

WORDS AND ACTIONS TO HEAL THE EARTH

Earth Day and A Council of All Beings

The first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970, based on an initiative from Senator Gaylord Nelson. The official Earth Day on April 22nd will be celebrated for the 46th time this year by one of the farthest flung volunteer efforts of people around the globe. The Earth Day Network theme this year is: Trees for the Earth, which begins a 5-year effort to plant 7.8 Billion trees by 2020, one for every human being on earth. Sadly, 15 Billion trees are currently lost each year around the world. And by the way, it takes roughly 96 trees to absorb the CO2 produced by each person every year. Even with the millions of trees planted each year by logging companies, governmental agencies, conservation groups, and individuals, we continue to lose forests of trees each year.

What will it take to make sure there are enough trees to bring balance back to the natural world? I'm not sure anyone knows the answer, but earthlings of all species will continue to lose ground as more forests are cut to build cities and support agriculture and meat production.

Back in 1988, Joanna Macy and Pat Fleming included a description of A Council of All Beings in the wonderful little book, *Thinking Like a Mountain, Toward a Council of All Beings*, by them, John Seed and Arne Naess. I met Joanna Macy while I was studying at the Institute of Culture and Creation Spirituality with Matthew Fox in 1989-90, and we later brought her down to conduct a weekend workshop at Pacific Unitarian in Rancho Palos Verdes. I renewed my acquaintance with Joanna and her thought in a workshop at the UU Minister's Institute at Asilomar last year. John Seed, who is from Australia came to conduct a workshop at the church and at a District Assembly we hosted in Little Rock a few years ago.

I would like to invite you all to participate in a very brief form of the Council of All Beings. Many of you should have found a coloring page of one of Earth's family of beings. Additionally, I would invite each of you to think about the ways you may help to voice the opinions and needs of different

species of birds, animals, people, fish, aquatic mammals, trees, plants, landforms, rivers, lakes, oceans, and any other part of the Earth whose voice is crying to be heard. I will give you a few minutes to think about what species or part of earth you might like to represent, and then I will ask those who wish to speak to identify yourself and then share your biggest concern or need.

I have celebrated Earth Day in some fashion each year I have been active in Ministry and a few when I was studying and doing other things! In fact, the first sermon I ever presented in my home church when I was in high school addressed the earth and environmental concerns. Earth Day helps me to remember to do what I can to help address the environmental challenges we face now in the 21st Century. I know many of you have participated in the community Earth Day celebrations in Stockton or in other places, and I suspect that ecological concerns are one of the biggest areas of agreement for most Unitarian Universalists.

Many of us started out with the intent of helping to raise people's consciousness about ecological concerns through sermons, lectures, workshops, demonstrations, and community actions. Today it feels as though we are at least closer, if not past the tipping point on air and water pollution and global warming, past the point where earth's resilience can repair the damage caused by 3 centuries of industrial growth based in oil, petroleum and petrochemical fuels, products and waste discharges. With the warming of air and oceans, millions of people and other living beings are at risk from melting polar ice and resulting rising oceans all around the globe. With changes in drought, rain, and snow cycles, and raided aquifers, millions more lack adequate supplies of clean water for drinking, bathing, and farming. We need to continue consciousness raising but also seek for greater action by governments and industry to turn back the clock on ecological damage. One good thing we can do is to put ourselves in the metaphorical shoes of the other species who are suffering.

With such a full service, I promised to keep the sermon short, so I will stop here to invite representatives from the many life forms and parts of Earth to speak. Please tell us who you are and who you represent before sharing your concerns and needs to this Council of All Beings!