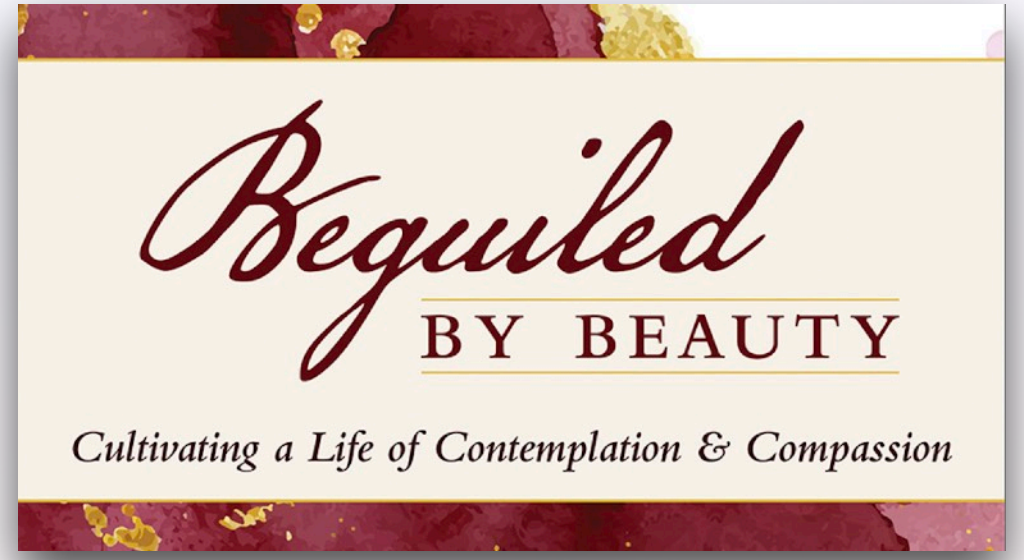

Week 1
"Beauty, Contemplation, and Radical Compassion"

WE GATHER

Threshold Moment

Play video package:
"Week 1 Threshold Moment with Voiceover"
or
"Week 1 Threshold Moment NO Voiceover"
[for use with your own Voiceover edited in or live]

—

OR
[create your own from scratch-
the following is the script for the pieces of the video package]

"The difficulty and crisis of the world is overwhelming. It is virtually impossible to bear it without very deep resources." — Wendy Farley

Are you ready for a deeper well inside?

Divine Goodness, prepare my spirit to see and be beguiled by the beauty of life. Amen.

[Chimes begin (get a free soundtrack HERE)
Musician underscores the words of the leader with the theme song,
"For the Beauty of the Earth"

Pastor/Leader: All things are beautiful–not by a standard of "pretty" as seen by our eyes, but by an essence of sacred worth that is sensed by the spirit. This is the root and heart of compassion and justice. Beauty is the threshold to Divine Goodness and a door into radical compassion. Contemplation trains our spirits to see this deeper truth. Over the next six weeks, we will pursue a contemplative life to deepen our spiritual capacities so that we might live as Beloveds of God who extend Goodness in the world.

For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth,
over and and around us lies.
God of all to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise!

[chimes continue as the accompaniment fades into silence]

Silent Centering

[invite people to a time of silence with words or screen prompts…]

You are invited to a moment of quiet rest, a time of slowing the pace of your body and mind so that the spirit can settle.

[end of "Threshold" video package]

[after about 30sec-1min, let the chimes return (or a bell)
and then proceed with a prayer]

Prayer of Opening

Divine Goodness, Holy One,
Pause us for this moment,
bear us up in this time,
hold us for eternity.
We offer ourselves in connection with you.
We allow ourselves this love from you.
We release ourselves into your presence.
And all the people say, **"Amen."**

Hymn of Beauty
"For the Beauty of the Earth"
ELW 879, GTG 14, Chalice 56, NCH 28, UMH 92, VT 120, VU 226, W&R 40
(we recommend Chuck Bell's arrangement)

Offering of Peace

[Pass the Peace in the manner to which you are accustomed or use an alternative such as turning to people with a "peace sign" and a visual connection or perhaps a slight bow with hands together, drawing on a practice of greeting done in some places in the world.]

WE PROCLAIM

Searching for Beauty: A Time for Children

See the children's time document for these suggestions.

Lectio Divina

Leader: Beauty occurs in many ways through our rituals. *Divina* is of Latin and Italian origin, meaning "divine or heavenly." It is also a variant of *Davina* (Hebrew), meaning "loved one." In this series, we will encounter the Divine Loved One through "Lectio Divina" (scripture), through "Sermo Divina" (the Latin origin of the word "sermon"), through "Visio Divina," (images and poetry), and through "Musica Divina" (music). All of these are portals into a sensate experience of the holy. Some forms will pique your cognitive mind, but you can also allow some to simply wash over you, infusing your psyche and soul with a mysterious sense of wonder.

