



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Earth Day

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, Wednesday Evening, April 2019

CHALICE LIGHTING:

We seek our place in the world
and the answers to our hearts' deep questions.
As we seek, may our hearts be open to unexpected answers.
May the light of our chalice remind us that this is a community of warmth,
of wisdom, and welcoming of multiple truths.

~ *Debra Faulk*, <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/open-unexpected-answers>

CHECK-IN: (4 min each)

Share how you are in this moment. Share something you put aside to be fully present here or share what has been happening in your life since we last met.

DISCUSSION / FEEDBACK (3 min)

OPENING WORDS: (1 min)

This we know.
The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth.
This we know.
All things are connected, like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.
Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

~ *attributed to Chief Seattle*

QUIET REFLECTION (2 min)

If we don't change our direction, we're likely to end up where we're headed.

~ *a Chinese proverb*

INTRODUCTION TO EARTH DAY: (4 min)

Each year, Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement. The height of counterculture in the United States, 1970 brought the death of Jimi Hendrix, the last Beatles album, and Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water". War raged in Vietnam and students nationwide overwhelmingly opposed it. At the time, Americans were slurping leaded gas through massive V8 sedans. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of legal consequences or bad press. Air pollution was commonly

accepted as the smell of prosperity. “Environment” was a word that appeared more often in spelling bees than on the evening news.

Although mainstream America largely remained oblivious to environmental concerns, the stage had been set for change by the publication of Rachel Carson’s New York Times bestseller Silent Spring in 1962. The book represented a watershed moment, selling more than 500,000 copies in 24 countries, and beginning to raise public awareness and concern for living organisms, the environment and the links between pollution and public health.

Earth Day 1970 gave voice to that emerging consciousness, channeling the energy of the anti-war protest movement and putting environmental concerns on the front page.

The idea for a national day to focus on the environment came to Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, after witnessing the ravages of the huge oil spill in Santa Barbara, California, in 1969. Inspired by the student anti-war movement, he realized that if he could infuse that energy with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution, it would force environmental protection onto the national political agenda. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a “national teach-in on the environment” to the national media; persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Republican Congressman, to serve as his co-chair; and recruited Denis Hayes from Harvard as national coordinator. Hayes built a national staff of 85 to promote events across the land. April 22, falling between Spring Break and Final Exams, was selected as the date.

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies. Thousands of colleges and universities organized protests against the deterioration of the environment. Groups that had been fighting against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness, and the extinction of wildlife suddenly realized they shared common values.

Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. By the end of that year, the first Earth Day had led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species acts. “It was a gamble,” Gaylord recalled, “but it worked.”

As 1990 approached, a group of environmental leaders asked Denis Hayes to organize another big campaign. This time, Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and lifting environmental issues onto the world stage. Earth Day 1990 gave a huge boost to recycling efforts worldwide and helped pave the way for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It also prompted President Bill Clinton to award Senator Nelson the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1995)—the highest honor given to civilians in the United States—for his role as Earth Day founder. <https://www.earthday.org/about/the-history-of-earth-day/>

WORDS OF WISDOM

(9 min)

I only feel angry when I see waste. When I see people throwing away things we could use.
~ *Mother Teresa*

The Earth is what we all have in common.
~ *Wendell Berry*

Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.
~ *George Bernard Shaw*

Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time. ~ *Katrina Mayer*

To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.
~ *Theodore Roosevelt*

He that plants trees loves others besides himself. ~ *Thomas Fuller*

You may be able to fool the voters, but not the atmosphere. ~ *Donella Meadow*

One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken.
~ *Leo Tolstoy*

The environment is where we all meet, where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share. It is not only a mirror of ourselves, but a focusing lens on what we can become.
~ *Lady Bird Johnson*

The Earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations.
~ *John Paul II*

Nature is painting for us, day after day, pictures of infinite beauty. ~ *John Ruskin*

Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries.
~ *Jimmy Carter*

Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.
~ *George Washington Carver*

You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.
~ *Jane Goodall*

Buy, buy, says the sign in the shop window; Why, why, says the junk in the yard.
~ *Paul McCartney*

The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard. ~ *Gaylord Nelson*

What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?
~ *Henry David Thoreau*

Environmentally friendly cars will soon cease to be an option ... they will become a necessity.
~ *Fujio Cho, Honorary Chairman of Toyota Motors*

To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome than the most luxurious Persian rug.
~ *Helen Keller*

If one truly loves nature, one finds beauty everywhere. ~ *Vincent Van Gogh*

A nation that destroys its soils, destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people. ~ *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness. ~ *John Muir*

The Earth is a fine place and worth fighting for. ~ *Ernest Hemingway*

We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as its other creatures do. ~ *Barbara Ward*

The proper use of science is not to conquer nature but to live in it. ~ *Barry Commoner*

As I walk, as I walk
The universe is walking with me
In beauty it walks before me
In beauty it walks behind me
In beauty it walks below me
In beauty it walks above me
Beauty is on every side
As I walk, I walk with Beauty.

~ *Traditional Navajo Prayer*

SONG: Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology) by *Marvin Gaye* (3 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CShUISLYLGY>

BREAK (15 min)

SHARING ON TOPIC: Earth Day (4 min each)

Use these questions to formulate how you feel about the topic. If you wish to answer the questions, choose only a few that “speak” to you. You do not need to specifically answer every question.

If Earth was run like a hotel, we would each have to provide a valid credit card at the beginning of our stay. If we caused any harm during our visit, we would be charged for the damages at check-out. If this were so, chances are we would each be more careful, knowing that even the smallest of actions harming “Hotel Earth” would appear as an item on our bill. In this scenario the owner fixes the hotel using the damage fees charged to the guest accounts.

This is clearly not how it works. Still, how we view our relationship with the Earth greatly impacts the choices we make and whether or not we take action in the face of local and global environmental challenges.

- How do you conceptually think of the planet Earth and your relationship to it?
- In what way is this view related to your personal spirituality, beliefs, the Unitarian Universalist Principles, and the way you live your life?
- What aspects of your lifestyle, habits, and consumption positively or negatively impact the Earth?
- Who do you feel is ultimately responsible for caring for the Earth and the ecosystem on which we depend?
- What threat do you feel climate change represents to your own, your children’s, your grandchildren’s, or other relatives’ future?
- Do you talk about climate change with personal friends? Children? Grandchildren? Why or

why not? What ways have you found to share your concerns?

- How do you feel about the way we are handling the topic of climate change in our church?
- Where do you find hope regarding climate change?

DISCUSSION / FEEDBACK

(3 min)

SESSION FEEDBACK

(5 min)

What went well? What can be improved? Other suggestions? Next topics?

CLOSING WORDS

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

~ *Closing words of the Earth Charter* http://earthcharter.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter_english.pdf

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE AND SOUND A CHIME

Lyrics: Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)

Woo, ah, mercy mercy me
Ah things ain't what they used to be, no no
Where did all the blue skies go?
Poison is the wind that blows from the north and south and east

Woo mercy, mercy me,
Oh things ain't what they used to be, no no
Oil wasted on the oceans and upon our seas, fish full of mercury

Ah, oh mercy, mercy me
Ah things ain't what they used to be, no no
Radiation underground and in the sky
Animals and birds who live nearby are dying

Oh mercy, mercy me
Ah things ain't what they used to be
What about this overcrowded land
How much more abuse from man can she stand?

Oh, no no, no, na na, na...
My sweet Lord... na, na, na
My Lord... my sweet Lord

Songwriters: Marvin Gaye / Marvin P Gaye
Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology) lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC