with his own wishes and desired, he had ignored Baha'u'llah. That day Haji

Muhammad made a firm decision to obey the commandments of God at all times.

Why do you think Baha'u'llah told Haji Muhammad not to kill innocent birds?

Are birds important to our planet?

- 1. Birds control insect populations. They feed on insects and caterpillars that can damage crops, gardens, forests and natural areas.**
- 2. Birds control pests. Hawks and owls feed on mice, rats and other rodents which helps to control the numbers of these pests.**
- 3. Birds disperse seeds. Seeds spread by bird dropping allow new trees and other plants to grow without people helping to plant them.**
- 4. Birds pollinate plants. Nectar-drinking birds like hummingbirds pollinate plants as they visit flowers seeking nectar. Plants, crops and trees wouldn't grow without birds and insects to pollinate them.**
- 5. Birds belong to the food chain. They and their eggs provide food for predators, including other birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and humans.**
- 6. Birds like vultures and some hawks eat roadkill and dead livestock. If they didn't feed on dead animals the horrible smell would last a long time.**
- 7. Birds offer enjoyment. Many people get great joy watching and listening to birds. Since birds are widespread, they can be enjoyed everywhere.**

- 8. Birds have cultural significance. In the past people observed bird migration and planted and harvested their crops accordingly. Bird feathers have also been used in sacred ceremonies in some Maya, Inca, Aztec and North American Indian cultures**
- 9. Birds help monitor the environment. Birds are sensitive to disturbances in the environment. Therefore, by observing bird behavior and comparing numbers of each bird species from year to year can monitor the health of our planet. Around 1911, miners started carrying canaries into the mines with them, and they quickly became a metaphor for warning signs – when the canary keels over, it's time to evacuate the mine before you become the next victim. Another example is the beautiful Peregrine Falcon who started becoming extinct because their eggs became so thin the baby birds did not develop. They found that the use of the insecticide DDT that was being used to control mosquito populations was the cause. It is now recognized as a bio-accumulative toxic chemical and is banned in the U.S.**

End your special bird hike with a special prayer of praise to God for manifesting these signs of oneness in all the realities of life!

“All praise, O my God, be to Thee Who art the Source of all glory and majesty, of greatness and honor, of sovereignty and dominion and of loftiness and grace, of awe and power...there

is no God but Thee, the Unconstrained the All-Subduing”.
Baha’u’llah

A tree identifying Hike!

Black Walnut!

A deciduous tree capable of reaching up to 130 feet tall! The black walnut has serrated compound leaves and furrowed, dark-colored bark.



Black walnut timber is very highly prized for its straight, dark, heavy, strong, fine-grained heartwood, which is used to make

fine furniture, valuable gunstocks, flooring, oars, cabinets and coffins.

Black walnuts have a rich history as well. They were used to treat problems with the kidneys, gastrointestinal system, ulcers, toothaches, syphilis, and snake/spider bites. Native Americans used black walnut medicinally to treat skin disorders.

Black walnuts are eaten by mice and squirrels. These rodents commonly store the nuts in caches, then fail to eat them all. In this way, they distribute the nuts away from the parent plant and facilitate its spread.

The roots contain "juglone," a chemical that is lethal to and prevents the growth of many other plants within the tree's rooting zone.

Hackberry Trees!



A fast grower that can reach up to 130 feet tall, the common hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) has oval-shaped leaves and grey bark that is mostly smooth. Hackberries produce small drupes that are popular among wildlife. **All hackberries are edible and highly nutritious.** They have been consumed by humans for millennia and are one of the first known foods that humans have eaten and stored. Caches of hackberries have been found in ancient cave sites. It is no wonder that early people were eating hackberries.

The tree is the only host for the hackberry emperor butterfly. They are associated with the earth and nature and symbolize **new beginnings.**



In folklore, the Hackberry tree is **a symbol of wisdom.** Its longevity and hardy nature have made it a fixture in stories that emphasize the importance of deep roots and a strong foundation. Artists have often used the tree's silhouette to represent steadfastness in the face of time's passage.

Oak Trees!



Oak trees are mature at 75 years and have an average lifespan of 150-250 years. However, the oldest oak trees are over 1,000 years old! **Acorns** are the fruit of oak trees. There are hundreds of species of oak trees around the world, with about 90 oak trees native to the US. Acorns are easy to harvest. They store well and are relatively simple to process. **One oak produces more than 2,000 acorns every year**, but only one in 10,000 acorns will manage to develop into oak tree. Raw acorns are considered unsafe due to their tannins, which are toxic if consumed in high amounts. However, you can remove the tannins by boiling or soaking. **Properly prepared acorns are perfectly edible** and full of nutrients like iron and manganese. In times of war, some soldiers used ground acorns as a coffee substitute. Acorn coffee was made during the

American Civil War, and the Germans made their own version during the World Wars

The Oak has been called the “king of the woods”. Oak symbolizes **strength, endurance, power and ancient wisdom**. The oak tree's strong roots penetrate deeply into the earth, anchoring it firmly in place. Like the backbone of the earth, its trunk rises tall and proud, branching out into a canopy of leaves that provide shelter and protection to all those beneath it. Oak trees continue to be symbols of strength and wisdom that remind us of our divine and enduring connection to God.

