



"Even our knowledge of God comes to us from our acquaintance with Earth, for the divine reveals itself first of all in the sky and in the waters and in the wind, in the mountains and valleys, in the birds of the air and in all those living forms that flower and move over the surface of the planet."

Thomas Berry, "The Third Mediation" 1982



*Let us be "protectors" of creation,
protectors of God's plan
inscribed in nature,
protectors of one another
and of the environment.*

Pope Francis, March 19, 2013

***"and God saw
that it was good"***

Nine days of prayer to honor creation.

Drawing from the powerful statements
of many religious and spiritual traditions,
these nine days of prayer invite us
to reflect on creation as God's abundant gift to us
and on the response such generosity asks of us.



We are all responsible for the protection and care of the
environment.

Benedict XVI, January 2010

God writes the good news of life and hope in the Bible and
on trees, in flowers, through the clouds and stars.

Martin Luther, 1515

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Society of Quakers)

We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors. We
are borrowing it from our children.

(Attributed to many sources.)

Pilgrimage Prayer
Bayview Corner to the Good Cheer Garden
April 23, 2016 - 1:00 PM

As people of many faiths, we walk together in solidarity toward a holy place – where loving people work with nature to grow food that will be given to those who are hungry. There we will bless the land together and commit to work with one another to care for our common home. Let us walk in silent witness, reverent to the gift of life and its beauty as diverse beliefs unite in love of the land and one another.

Blessing at the Garden

RESPONSE: Holy One, find us ready

*We join with the earth and with each other
To bring new life to the land
To restore the waters
To refresh the air.*

Holy One, find us ready.

*We join with the earth and with each other
To renew the forests
To care for the plants
To protect the creatures.*

Holy One, find us ready.

*We join with the earth and with each other
To celebrate the seas
To rejoice in the sunlight
To sing the song of the stars.*

Holy One, find us ready.

*We join with the earth and with each other
To recreate the human community
To promote justice and peace
To remember our children.*

Holy One, find us ready.

*We join with the earth and with each other.
We join together as many and diverse expressions of one loving
mystery: for the healing of the earth and the renewal of all life.*

Prayer from the United Nations Environmental Sabbath Program

Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

As people of faith, we are called to acknowledge our responsibility - and each to do our part - in caring for God's gift of the Earth.

WILL WE ACCEPT THIS CALL FROM GOD?

The human family has received from the Creator a common gift: nature. We are called to exercise responsible stewardship of it. Yet so often we are driven by greed and by the arrogance of dominion, possession, manipulation, and exploitation; we do not preserve nature, nor do we respect or consider it a gracious gift which we must care for and set at the service of our brothers and sisters – including future generations.

Pope Francis, January 2014

Day 9 – Gratitude for our common homeland

Beginning in ...the last century ...there has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home. An interdependent world ...motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries. Interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*.
Laudato Si, p. 109

Reflection

People of diverse cultures and belief systems around the world all desire peace. Each person is an expression of God, an instrument of peace. We align our thoughts with these like-minded people, opening the way to harmony, spiritual freedom and responsible lifestyles. Together we tap into the power of love to bless one another and every being in the world. We look beyond prejudice, narrow-mindedness and self-serving greed to envision a world of respect, understanding, interdependence and oneness of purpose.

This planet, the homeland of which we are all a part, blesses us with food to eat, water to drink and oxygen to breathe. Earth is our home and we commit to being good stewards for our home.

Our oneness in thought, purpose and understanding builds an environment of lasting peace. I view the world through the eyes of divine love and gratitude and I affirm goodness, love and peace. My vision of oneness and harmony contributes to a consciousness of peace.

We co-creators with God, bless the Earth with loving actions.

Contributed by Unity of Whidbey

Let us embrace our role as co-creators with You and bless the earth and one another by what we do.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 8 – Gratitude for simplicity

Quaker simplicity is one of the commitments to the Spirit of God. Simplicity consists not in the use of particular forms but in avoiding self-indulgence, in maintaining humility of spirit and in keeping the material surroundings of our lives directly serviceable to necessary ends. This does not mean that life need be poor and bare or destitute of joy and beauty. All forms of art may aid in the attainment of the spiritual life, and often the simple lines, themes or moments, when characterized by grace and directness, are the most beautiful.

