

Soul Matters

A kaleidoscope of thoughts, images, stories, poetry, and ideas to engage hearts and minds.



Sustaining Earth

April, 2015

My first view — a panorama of brilliant deep blue ocean, shot with shades of green and gray and white — was of atolls and clouds. Close to the window I could see that this Pacific scene in motion was rimmed by the great curved lip of the earth. It had a thin halo of blue held close, and beyond, black space. I held my breath, but something was missing — I felt strangely unfulfilled. Here was a tremendous visual spectacle, but viewed in silence. There was no grand musical accompaniment; no triumphant, inspired sonata or symphony. Each one of us must write the music of this sphere for ourselves. ~ Charles Walker, astronaut

This month's *Soul Matters* packet invites the reader to enter into a time of contemplation, deepening, and action.

As the Earth opens to a full bloom here in the northern hemisphere, may we be flooded with intoxicating experiences of transcendent beauty. As the Earth reveals to us a hidden treasure trove of miracles, may we be humbled by the mystery of all that we do not know. As the Earth follows the laws of nature, may we be inspired to follow the ways of the mind, leading us onward to preserve all that is right and good. As the Earth turns, again and again and again, offering us rest and rejuvenation, may we awake ready to take up the mantle of stewardship.

Out of nothing our Creator called us forth, the hands and the eyes and the ears and the heart. How then shall we write the music, sing the songs, celebrate the living, grief the dying, hold tight to what is right and good and bring voice to the holy? How then shall we act on behalf of the Creator and Sustainer?

In faith, Rev. Carie

Opening Words

As surely as we belong to this universe we belong together.

We join here to transcend the isolated self, to reconnect, to know ourselves to be at home, here on the earth, under the stars linked with each other.

~ Rev. Margaret Keip



This Soul Matters packet was created by Rev. Carie Johnsen and Claire Curole at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta, ME.

Thoughts within were gleaned from the Soul Matters Network, the UUC Resource Circle, and other sources.

If you would like to share your experience and wisdom for future packets, please email minister@augustauu.org. To receive an electronic copy please email info@augustauu.org. To learn more about Unitarian Universalist Community Church, please visit our website www.augustauu.org.

QUESTIONS TO WALK WITH



Below is a list of questions to open the mind's gateway to reveal the wisdom that is right below the surface of our everyday ordinary lives. Pick one question, any, the one that grabs you and won't let go, then walk with it. Let your mind wander and wonder. Let the question percolate. Listen curiously to what surfaces. Live into the answers. Be surprised by what is discovered. Share what you learn with someone you meet along the way.



Making the Earth Sacred Again

Except from a Sermon by Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell

From feminist philosopher and poet Susan Griffin, from her book, "Woman and Nature":

"I know I am made from this earth, as my mother's hands were made from this earth, as her dreams were made from this earth and this paper, these hands, this tongue speaking, all that I know speaks to me through this earth and I long to tell you, you who are earth too, and listen as we speak to each other of what we know: the light is in us."

Making the earth sacred again. Once it was considered sacred. Before the established religions emerged—before Christianity, before Buddhism, before Hinduism—human beings articulated their worship through the earth. People venerated nature instead of deities. The sun, bringing light and life, was worshipped; prayer and ritual dancing were directed to the rain god, whose water caused the plants to grow. The Spirit was alive, diffused through all of nature, and tribal people felt at one with nature.

Instead of seeing ourselves as spiritually connected to family, clan, and land, we now see ourselves as separate individuals relating to other separate individuals. Applying our minds to the natural world, which we now view as dead matter to be used, we have produced an extraordinary culture in some ways: we have cars and airplanes that give us mobility, we have computers which let us communicate instantly with others on the other side of the globe, we have amazing medical technology. On a more mundane level, we have microwaves and blenders. But with technology, as with any change, there is always a cost. We find ourselves separated, lonely, fearful. As we have moved to objectify and control nature and harness its riches for ourselves, we find ourselves no longer at home in the world. We are strangers here. Says Native American Lame Deer, "Only human beings have come to a point where they no longer know why they exist. They have forgotten the secret knowledge of their bodies, their senses, their dreams."

There is a strange ache inside for what has been lost, and mostly we don't even know where that ache comes from. Then we see the ocean at sunset, and we feel at one with the sea and the earth and the stars, and we know. Or we simply take a walk in our neighborhood and gasp at the beauty of a tulip tree in full bloom, like the one across the street from my house, and we know. We know what we have lost. Our problem is not at base a technical problem—it is a spiritual problem. It is estrangement from the earth and from one another.

