**Opening Meditation.**

**Begin by selecting a leaf from an array of leaves.**

**Receive a pencil and piece of paper (copy paper from a printer is perfect)**

**Begin with three easy breaths. In and out. In and out. In and out.**

1. Leaf,

Explore with your senses, visual, tactile, audio, texture.

With this leaf as your companion, listen to this poem.

by Mary Oliver,
“When I Am Among the Trees”

When I am among the trees,

Especially the willows and the honey locust,

Equally the beech, the oaks, and the pines,

They give off such hints of gladness.

I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,

In which I have goodness, and discernment,

And never hurry through the world

 But walk slowly and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in the leaves

And call out, “Stay awhile.”

The light flows from their branches

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,

“and you too have come

Into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled

With light, and to shine.”

Place your leaf on the center of the paper and in each corner enter a word about your inner knowing and any connection you feel with your leaf.

1. Turn over the paper and place it on top of the leaf. Feel the leaf under the paper, through the paper. Be sure it is located at the center.

Using the side of your pencil lead, begin to rub the leaf beneath the paper. Slowly move back and forth across the leaf, starting at the tip of the leaf. Watch the tip of the leaf appear on the paper as you rub, move down the leaf, slowly, slowly rubbing, watching the leaf appear on the paper.

Let the emerging leaf listen with you as I read a second poem by Mary Oliver. “Wild geese.”

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

For a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

Love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

Are moving across the landscapes,

Over the prairies and deep trees,

The mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

Are heading home again.

Wherever you are, no matter how lonely,

The world offers itself to your imagination,

Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –

Over and over announcing your place

In the family of things.

When you are finished, carefully look at the rubbing. What comes to mind that humans need to understand about nature? What comes to mind about what nature contributes to our lives? How can we close the gap between nature and humanity? Write your ideas down along the edges of the paper.