**2018 Orientation Ecological Examen**

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1. I’d like to help us enter into our Examen time together with a mindful movement that I really appreciate – it is a movement that I learned from a book by Thich Nhat Hanh, who is a Buddhist monk.
   1. You can be standing or sitting, but you’ll want a bit of room on each side for your arms to stretch out.
   2. We start with our arms stretched out to each side, hands face up.
   3. As we breathe in, we curl our arms in, so that our fingers touch our shoulders.
   4. And as we breathe out, we unfurl our arms and stretch them back out. When we do this, the idea is that we are unfolding our petals like little lotus flowers.
   5. And we can do this a couple more times. Breathe in, and fingers to shoulders. Breathe out, arms out. Breathe in, breathe out.
2. Welcome to our Examen time together.
   1. The Examen is a prayer practice that St Ignatius of Loyola articulated and encouraged.
   2. St Ignatius was the founder of the religious order called the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits – which has given way to many ministries and groups which consider themselves to be “Jesuit” or “Ignatian,” and which practice “Ignatian spirituality.”
   3. The Examen is a practice of “examining” your day, of taking stock of what has been life-giving, and what has been life-draining. Ignatian language that is often used is “consolation” for those life-giving moments, and “desolation” for those life-draining moments.
   4. Something I find nice about Examens is that it can be similar to a type of guided meditation – and in that sense can feel a bit more approachable and adaptable for people from non-Christian traditions or folks who don’t identify as religious or spiritual.
   5. Another thing about the Examen is that it can be done in groups or solo, so it could be a nice daily, grounding practice you can bring into your year.
   6. A standard structure or format for an Examen often moves through five steps – first, ***becoming* *aware***of the presence of God, Spirit, Higher Power, connection with the universe. Then ***reviewing the day*** with gratitude. Then ***paying attention to your emotions****.* Then ***focusing in*** on one feature of the day and pray or meditate from that place. And finally to close, we ***look toward tomorrow***.
   7. Tonight’s Examen will roughly follow that structure, with some pieces folded into each other a bit. Tonight we’ll also have more of an ecological lens to the way we’re connecting with and examining our day. So, tonight’s examen will be a little different than tomorrow’s and a little different than other examens you might experience in the future.
   8. Tonight’s Examen will give space first for personal reflection, and then we’ll split up into communities to reflect and share together as you wish. You’ll be free to go as long or short as you wish in communities – we won’t gather back together after that.
3. To get yourself ready for this time:
   1. You can have a journal out if you want it. I’m not going to specifically prompt you to write in it, but you might appreciate having it handy if you want to make note of something.
   2. And then find a comfortable position – maybe laying on the floor/ground, maybe sitting, maybe standing.
4. As you find a comfortable position, whether you’re moving or still, begin to notice your body. Notice your breath. No need to change it, but notice.

As you settle in, notice places in your body where you may be holding tension, or extra energy. Notice places in your body that feel tired – or places on your body that feel gritty, places where nature has clung to your skin perhaps. To tune into your body, you may find yourself closing your eyes or drawing your gaze downward. You may put both feet on the ground. Notice that your breath may be shallow, your jaw may be clenched, your leg may be fidgeting.

Say hello to this energy. Welcome, fidgeting leg – you are part of my body, and you are sacred. Welcome, knotted stomach – you are sacred. Welcome, exhaustion – you are sacred.

As we notice this holy energy moving through us, we become aware of God’s presence. We become aware of the divine, we become aware of Spirit, of the holy, of our connection to the larger whole of the universe.

And as we notice the knots, or the fidgets, let us also begin to notice the places of ease in our bodies, moments of stillness, of deeper breath. As you notice these places, you may decide to lean into them a bit – to expand the lungs, as far down into your belly as you can. You may notice yourself sink into your seat a bit, feeling gravity tug at you and even release some tensions you may have been holding.

As we notice these places of ease, of centeredness, of stillness, we continue to become aware of God’s presence. And perhaps in noticing the tug of earth’s gravitational pull, the invitation to be held by something bigger – we may feel closer to creation, to the Earth for a moment.

1. As we melt into, and probably also resist, this feeling of closeness and of being held, we may feel grateful for all that we are held by, all that supports us, all the moments of being seen and heard, perhaps all the people we are held by – friends, family, other members of the JVC Northwest movement over time, our ancestors, our natural siblings of the trees, the moon, the sun. This day, and the days leading up to this, have held a lot for us. And as the day has held a lot, it has likely also held parts that felt not-so-life-giving – painful parts, frustrating parts, shadow parts. This gratitude and this pain are all part of the whole.

I’ll offer some reminders of at least some of the scheduled parts of the day, to help jog your memory as you walk through your own particular day. We’ll re-journey through our days in our own imaginations, and then you’ll have time to find a space with your community to share gratitudes and sorrows from the day.

As you re-imagine your day, pay attention to your emotions, and notice where you felt life bubble up, where you felt gratitude, moments you want to savor. Also notice where you maybe felt pain or sorrow, perhaps anger, confusion, perhaps joy, lightness, heaviness. Try to make a note to yourself – bookmark those moments for yourself. If you have your journal, you may want to make a physical note to yourself. Or you can make a mental note. You won’t have to share any or all of these moments that you note to yourself, but there will be time and space to share what you want with your community.