Contributed by the Whidbey Island Friends Meeting –
The Religious Society of the Quakers

Reflection:

I looked at the sale section of a catalogue recently. A few clothing items appealed to me – good fabrics, made in a country that doesn't have an outrageous record of mistreating workers. I planned to order them. And then I asked myself 'Do I need these?'

The answer was 'no'. Yes, I certainly would use them and, as my current inventory got worn out, I would have a ready-made back-up inventory. It made good economic sense to purchase while they were on sale and use them as needed. But I might not need them for two or three years, such is the current inventory that I have. In a moment of strength, I put the catalogue into the recycling bin – out of sight, out of mind. Someone else can benefit from the sale.

I felt a momentary grief of the loss of the opportunity to save the money on useful items, and then I took a look at my closet and in my drawer. My sense of resolve strengthened. If I am going to live more simply, I need to commit to it every day.

Let us purchase only what we need and reduce our consumption of the natural resources You gave for every being to share.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 1 – A Litany of gratitude for creation

In the beginning in the darkness, God created the heavens – the light of sun and the moon and the stars. *And God saw that it was good.*

Then God created the earth with its mountains and valleys, deserts and plains. *And God saw that it was good.*

Then, God created water. *And God saw that it was good.*

Then, God created the plants of all kinds. *And God saw that it was good.*

Then, God created the animals – the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals that slither and hop, and run. *And God saw that it was good*

Then, God created people and put them in charge, giving them the responsibility to protect and care for all of creation – for the water, the earth, the animals, and the plants.

Inspired by the Book of Genesis, chapters 1 and 2.

Reflection:

It **IS** good, this beautiful, created world. It sustains us, inspires us, comforts us. We are called to care respectfully and tenderly for this, our common home—for ourselves and for generations to come. Let us show our gratitude by responding to this call with our whole beings.

Let us respond to this call with courage and compassion.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 2 - Gratitude for nature's abundance

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation.

From the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church,
The Book of Discipline (2012).

Contributed by Langley United Methodist Church.

Reflection:

*Every morning I want to kneel down
on the golden cloth of the sand
and say some kind of musical thanks
for the world that is happening again –
another day –
From the shawl of wind coming out of the west
to the firm green flesh of the melon
lately sliced open and eaten,
its chill and ample body
Flavored with mercy.*

Mary Oliver, "On Thy Wondrous Works I Will Meditate", Psalm 145

Let us be strong and courageous to do the hard work of helping our culture to become reverent and respectful of all life.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 7 – Gratitude for lack of need

"For in the true nature of things, if we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold or silver."

Martin Luther

Contributed by Trinity Lutheran Church.

Reflection:

Long before it was popular, my Dad ingrained in me the importance of recycling and repurposing...everything. He made wooden racks, with spindles, on which we dried hand-washed plastic bags. On occasion, he went so far as air-drying (clean) paper towels on the backs of the front porch benches (a total embarrassment to my mother, by the way).

He never talked about being "green." No one used that term 50+ years ago. And he didn't talk about a motivation to care for the earth. It was just the "right" way to live. A message that I'm sure was passed down from his German-born mother, whom I remember removing and reusing buttons and zippers from threadbare clothing. And she was not a poor woman. Her family owned a dye factory in Philadelphia, which was successful enough that they survived the depression with relatively little trauma. It was just the right way to live.

My dad was a gardener, an organic gardener—a fact I couldn't escape, no matter how far I roamed. He was on the East coast, but sent me a subscription to Mother Earth News when I was in college in Minnesota. And my Issaquah community and I will never forget the housewarming gift he sent me when I moved to the Pacific Northwest. The package arrived in the post office, having been damaged *enroute*. I received a frantic call to come and retrieve it, as the ladybugs were swarming the USPS facility.