Oaks secrete a substance similar to nectar to attract pollinators and help protect the tree from harmful insects and pests. As a result, oak trees aren't prone to many pests and diseases.

Unlike many other trees, oak trees have not gone extinct during such a long stretch of time. This is mainly because their seeds are cased in hard shells. Plus, acorns and leaves are coated with tannic acid, which prevents fungi and insects from harming them.

The Stripped Hairstreak butterfly is common around Oaks.





Mourning cloak butterfly Unlike most butterflies, mourning cloaks are not fans of pretty flowers. Instead, as both adults and caterpillars, these guys prefer trees. Adults feed on tree sap, rotting fruit, and even mud or dung to extract minerals.

When you have identified the different trees take out your journal and revisit the tree you loved the most. You could take a team of people with you. Collectively draw and color your tree and bless your tree with a beautiful prayer.

Spontaneous Nature Gratitude Hike!

We have a brief opportunity pass on to our children our love for this Earth and to tell stories of our times in nature. “..Behold the signs of thy Lord’s mercy in every created thing, and see the spreading rays of His Names and Attributes throughout all the realm of being...” Abdu’l-Baha

A spontaneous forest gratitude walk with kids involves using senses to notice nature's gifts (sounds, smells, sights) and verbally expressing

thanks for them, fostering calm, connection, and deeper appreciation for the environment, boosting well-being, and strengthening family bonds through shared mindful observation and simple acts of appreciation like thanking a tree or the wind.

Things you may ask during the walk:

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- **Ask “What’s happening?” Feel the wind! Can you feel the wind on your skin? Which way is the wind blowing? What things in nature are moving because of the wind. Notice if there are signs of a strong wind at one time.**
- **Look for signs of animals that have been nearby, perhaps you see nuts that are gnawed or half eaten, bark on trees that have been nibbled off. Perhaps you see tracks of animals or animal droppings.**
- **Listen, what do you hear? Look, what do you see? Ask children to spot vibrant colors, different leaf shapes, or hidden insects.**
- **Touch, what do you feel? Smell, what do you smell?**
- **Watch for insects; when you find one observe what they are doing. Don’t touch them, just let them**

continue to do what God programmed them to do on this planet.

- Do you see some seeds, nuts, berries, pinecones, twirly little maple seeds? Find seeds that stick to your clothing, or seeds that are carried by the wind. Find a small seed, then find a large seed.
- What does the sky look like. What do the clouds tell you? Do you think it will rain? Are the clouds white or gray or wispy? What is the weather? Is it hot, warm, cool or cold?

Now think of gratitude. How would you walk through the forest or prairie with gratitude? What did you see today that brought you delight?

Let's say a prayer of gratitude to God for all we witnessed in this beautiful walk.

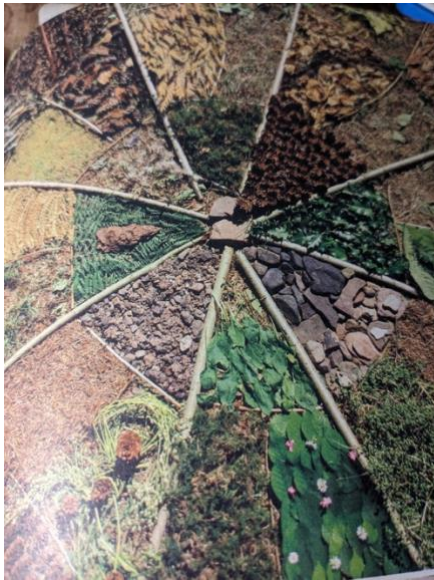
"Father, we ask Thy blessings for this food that has come from Thee, the source of all things. May it produce in us peace, harmony, health and love towards all".

Station 3: Crafts!

Mandala leaf and pebble art!

Create something beautiful for others to discover and enjoy. It is a circular geometric design originating in India, used in

Hinduism and Buddhism to symbolize the universe. It is also a tool for meditation. It starts from a central point expanding outwards. Each shape carries a spiritual meaning like growth, unity or the cosmos. It could also be free form without restrictions so creativity can flourish. The idea and pictures are from Wild Days, Outdoor Play for Adventurers, by Richard Irvine. It could also be used to develop elevated conversation about the signs of oneness manifest in all of creation.