1. How do we make the moon speak to us again of love and not see it just as a mass of rock where we planted our flag, our first colony in space?
2. How do we make the earth sacred once again?
3. Name three ways in which you regard Earth as a commodity. Name three ways in which you experience humanity's interdependent relationship with Earth.
4. What is one thing you can do this month to cultivate a sacred oneness with Earth?

For additional Small Group Ministry Session "Earth Day", visit <http://www.augustauu.org/minister-staff-and-church-life/>



Spiritual Practice - Deepening Experiences

Choose one or more that appeals to you.

1. Beauty Immersion Walks*

There is a Native American saying, “May I walk the Beauty Way”. This month, take a series of short ten-minute walks focusing only on the beauty around you, before you, above you and behind you. Breathe it in and let it seep into every cell of your body. Let yourself fall in love with this beauty-filled universe.

2. Follow the Food Trail*

While eating a meal, trace its path and the work that went into it. Where did it come from? Don't forget the soil, the water, and the generosity of the sun that grew it. How about the idea to domesticate plants and animals? See if you can trace the food back through the fifteen billion years of creativity. Now how would you frame a meal of thanksgiving? Create it! Consider ways to improve the quality of your food choices and the subsequent impact your choices have on the environment. Challenge the family to do better. Then do it!

3. Re-naming Sunrise and Sunset*

Brian Swimme describes the planet this way: “A gorgeous living Earth drifts light as a feather around the great roaring generosity of the Sun”. When we realize that the sun isn't coming up and going down, but that we are always coming into or out of its light and warmth, how else could we name what we experience at dawn and dusk?

4. Words, Words, Words*

Our task is to create the language that will allow the earth to flourish. Examine your vocabulary. Listen to yourself speak. Identify the terms and phrases of a dysfunctional world-view. The sexist words need to be identified. Mechanistic terms abound. What about the human-centered language we use? What is the sacred language of a living cosmology? Begin to incorporate it into your way of speaking.

5. Buy Green!

Make a commitment to make informed choices about your lifestyle. Adopt one new healthy living practice each week during the month of April, then maintain the practice until it becomes habit. A variety of options to choose from can be found at the Maine Resources Council of Maine website. <http://www.nrcm.org/our-maine/buy-green/>

6. Listen to Maine Green Minute

Tune into 98.9 WLCZ each week for easy tips you can use every day to lessen your impact on Maine's environment. Live stream options available at www.989wclz.com.

* Taken from “An Amazing Journey! The Universe and Me.” Edited by Global Education Associates Upper Midwest. 2004.



Faith in Action!!

Be part of the **Augusta West Side Neighborhood Association**

Participate in the **SPRING CLEAN UP Saturday, May 2nd**

Join the local community for spring clean-up in the neighborhood. Residents and church members will gather and set out with garbage bags. Word on the street is root beer floats will be served up in our fellowship hall after the work is done. More information will follow in the May newsletter and weekly announcements.

Make a difference in Maine's environment

Support the Maine Resource Council of Maine (NRCM)

Attend the Citizen Action Day Tuesday, April 7, 2015

NRCM's annual Citizen Action Day is a great opportunity for you to meet with your legislators and urge them to vote to protect Maine's environment. Maine's Legislature will vote on several bills in 2015 that, for better or worse, will have an impact on Maine's environment. Before they vote, your legislators need to hear from you, their constituents, about legislation that affects Maine's air, land, water, and wildlife.

At Citizen Action Day you will:

- Learn about our legislative priorities for the 2014 session first-hand from NRCM staff.
- Participate in the legislative process by speaking with your legislators during our visit to the State House.
- Sit in on an important public hearing or work session on one of NRCM's priority bills.
- Meet other NRCM members and activists like you who care about Maine's environment.

Register online at nrcm.kintera.org. If you have questions, please contact Todd Martin, NRCM Outreach Coordinator, at tmartin@nrcm.org or (207) 430-0115.

Join with the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN)

Attend the Annual Planning Meeting Saturday, May 9th at 10 a.m. at the UU Community Church of Augusta.

The Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN) is a statewide advocacy and public policy network anchored in our Unitarian Universalist faith and animated by its principles. MUUSAN works in alliances with other organizations focusing on promoting policies, both statewide and national, that support our principles.

The seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle is, "**Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.**" Through our advocacy we:

- Acknowledge our responsibility to protect the quality of the environment
- Recognize humanity's part in creating Climate Change and the urgency of mitigating its damaging effects.
- Work to lessen our dependence on fossil fuel and encourage the use of sustainable, clean energy.

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Closing Words *This is our hope: that the children born today may still have, twenty years hence, a bit of green grass under their bare feet, a breath of clean air to breathe, a patch of blue water to sail upon, and a whale on the horizon to set them dreaming. ~ Jacques Cousteau*