

Earth-Ecology

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

- * Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- * Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- * Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- * Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- * Humanist teaching which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- * Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

In a wonderful and inexpressible way, God is created in his creatures.
John Scotus Erigena

Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures.
Albert Einstein

It is impossible to obtain our potential as humans without an interrelatedness to animals and nature. The natural world opens us to silence in order that we may hear beyond ourselves. It is essential to our wholeness. Without it, we would not grow emotionally or spiritually. It is this spiritual dimension that allows us to reach out beyond ourselves, seek our life's work and take pleasure in this work. Peoples of the past saw animals of symbol of power and nurturance and surrounded themselves with animals in order to feel safe. We who have enjoyed the companionship of animals in our everyday lives, who witness them in nature, or who have seen them in the lives of others, know for certain the profound effect they have on us. Animals teach us about life, suffering, and death. They provide for us a space where we can feel safe and be alone, a place where we can cultivate the contemplative part of ourselves.
Mother Hildegard George

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Group Business

Closing Words and Song "Go Now in Peace"

**Even
After
All this time
The sun never says to the earth,**

**"You owe
Me."**

**Look
What happens
with a love like that.**

**It lights the
whole
Sky.**

Hafiz

Covenant Circles

The Earth



Homework

Ecology-Earth Faith

1. In your theology/philosophy, what matters about the health of the ecology? Does the Earth have intrinsic rights, or is it a matter of what works best for humanity? Does humanity have an intrinsic need for nature, wide open spaces, fresh air, or would we be just as happy being indoor creatures?
2. In your theology/philosophy what is the problem, if any, with the extinction of species?
3. What, if anything, makes you sad about the current state of the earth?
4. What part does nature play in your spirituality?
5. What actions do you take to protect the environment? Why?

Leader Notes: Earth and Closure

Recruit readers for the three quotations. You'll read the "living tradition" piece going around the room.

If this is your last group, before you begin, tell the group that there will be two rounds of sharing this time. The second round will be an opportunity to reflect on what the group and its individuals have meant to them. The first round will be on the topic...whatever individuals want to share about their relationship to the Earth. If this is an ongoing group, do your rounds as usual.

Begin as usual with chalice lighting, joys and concerns and silence.

Remind the group that the first reading comes from the Purposes and Principles of the UUA, of which this church is a member.

Do your two rounds of sharing.

If your group is ongoing, close as usual. For the last group: As a closing, gather in a circle. Tell your group that each person is going to take a moment to share an appreciation of the person to their right, and when they are done, the whole group will chime in with a heartfelt, AMEN! You will want to begin this process to model it. (*As an alternative, the whole group may want to join in the sharing of appreciation for each person with a sentence or two.)

If there is someone in your group that you think others will have some difficulty appreciating, you will want to focus on that person yourself, so make sure you've positioned yourself to the left of that person. You can accomplish this most easily by joining the circle last. After you have explained this to the group, give them a good long moment of silence to think about what they want to say.

Make your appreciation pretty short, for instance: "N, what I most appreciate about you is how committed you were to the group; you were here almost every meeting. And I appreciate the passion you had for some of the topics."

Go around the circle. The closing words follow.

What we call a beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from....
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. -T. S. Elliot

Then, sing!

And let me take this last moment to appreciate you, the leaders who have made these groups possible for church members! Thank you!!!
Christine Robinson