1. So - at the outset of the day, you woke up. A lot of you were in a different state in the US this morning – what did it feel like in the room where you slept last night? Was it warm? Cool? Maybe you’d actually been awake for awhile before the sun came up, maybe it was so early that only your body moved you forward, and your mind took awhile to catch up. Did you wake up anxious about what the day would hold? Excited? Sad about goodbyes that would be said, or had already been said, as you begin this next chapter?

You moved through your morning routine. You ate breakfast, maybe drank coffee or tea. For Additional Year JVs who attended Pre-Orientation, you wrapped up your sessions and cleaned up. Many of you started and continued a good chunk of your day in travel mode. Before you departed, what landscape and climate surrounded you? Were you near an ocean, or far inland? Were there mountains, or was it flat? Were you in a city or a rural area?

For those who boarded a plane, you went through a security check, maybe got patted down, hoped that your bags were under the weight limit. As you boarded that plane - or bus, or train, or eeked out the last leg of a road trip, you helped consume fossil fuels and emit carbons into the atmosphere. Perhaps that brings up lament, or frustration, or curiosity.

You ate lunch. Maybe you were really hungry and were glad to have your hunger need met, or maybe it was hard to keep anything down because of the butterflies in your stomach - or maybe you were proud to just keep showing up to each next step of the day, which would bring you closer to this point. And again, as you were in travel mode, you likely consumed food that was made and packaged by someone else. And the plastic wrapping will certainly sit in a landfill for years as it attempts to break down.

As you arrived in Oregon, how was this landscape different from or similar to where you started your day? Perhaps you started your day near the Atlantic ocean, and now you’re near the Pacific ocean, perhaps you were in the midst of the great plains, and are now near mountains. As you traveled to camp here in Molalla, you may have noticed farms nearby, before you get to the trails and cabins on this property. Maybe you noticed the sights and smells of irrigation systems, cows, and chickens, or were curious about the families who live and work here.

You began to meet fellow JVs and JVC Northwest staff and volunteers. Maybe you felt relieved to begin having some concrete faces to this mysterious adventure you’ve set out on. Maybe you felt uncertain about whether you’d be liked or accepted. Maybe you felt frustrated that no, indeed, these new people still aren’t the people I’m saying goodbye to, and perhaps that feels sad or disappointing. Maybe you felt curious – I wonder who the heck these people are going to turn out to be?

As you arrived to camp, you set down your bags and began the journey of Registration. You received a ton of information. You listened to announcements. Maybe you paid very close attention, or maybe you felt distracted, or overstimulated. You received packets of information, a tshirt. You put faces with names of folks you’d been corresponding with before now. You started to file away new names and faces. Maybe you ate a few – or a lot – of blueberries – and if so, maybe those blueberries met needs for welcome, for comfort, for a sweet treat in the middle of the afternoon. Maybe you refilled your water bottle, and went to the bathroom. Did you notice other bodily or mental or emotional needs during that time? How were those needs met?

You began the journey of finding your cabin and choosing a bed. If you were the first person in a cabin, did you wonder who else would end up around you? If you were the last person in a cabin, did you hope that the folks who’d already claimed beds would be nice? Perhaps you got to your cabin and realized that you didn’t bring a pillow and began to wonder how your needs for warmth and comfort and enough sleep would be met after a long day of travel and transition.

At this point, maybe you napped, or took some solo time to reflect and re-gather, or called or texted home to confirm you’d arrived safely. Maybe you went for a walk to explore camp, or connected with fellow JVs. As you explored camp, maybe you came across a beautiful tree. The creek that runs through camp is a conservation / restoration area – as you walked along its curves, what impacts may you have had on the wellness of this watershed? And what impact did the watershed have on your wellness? Maybe you got quite warm in the summer heat. Did you wonder about why it would be so hot this close to the Pacific coast? Is this climate change? Were my expectations of the Pacific Northwest off from reality?

You made it to our gathering time this evening, bringing your body into proximity with over 140 other bodies in the meadow. Your feet stood on the grass, and you participated in a smudging. What was it like to smell the sage? To receive a sacred blessing? Did you feel grateful? Curious? Uncertain of how your body would react to the scent? Were you aware of your feet connecting with the earth? By way of this connection, did you feel connected with the Molalla people? Did you feel connected with Sister Margaret Witt and Margaret Ball? Maybe you felt awkward, maybe you felt held?

Again at dinner, what sensations did you feel as you took in a new meal? What emotions were you feeling as you sat together with your new house community? Did you find yourself sinking into the moment, or skipping ahead to what future meals will look like with this group? Did you feel curious? Relieved?

And then hearing about the history of JVC Northwest, what stirred up for you? Did you feel yourself held by the greater JV community over time? Did new questions come up for you about the tensions and the gifts of our history? Did you feel frustrated by the constraints of the history and structures you’re stepping into? Or did you find comfort in visualizing the historical framework, getting a sense for your place in the bigger picture of things?

1. In all of the pieces of today, what brought you delight? What do you want to savor? What are you lamenting? What brought you sorrow?
2. And as you look to tomorrow, what do you want to carry with you? Or let go of?
3. Now, you have time to join up with your communities. You can stay here in the meadow or wander to another spot around camp. I encourage you to do a “go-round.” Each person takes a turn sharing one or two things that stand out to you after reflecting on the day. Each person has the option to “pass” or “pass for now.”