Make Nature Faces:

- 1. Precut cardboard ovals for the faces and let the kids and creativity lead them. Go on a nature walk to collect various leaves, twigs, petals, seeds, grasses and other interesting natural items. The faces, when complete,**

could be attached to a stick and used for a play that they collectively create. Perhaps they could perform at night around the campfire. The following is a script of what you could say to introduce the craft: God created this beautiful world. He created YOU! Each one of us is a trustee or steward of this planet. God is trusting us to take good care of this earth. As you create your nature face think about what things you will do on this planet to show you care and to make God smile.



Play with clay!

This is fun for the kids and adults. Go to a local pottery store and pick up a 10-pound bag of clay. You can get clay that dries in earthy clay color. Store it in an airtight bag. Look at the sample of ideas below! This idea is from

Forest School Adventure. Outdoor Skills and Play for Children by Naomi Walmsley and Dan Westall.



Build an A-Frame shelter. This is a gross-motor team building activity, “God loveth those who are working in His path in groups, for they are the solid foundation...in groups, united and bound together, supporting one another”.

You need to bring some very strong rope, so you are able to secure the sturdy frame for the structure. Note how they start with the larger branches and secure them on the top.



Station 4: Zero Waste: Thinking deeply about how to care for our planet. Taking care of the planet because it's an expression of God's love for us brings us joy. Baha'u'llah said we should be "content with little and be freed from all inordinate desire". He also said we should not take from the world more than we need.

Zero Waste: Read book below on Zero Waste (at the end of this document" and make tie-dye napkins.

Materials Needed:

- White cloth napkins (pre-washed, left damp)
- Rubber bands or string

- Fabric dye (or diluted food coloring for less permanence)
- Plastic gloves (for adults/older kids)
- Plastic bags (Ziploc) or a tray/bucket
- Plastic sheeting/tarp to protect surfaces (optional, but helpful)

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. **Prep the Napkins:** Dampen white cloth napkins and lay flat.
2. **Create Your Pattern:**
 1. **Swirl:** Pinch the center and twist into a spiral, securing with bands.
 2. **Scrunch/Fan:** Fold accordion-style or scrunch randomly and bind with bands/string.
3. **Apply Color:** Wear gloves, apply dye (or food coloring) to different sections.
4. **Let it Sit:** Place in a plastic bag or cover and let sit for 8-24 hours to set (or microwave briefly per dye instructions).
5. **Rinse & Reveal:** Rinse under cold water until clear, remove bands, and wash gently.
6. **Dry:** Air dry

Story for Zero Waste station:

Welcome to our Zero waste home!



Today we are going to share a story of a girl who went zero waste in her home. We will walk through some of the things she did. As we walk the zero waste path think about whether or not you would like to do this for the health of our planet!

Are you ready for this adventure?



Our adventure begins!

This is Lauren Singer



Over the past three years, this is the garbage she produced! It fits in a 16 ounce Mason Jar just like the one I am holding!



**The average American tosses nearly
4.3 pound of waste per day! Yikes!
That is 1,569 pounds per year! Below
is what our landfills are looking like!
YUK**



What if *you* could produce little or no trash? What if *you* followed in the footsteps of Laruen Singer?



First, she studied environmental science in college. She learned about pollution and developed a passion to learn everything she could about how to take care of this planet.



This is one of her classes. Do you like to learn about the world? Do you like to be outside?

She joined protests; she thought she was doing good by protesting.



But then she realized the greatest thing she could do was to change her own habits. By changing her own habits she would inspire others to do the same. She decided to live a zero waste lifestyle by cutting plastic out of her life.

She said she took baby steps, little-by-little over time.



Her first step was to stop using plastic bags.

She brings a reusable bag and non-plastic water bottle everywhere she goes. So when she is at a grocery store and they ask, “Paper or plastic”. She says, “I brought my own bag”.



Could you do this?

She uses bamboo toothbrushes instead of plastic. She makes her own toothpaste.



She says it takes very little time to make her own toothpaste compared to going to a store and buying toothpaste in *plastic tubes*. Imagine if everyone did this! We could seriously cut down on trash!

She refuses to use anything disposable like straws or plastic utensils, plates and cups or plastic water bottles in her home. She even refuses straws or plastic utensils and plastic water bottles at restaurants. She brings her own non-plastic alternatives.



Could you say “no!”

She used CLOTH NAPKINS



Paper is great because it's compostable, but it still takes a lot of trees to supply everyone with paper napkins. Instead of a paper napkin use a cloth napkin. This napkin can be used over and

over again instead of being thrown away after one use.



She eats whole foods. No processed or packaged foods. She says since she has been eating this way she feels great!



Imagine eating no packaged or processed food! Think about how much trash we could keep out of the landfill!