Play video package:
"Week 1 Scripture with Voiceover"
or
"Week 1 Scripture No Voiceover"
[for use with your own Voiceover edited in or live]

OR
[simply invite someone to read]

Ezekiel 31: 3-7 (Inclusive Bible)

Look to Assyria, once a Lebanon cedar
[beautiful branches, dense shade, towering height;] (a)
its top among the clouds.

Springs nourished it,
and deep waters made it grow tall;
their streams flowed around its base,
sending their channels to all the trees in the countryside.
So it towered high above every other tree of the field.
Its boughs grew larger and its branches extended out,

nourished by an abundance of water.
All the birds of the air nested in its boughs;
under its branches wild animals gave birth to their young.
All the great nations thrived in its shade.
It was majestic in its beauty with its spreading boughs,
its roots reaching deeply into an abundance of water.

(a) Ref: CEB

[end of "Scripture" video package]

Musica Divina
[This could also take place as a musical reflection after the sermon]

"The Tree of Life"
or
"Tree of Life"

Sermo Divina
[see the Sermon fodder document and the Wendy Farley interview for your preparation]

Visio Divina

Play video package:
"Visio Divina, Week 1"

Sensing with Spirit
Defining beauty as depth
The divine dances

OR

[create your own compilation of member's photos/videos and write your own Haiku or Prayer Poem and underscore with your own musicians]

WE RESPOND

Prayers of the People
"Look Around"
Original song for the series by Marsha Jean Moors-Charles, arr. Caleb Collins
[use the "Look Around–Prayers" audio recording provided in the downloads or use the sheet music provided–see Music Document for further notes]

Leader: Our prayers in this series will invite us to an open-eyed experience of "looking around." I invite you to look around and find something to focus on. It may be a detail that you rarely see or something that you see frequently, but you can see it more deeply. Or you may let your gaze wander during prayers as a way of giving thanks for these surroundings. "Looking around"–whether we do that with our eyes or other senses–is how we notice the beauty in the world and in the people we encounter, but also how we notice suffering. We are called to intercede in prayer for the healing of all.

Music: ["Look Around–Prayers A"]
Verse 1: When you're tired and feel you can't get through
Uncertainty comes over you
Just Look Around
When your problems seem too much to bear
Unsure if there's someone who cares
Just Look Around
Whether stranger, neighbor, family, or a friend
On each other in tough times we can depend

Chorus: Look Around – kindness, love is ours to share
We can see it everywhere
Though it might seem like forever
Look Around—for even in the darkest night
Things are gonna be alright
We'll get through this together
Just Look Around!

Leader: [insert prayers of the people as you are accustomed, ending with the Lord's Prayer if that is your tradition]

Music: ["Look Around–Prayers B"]
Verse 2: Sometimes it can be hard to see
Life is full of possibilities
So Look Around
Each new day is such a gift
Embrace it and the life you live
And Look Around
Outstretched arms and many helping hands
Don't give up on all your dreams and all your plans

Chorus: Look Around – kindness, love is ours to share
We can see it everywhere
Though it might seem like forever
Look Around—for even in our darkest night
Things are gonna be alright
We'll get through this together

Just Look Around! Look Around!
Just Look Around.

Call for Offering

Leader: As the song says, “we’ll get through this together”…
“with outstretched arms and many helping hands.”

[Continue with your call to offering.
We suggest that you include a way that people can offer help this week
such as a food pantry donation or helping with a particular church or local initiative]

Communion and/or Ritual Action

[See “Communion” document for a communion ritual to insert on weeks you have communion. If you are not having communion, continue with the following:]

Leader: This series invites us to integrate contemplative practices into our daily lives as a way of opening to the Divine in deeper ways, thereby training our spirits for compassion in all things. This week’s ritual action is a time of meditative “watering.” Set a reminder to pour yourself and drink a glass of water and then refill that same glass and water some other living thing… offering a glass of water to someone else or to a plant, tree, garden, etc. As you do so, allow your mind to slow, your heart to open, your eyes to drink in your surroundings. You may want to put a note nearby, “Water is life. Water your life so you can water other life… for the beauty of the earth.”

And now, let us add our singing to the song of creation already in progress…

WE GO FORTH

Closing Hymn

“As the Deer”
GTG 626, FWS/STF 2025, VU 766, W&R 471
OR
“Come to the Water”

Benediction

The world is so varied and beautiful.
Seek wisdom wherever it is to be found.*
And may the goodness of the Creator,
the companionship of the Christ,
and the insight of the Spirit,
infuse your life now and always.
Amen.

Benediction Song Reprise

*[Play video package: "Benediction"
or use the PDF score]*

God of all to thee, we raise,
This our hymn of grateful praise!

** The first two lines of the Benediction are a quote from Dr. Wendy Farley's father, Dr. Edward Farley, a renowned theologian.*