



INTERCONNECTION WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Adapted by Annette Garver from Small Group Conversations at Universalist Church of West Hartford, CT

Date: June 14, 2021

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *May our time together bring learning, understanding, compassion, encouragement, and hope as we share about our life journeys and passions.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words: We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things. (Our Seventh Principle restated by the UUA "Tapestry of Faith" in simpler language.)

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Do you have a "natural area" near home where you often go? Tell us about it.
2. What do you most enjoy now that brings you into the natural world?
3. Share a moment in time when you felt deeply connected to (perhaps healed by) the natural world.
4. How does being outdoors make you aware of the interconnected web of life, of which we are all a part?
5. What ways have you found to help preserve the natural world?
6. Has nature played a role in your spiritual journey?
7. What do you believe is the greatest threat to nature?

Breathing in **silence**, to ponder the readings and questions

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings (see below)

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions.

Break

Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading: If there is any hope for the world at all, it does not live in climate-change conference rooms or in cities with tall buildings. It lives low down on the ground, with its arms around the people who go to battle every day to protect their forests, their mountains, and their rivers because they know that the forests, the mountains and the rivers protect them. ~Arundhati Roy

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we meet again.*

Readings, Quotes

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished. ~Lao Tzu

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.
~Rachel Carson

The universe is a continuous web. Touch it at any point and the whole web quivers. ~Stanley Kurwitz

The least movement is of importance to all nature. The entire ocean is affected by a pebble. ~Blaise Pascal

No man is an island. Instead, his “interbeing” is shared with the plants and animals he eat, the people who make his clothes and food, the people who populate his home, country, and the very world he perceives, the insects that pollinate the trees that yield his fruit, shade him from the sun, and provide lumber for his house.
-Buddhist Monk and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh

Yesterday I went for a walk.... Usually I stick to the main street sidewalk and the trail. With a different goal in mind, I started wandering.... I was surprised by what I learned about where I live. And I've been here for ten years! There is the stream-carved gully that is paved over at one point by a major thoroughfare. I found several spots where various species of wildflowers and forgotten cultivars are blooming...and a small DIY farm in a neighbor's side yard with chickens.... I also came across some interesting footprints in the soft earth. Not canine, but who or what's been there? Returning home I noticed that my perspective on where I live had changed. And this shift in perspective stayed with me. I spent the rest of the day marveling at things normally mundane and habitual. ~ Elizabeth Sikes

Mother Nature speaks in a language understood within the peaceful mind of the sincere observer.
~Radhanath Swami

Look deeply into nature, and you will understand everything better. ~Albert Einstein

I am glad I will not be young in a future without wilderness. ~Aldo Leopard

Let's take our hearts for a walk into the woods and listen to the magic whispers of old trees.
~Unknown muses from a mystic

I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees. ~Henry David Thoreau

Sometimes we wonder, a worried wonder, what more can we do.
In all our longing to bring healing to this land will we last long enough to see it through.
From all our giving, all our passion all our care, when we're gone will something good be left behind.
Then we hear a voice from deep inside, sweet simple words come to ease our minds.

Chorus:

Trees grow slow and trees grow strong.
And trees sway with the wind their whole lives long.
And trees hold the ground as they reach for the sky.
And fallen trees still feed the seeds they cast before they died.

~from "Trees Grow Tall," Laurence Cole