She packed her own lunch in zero waste containers.

Before she left her house, she made sure she had a reusable bottle with her. She had learned in college that 60 million water bottles are landfilled each day! Plastic has a very low recycle rate. Only 9% is actually recycled.

COMPOST



She composted her food scraps. Composting returns natural items like food scraps and paper back to the soil where it will break down. We are going to do this together so you can see how easy it is. First, let's pretend that we just ate a snack of apples and bananas.

- 1. Shred the apple**
- 2. Cut the banana into small strips.**
- 3. Put this into a container**
- 4. Go outside and compost**

Walking the Zero Waste path takes mindfulness and courage. It is an exciting challenge. It will be a fun adventure since it will help heal our planet! Do you think you could do some of the things we talked about today? Would you walk the Zero waste path?



Station 6: Service Project:

Our cook has many different very important ways to serve our camp in the kitchen. Sign up to help prepare a vegetarian meal. Why try vegetarian? Climate scientists overwhelmingly agree that shifting to vegetarian or plant-based diets significantly mitigates climate change by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, land use, and water consumption, with some studies showing it's a more impactful individual action than reducing flights or buying electric cars. These diets lower emissions because producing meat, especially red meat, requires vast amounts of land, water, and feed grains, plus ruminants produce potent methane. Abdu-I-Baha said:

“Looking after one’s health is done with two intentions. Man may take good care of his body for the purpose of satisfying his personal wishes. Or, he may look after his health with the good intention of serving humanity and of living long enough to perform his duty toward mankind. The latter is most commendable.”

Menu:

Veggie Lasagna/ pesto lasagna

Large salad

Whole grain rolls

Healthy cookies

Tea/coffee and Hot Chocolate

Morning:

Orange infused steel cut oats

Pancakes

Oatmeal

Eggs

Toast with peanut/butter (check for allergies first) or jelly

Sliced oranges

Applesauce

Orange juice, milk, nut or rice milk, coffee, tea

Lunch:

Soup

Salad

Baked potato bar

Make your own cheese and lettuce sandwich

Supper:

Tacos

Corn tortillas

Guacamole

Cabbage/jicama salad

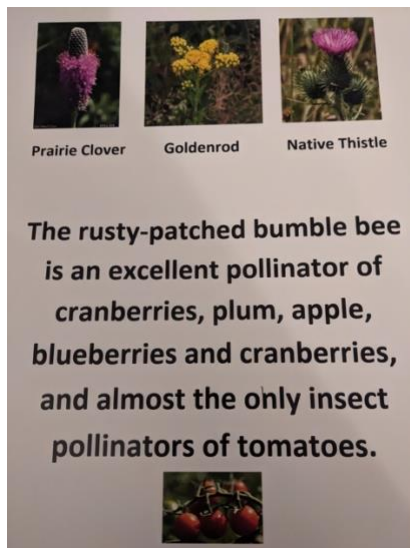
Make smores around the campfire for desert

Station 7: Read segments of Butterfly Eyes and other Secrets of the Meadow by Joyce Sidman. It is a beautiful book to increase curiosity about meadow ecosystems. Depending on the ages of your group you can shorten some poems and explanations.

Prairie restoration is a powerful tool for climate change mitigation by boosting carbon sequestration (especially underground), managing water (reducing floods/drought impacts), increasing biodiversity, and cooling local environments, complementing forests by storing carbon more resiliently in deep roots.

Activity that inspires children to plant some native seeds:

To make clay seed balls, mix 5 parts red powdered clay, 3 parts compost, and 1-part seeds, adding water gradually until it's a cookie-dough consistency, then roll into balls and let dry for 24-48 hours. This simple recipe protects seeds, providing a nutrient-rich, protective home that breaks down in the soil to help native plants grow, perfect for guerrilla gardening or kids' projects.



We chose seeds for flowers that helped our endangered Rusty Patch Bumble Bee. As a neighborhood we used our yards as corridors for this bee so there were multiple sources of food for him.

Station 8: Storytelling (Short Stories) and elevated conversation. Divide into groups. Each group will have one story. Read the story and collectively share the insights gained. The stories will be short and sweet so all members, from the very young to old can enjoy collectively.

1. Carl and the Meaning of Life by Deborah Freedman

Every creature in this book has an important job, all need each other, and our world needs them. Everything is connected. How do you help the earth? This book would be fun acted out for possible Storytime around the fire at night.

2. Listen to the Language of Trees by Tara Kelly

3. The World is Ours to Cherish by Mary Annaise Heglal

Station 10: Creating an enlightened village. Let's create a village; a village that Abdu'l-Baha established! The village was named Adasiyyah. Pre-make a sign with this name on it so they can see the word and remember the name.

