

## **EARTH DAY** (adapted from Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, Maine)

### **OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:**

*Viewed from the moon,  
the most astonishing thing about the Earth is that it is alive....  
Beneath the moist, gleaming membrane of bright blue sky,  
it has the self-contained look of a live creature full of information,  
marvelously skilled in handling the sun.* ~ Lewis Thomas

**PURPOSE:** We come together to build connections and to talk about what deeply matters.

**CHECK IN:** How is your spirit right now?

### **READING OF GROUP COVENANT**

**FOCUS:** Earth is not a planet with life on it; rather it is a living planet. The physical structure of the planet — its core, mantle, and mountain ranges — acts as the skeleton or frame of its existence. The soil that covers its grasslands and forests is like a mammoth digestive system. In it all things are broken down, absorbed, and recycled into new growth. The oceans, waterways, and rain function as a circulatory system that moves life-giving "blood," purifying and revitalizing the body. The bacteria, algae, plants and trees provide the planet's lungs, constantly regenerating the entire atmosphere. The animal kingdom provides the functions of a nervous system, a finely tuned and diversified series of organisms sensitized to environmental change.

Each species is a unique expression of planetary consciousness, with its own unique gifts to the body. Humanity allows the planet to exercise self-conscious awareness, or reflexive thought. That is, the human enables Earth to reflect on itself and on the divine Mystery out of which it has come and in which it exists. We are a means by which nature can appreciate its own beauty and feel its own splendor; or destroy itself. This shift, from seeing ourselves as separate beings placed on Earth ("the world was made for us") to seeing ourselves as a self-reflexive expression of Earth ("we were made for the world"), is a major shift in our understanding of who and what we are. It is a shift at the deepest possible level: our identity, or sense of self.

### **Questions:**

1. How do you *experience* the earth as a living system?
2. What images in this reading resonate with your heart or spirit, theology or world view? Why?
3. What is your joy or sorrow for the earth?

**CONFIDENTIALITY CHECK:** Is there anything that you shared here today that you would like held confidential? Otherwise, this is a reminder that we treat each other's sharing with kindness and respect.

### **CLOSING WORDS:**

For the beauty of the earth, for the splendor of the skies  
For the love which from our birth, over and around us lies  
Source of all to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise  
~ Folliott Sanford Pierpoint, adapted, *Singing the Living Tradition* #21