

A Reflection – Summer Series #1 – July 5, 2026 – Little Current UC – Psalm 113: 3

Summer Sabbath Series STARTING - #1 SUNFLOWERS.....

The Inventions of Summer

Revised 2026

Four Devotions for Summer.

The Summer Sabbath Series 2020, Revised 2026: The Inventions of Summer is written by Janice MacLean, Host of the Prayer Bench.

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INTRODUCTION

The Inventions of Summer

The poet, Mary Oliver gazes on the splendour of roses and declares there is no end to the "inventions of summer." This phrase, from her poem, "The Roses" in her book Devotions, The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver, prompted me to reflect on the "inventions of summer" that inspire me.

I thought of many:

- There is nothing I love more than a field of sunflowers and seeing them turn their face to the sky. They pronounce blessing by their presence.
- I can't wait for the first taste of garden-fresh string beans. They teach willingness and ask me to name my prayers of thanksgiving and ponder how I return blessing to Earth.
- I remember catching fireflies in a mason jar. Do you? Fireflies speak a language of love. This prompts prayers for others.
- Then there are mosquitoes. "Mosquitoes? You say!" Yes, these mosquitoes teach us to pray in hard times.

What are your plans for summer? In these days that is not an easy question to answer. In the midst of uncertainty, I offer this small booklet of devotions and prayer practices to nurture and enrich your summer-time space whether you are home for a staycation, at the cottage, out on your back deck or sitting in your most comfortable chair.

Or perhaps you are part of a community of faith that takes a Sabbath break over the summer. This small booklet offers devotions for you to use on four Sundays. Know you are joined in prayer with many others. Together, apart.

The pattern for our Summer Sabbath is simple. We begin with a scripture you can read and “inwardly digest” or you can spend time with the short focussing verse. I wrote a reflection for you to ponder. Take your time and enjoy slow reading. An evocative question or two might lead you to your own reflection. You might want to learn by heart the breath prayer. It’s a short phrase you can use throughout the day/week. The spiritual practice leads you into different experiences of prayer. Use the white spaces or your journal for drawing, doodling, writing a poem or a prayer or journaling your thoughts and experiences as you explore the “inventions of summer.”

Enjoy your Summer Sabbath!

Janice

Host of the Prayer Bench

REFLECTION.....

July 5, 2026 – for Little Current UCPC

1. SUNFLOWERS: Pronouncing a Blessing

“From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised.”

-- Psalm 113:3

The poet Mary Oliver calls the sun the “best preacher that ever was.”¹ That makes a field of sunflowers the best congregation ever. Don’t you just love their bright colour and how they turn themselves to face the sun? They make a journey every day.

Some varieties of sunflowers grow over 12 feet tall. I think they are elegant. They are also practical. Sunflowers are used for medicine, dye, food, and oil. They attract bees. Deer find them tasty when the plant is young. (This might not be a good thing if you are not a deer.) Birds enjoy the seeds; one sunflower can contain up to 2000 seeds. Artists love their uniqueness.

Sunflowers are one of my favourite “inventions of summer.” They spark awe in me. Their turning with the sun makes me think they are very good at praising the Maker. They are practiced in blessing.

In Psalm 113, the Psalmist thinks the Sun’s daily journey across the sky is a source of wonder. With the sunrise we awaken to the day and look expectantly to new beginnings, fresh possibilities and novel joys. With the sunset we say thanks, we let go all that is undone, deal with what is unsettled in us and seek rest in the stillness of the evening.

Like sunflowers who follow the sun, we are part of this rhythm. This is our daily prayer. We receive the day with the intention of seeing the Divine in every place, in every creature, in every hour. Here is God. And here. And here. God is pouring God into sunflowers and into all that is around us. We are not alone. Blessed be!

Each day is different. Some days it is easy to be delighted and bless the Maker. It’s delightful to be part of the journey from the rising of the sun to its setting. Some days our feelings are ragged, and our emotions run deep. These days make it difficult to trust in that Sustaining Mystery. We find it hard to see the sun.

Blessing is a choice we make every day. When we rise up and when we lay down and all the moments in between. Indeed, we can bless the Maker in all things and every situation. Some days it just takes more effort, more practice.

What are the ways you bless the Maker? What helps you notice the Presence of God in all that is around you? What is your morning practice of welcoming the day? through the journey of the day? when evening comes? Might you find a sign or a symbol of Sustaining

Mystery as you go through this day? As you set your face to the sun today, how many ways will you find to praise the Maker?

Sing praises to the Maker of the Universe.

“Pronouncing a blessing.” It has an old-fashioned air to it, doesn’t it? What images come to mind?

The work of pronouncing a blessing belongs to all and it isn’t limited to the human species. The sunset pronounced a blessing as it dipped in glory. The friend who called or texted “just because” pronounced a blessing on your friendship.

Blessings call out goodness in ourselves, in others, and in the world around us. “Bless you, Sun, for you are faithful in your daily journey across the sky.” “Bless you, Sunflower, for you bring cheer to many hearts.” “Bless you human one, may you be well this day.”
Pronounce blessings today.

Bless the experiences and encounters of this day remembering the Sustaining Presence of the One with us in all times, in all places, and in all circumstances.

Bless the earth, its creatures and all the elements, as you come across them today. Affirm their essential goodness.

Bless the humans, whether you know them or not, and trust the blessing reaches what is good and true and beautiful in them.

Bless aloud. Bless silently. Be generous in pronouncing your blessings.

After you have blessed, allow your heart to swell with gratitude.

Write a poem. Dance. Journal. Sing. AMEN, AMEN, AMEN.

1 “Why I Wake Early,” Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver, Penguin Press, 2017, page 171.



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