You need two huge pieces of cardboard (from a furniture store, they are happy to share their huge boxes). One piece you should keep whole so you can set it on a picnic table. The second piece should be cut into smaller pieces, so each child has a good supply. You also need a big box of scissors, tape, glue, crayons, markers, string, small sticks, leaves, acorns, etc. You can read 1-8 below and tell each child they should start making their village by constructing their house out of sticks, cardboard and playdough. This "Mud Playdough" should be made ahead of time as it is cooked. The kids enjoy it as it is like playing with mud!

Ingredients:

- **1.5 cups flour**
- **1/2 cup salt**
- **2 tsp cream of tartar**
- **2 tbsp oil (vegetable or canola)**
- **1 cup boiling water (add slowly)**
- **Sieved dirt or coffee grounds (optional)**

Instructions:

- 1. Mix Dry:** In a saucepan, combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar.
- 2. Add Wet:** Stir in oil and water.
- 3. Cook:** Place over medium heat, stirring constantly until the dough thickens and pulls away from the sides of the pan, forming a ball.
- 4. Cool & Knead:** Turn onto a floured surface, let it cool slightly, then knead until smooth.
- 5. Add Dirt:** Knead in your sieved dirt or coffee grounds until you reach the desired color and texture.

If you are short on time, you could also have them pick out their home from these ceramic houses I found at the dollar store. Also note in the picture I

have used Spanish moss from the dollar store to make it look like farmland that needed tending.



Tell them they are officially farmers. They all are working together to make a village. They will share resources if needed. They need to also set up their gardens. They learn from the script below that their first crops were wheat and barley. They could use green construction paper or flatten out some mud play dough and put dried weeds in it to

represent the wheat and barley. Then read the more of the script. Now they will use the clothespins and thread and pipe cleaners and black markers to make themselves and their family.



They also could make a silo for their grain with the cardboard. Then they can make fruit trees and use different colored clay for all the fruit they will be growing. They can design circle areas where they can gather for consolation and prayers. Then they can make a lagoon with blue clay and put in trees

that surrounded it to prevent malaria. This project will be super exciting to them. They will learn wonderful things about how Abdu'l-Baha built a sustainable village and reflect on those spiritual elements that transformed relationships with the outer community.

- 1. Abdu'l-Bahá bought neglected land in 1901,**
- 2. Then He guided Bahá'í families from Persia to settle there, transforming it from barren scrub into a thriving farm.**
- 3. The village became known as 'Adasiyyah.**
- 4. A great deal of effort was needed to prepare the land and the average daily temperature was around 102 degrees so it was stifling from June to September. Abdu'l-Baha told them that God would gradually make the climate more comfortable.**
- 5. Simple tools were used to prepare the land in the beginning then after a while they were able to get draft animals and ploughs.**

- 6. They also had to build homes to provide for basic needs of their families. Initially the homes were made from mud brick.**
- 7. They began by planting wheat and barley. The good thing about the environment was they could plant year-round and making double cropping feasible. Abdu'l-Baha would advise them of specific crops he recommended for each season and assured them of bumper harvests and great bounties.**
- 8. Before they started to cultivate the land Abdu'l-Baha told them to consult amongst themselves to divide the land. Every farmer was to take charge of a certain area of farmland in proportion to the size of his family. Each allotment was about 8 acres plus 9 to grow food crops and fodder for the livestock. Over time they were quite productive.**

- 9. There was occasional raiding from the surrounding community; Abdu'l-Baha improved security by encouraging them to build bonds of friendship and unity with the wider community.**
- 10. During the first world war drought conditions were caused by the fighting. Abdu'l-Baha foresaw famine. He asked the farmers to empty their granaries except for that which they needed to feed their families. He also asked them to purchase all the grains from farmers in the area. A train of 200 camels was dispatched to Haifa and Akka. It was distributed among the local population to prevent starvation.**
- 11. This humanitarian effort resulted in Abdu'l-Baha being knighted by the British. He accepted the honor but never used the title. After this the farmers were able to diversify**

their crops. They grew vegetables, eggplant, lentils and broad beans.

12. Then they added fruit trees, grapes, oranges, lemons, tangerines, grapefruit, lime and sweet limes. They planted broad beans around the pomegranate trees. Some were used fresh or dried for human consumption but most of the plants were ploughed into the soil while still green to improve soil texture and fertility.

13. Abdu'l-Baha introduced bananas into the region and showed them a special water saving method to plant them. No one in the region knew how to eat them. First, they ate the outer skin not knowing to remove it.

- 14. Soon the banana crops brought them profit and greatly helped the farmers stay in business.**

- 15. In the early years malaria was rampant, but they were instructed to plant a certain type of eucalyptus around the lagoon that produced quinine in its leaves and branches. This acted as a deterrent to the malarial parasite. Each farmer planted 10-30 saplings around the lagoon.**

- 16. The trees grew quickly and sucked up large quantities of the mosquito-infected water. Gradually malaria declined and eventually disappeared. The trees had a cooling effect on the area and their lumber was used in ceiling trusses.**

- 17. Crop rotation, and diversified crops were also encouraged by the Master along with diversifying livestock. They reared cattle, sheep, goats, poultry and pigeons. (if you have a source of inexpensive animals that would be fun for them to use in their village, or they can fashion them out of clay.**

- 18. Abdu'l-Baha advised them on the social development of the community and on how to treat their neighbors and establish bonds of friendship with them. When the farmers sought His advice, he would smile and suggest they all sit down and pray together, and consult on the resolution of the problem to ensure that unity of the community was maintained no matter what.**

- 19. The Master emphasized implementing moral and spiritual values in day-to-day work. At its**

peak there were around 1,000 Baha'is in the area. In the early days education of children took place at home. It was the task of parents and older members of the family to impart educational information. At a later stage classes were set up. Children were taught both Arabic and English so they could easily mix with the local people. Most of the curriculum was based on the Persian and Arabic writings of the Central Figures of the Baha'i Faith. Most children could easily recite 30 tablets of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha.

20. Sadly, in the 1960's Jordanian land reforms forced them to leave that area however the principles and practices that Abdu'l-Baha set before the world relevant examples of a just, productive and sustainable development pattern that could be used as we think about

restoration of land, sequestering CO2 and the moral development of humanity.

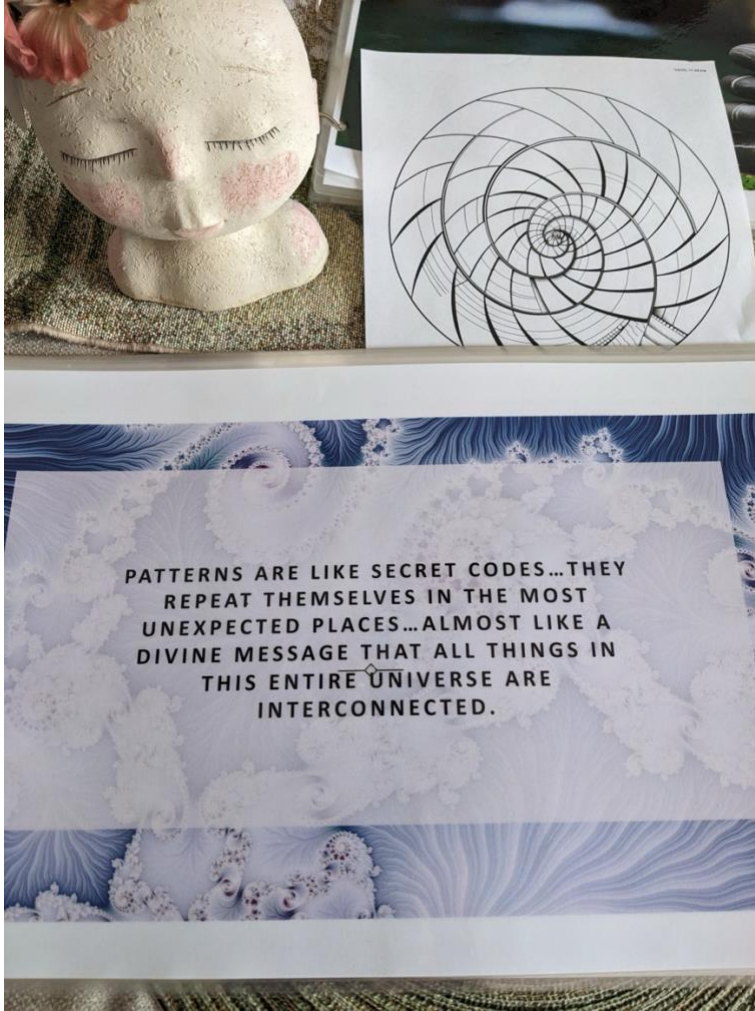
Station 10: It's always fun to have a quiet coloring table. "Patterns in Nature" is the theme for this station. This will be fun for parents and children together.

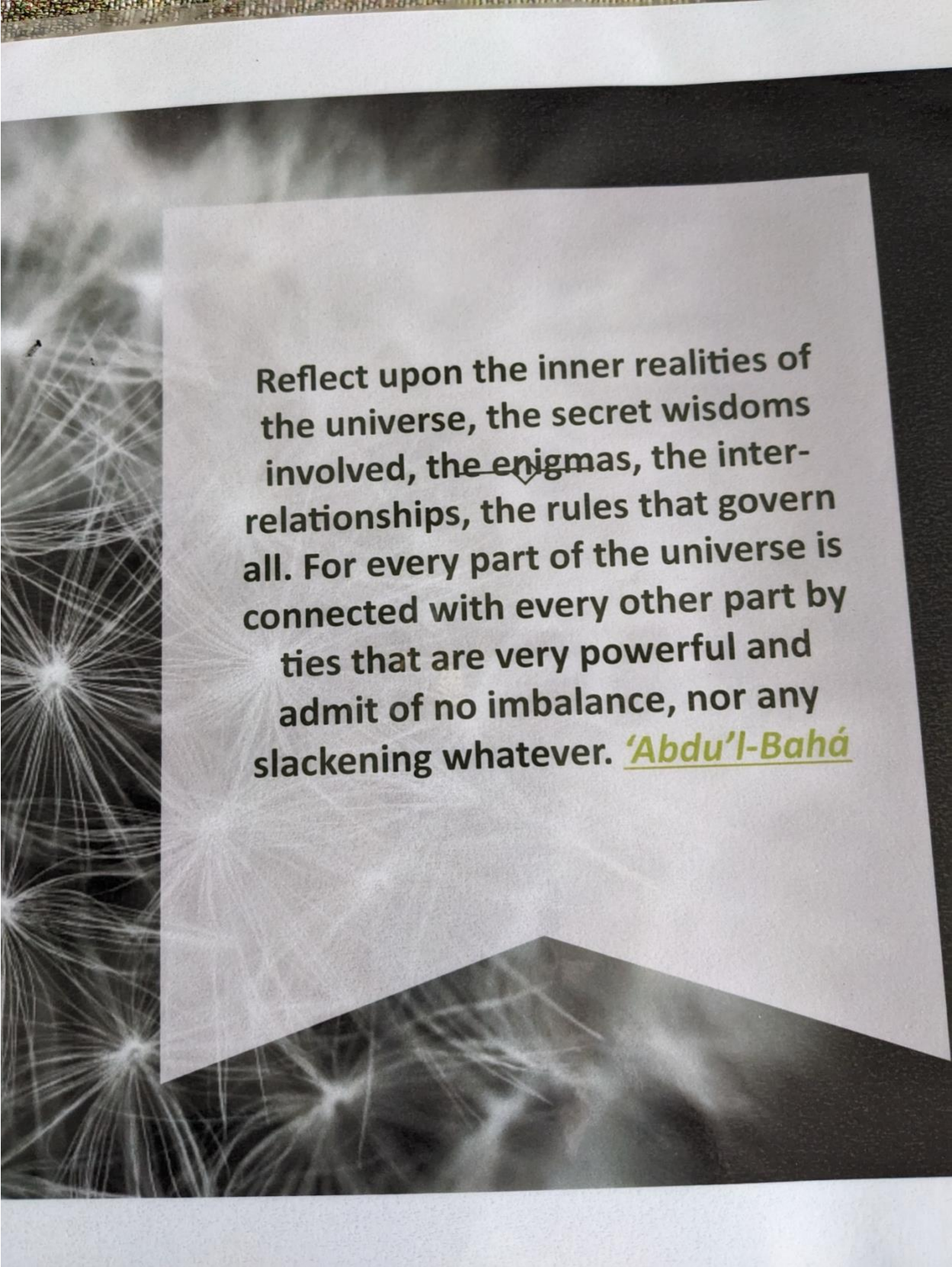
A large piece of cardboard would be great on a picnic table, so the woodgrain doesn't hurt their drawing. You need a good amount of white paper, colored pencils, crayons and pens. Inspirational books to inspire their drawing include the following:

Swirl by Swirl Spirals in Nature by Joyce Sidman

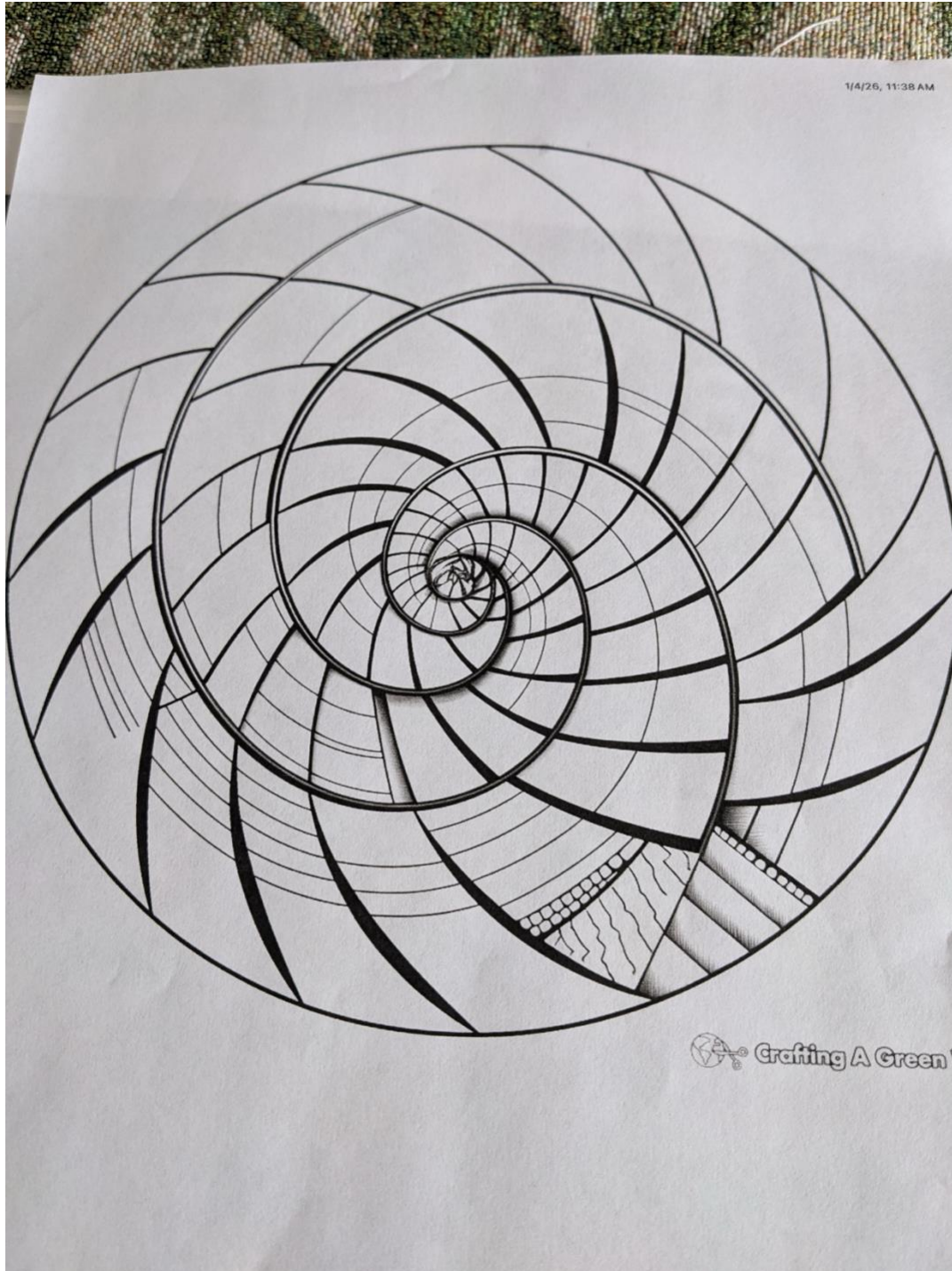
We are Branches: A picture book about branching by Joyce Sidman

Inspirational quotes to put at the table:





Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the inter-relationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever. 'Abdu'l-Bahá



Also have spirals and shapes that they can just color if they don't want to create their

own shapes. There are lots of free downloads online.

Nighttime gathering around the fire.

First make smores! Parents and children working together to roast their marshmallows and make certain everyone has a turn and is safe.

Then singing! At one of our eco-camps the youth created an amazing song about marshmallows and how happy it made them. It was amazing. They stayed up really late working on the song.

Also, gathering around the fire is a wonderful time to read inspiring quotes and prayers.

I love the quote about Faith by Ruhiyyih Khanum which goes well with our camp theme.

THIS IS FAITH

By Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum

“I am convinced that the greatest gift of a believer is faith; greater than intelligence, greater than character, for by faith we sink or swim, live or die, and it is almost the sole cause of our ultimate achievement and eternal life.”

This is Faith:

**To walk where there is no path
To breathe where there is no air
To see where there is not light-**

This is Faith.

**To cry out in the silence,
The silence of the night,
And hearing no echo believe
And believe again and again-**

This is Faith.

To hold pebbles and see jewels

To raise sticks and see forests

To smile with weeping eyes-

This is Faith.

To say: "God, I believe" when others deny,

"I hear" when there is no answer,

"I see" though naught is seen-

This is Faith.

And the fierce love in the heart,

The savage love that cries

Hidden Thou art yet there!

Veil Thy face and mute Thy tongue

**Yet I see and hear Thee, Love,
Beat me down to the bare earth,
Yet I rise and love Thee, Love !"**

This is Faith.

**Another amazing quote about Hand of the
Cause Dr Faizi:**

“Faizi was of the view that we must educate ourselves and find time to tune our senses ‘to see harvests in a grain and in a drop an ocean’. He would at times be so alive and sensitive to the world of nature that a wave of exhilaration would wash over him”. Page 270 in the book entitled, Faizi.