We leave a legacy, we all leave a legacy. May ours be one of living in recognition of the abundant glory of nature. May we be in awe...and may we dance to the cyclical pulse of creation. Amen

Let us demonstrate real respect for life, for all life You have created. Let us live conscious of our effect on future generations.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 6 – Gratitude for clean water and air

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.*

From The Canticle of the Brother Sun and Sister Moon,
by St. Francis of Assisi

Contributed by St. Hubert Catholic Church – Peace and Social Justice Commission

Reflection:

Puget Sound is an amazing symphony of interconnected life. For centuries, rivers thick with salmon fed thousands of people and animals. Fertile soil sustained plants small and gigantic that provided food and homes for millennia. Nature's abundance cared for all.

But things have changed. Our water has been fouled and the air holds many varieties of poisonous emissions. Beaches are often closed due to pollution. Shellfish beds are destroyed due to human waste. Every day, more than 38,000 pounds of toxic substances flow untreated into Puget Sound just from stormwater.

This beautiful and life-giving, fertile place is slowly being poisoned and strangled by our trash and exhaust. God gave us this place to provide for us and we are turning it into a trash heap. What must our God think of us!

Let us be determined to clean up the air and water that we humans have allowed to become poisonous and life killing.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 3 – Gratitude for our interdependence

“Salvation is a cosmic act about all creation...not simply a few human beings. We are therefore called to become effective shepherds and pasture tenders for the whole creation....not just the humans, or the mammals, or the local pasture, but the vast web of interconnected matter we call creation: every family, language, tribe, and nation of insect, woodland, coral reef, water vapor, and the rock below. Good and effective shepherds learn to recognize that we are all part of a far larger and more complex neighborhood than we have imagined. Loving our neighbor and caring for the garden in which we're planted, means cultivating respect and compassion for every part of creation.”

Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, 2013

Contributed by St. Augustine-in-the-Woods Episcopal Church Greening Committee

Reflection:

This amazing Island where we live is abundant with the diversity God has created. Crockett Lake alone hosts 238 bird species who visit, feed, and nest. They receive and contribute to the island's bounty.

God gave them a vital role in this elegant, natural system. They rely on trees, insects, fish and they help nourish the land, the forests, and other animal species. They are so common, we take them for granted - that they will always be here. But every tree we cut down destroys bird homes. Every field we clear reduces their food.

Lord, YOU told us to take care of this incredible world YOU created. YOU, who notice and love each sparrow, told us to do the same. Birds, fish, trees, mammals—they need us to care for them.

Let us appreciate deeply and care for the diversity of plants and animals You created to make a healthy, living system.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 4 – Gratitude for having a place to call home

*In the Unitarian Universalist tradition, we celebrate the inherent worth and dignity of **all** Creation. As some say, God doesn't make junk. So every creature has a valuable and intentional connection to the vast, rich web of life. As we look around – to the forests, beaches, sky, waters, animals, grasslands – we know our own lives, and the lives of our unborn grandchildren, depend upon the well-being of EVERYthing that surrounds us. As David Wagoner writes so eloquently in his famous poem, LOST –*

Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.

Here on Whidbey Island we are particularly blessed by a bounty of sacred creation. It is our Home.

Contributed by Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Whidbey Island

Reflection:

Drive nearly anywhere on this Island and we'll see farmland, pasture, forests, and beautiful views. Close to anywhere are beaches where we can catch fish, go clamming or crabbing, or just enjoy the gentle lap of water on our feet. Wild berries, mushrooms and edible greens abound if we know where to look for them.

Let us conduct an examination of our consciousness -

How are we consciously protecting and caring for this amazing creation? **How** do we demonstrate our gratitude for the abundance of food, clean water, and beauty? **How** do we respect that nature has limits to what she can do? **What** do we actively do to keep our natural world clean and productive so that all can eat, especially the unborn future generation? **When** do we take nature's bounty for granted because we have so much around us? **Do** we use nature's gifts wisely with loving care?

Let us be courageous and learn what is the true cost to the earth and its other inhabitants of how we live.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.

Day 5 – Gratitude for natural resources

From the Jewish tradition come two concepts that directly relate to caring for creation. Bal Tashchit is about not wasting anything—trees, food, clothing, all kinds of resources. Tikkun Olam charges us to repair the world, to help make the world perfect. Together, those would suggest we live lighter on the earth and look for ways to build harmony—with nature and one another.

Contributed by The Whidbey Island Jewish Community

Reflection:

Throughout all history, we humans have lived with and been fed, housed, and clothed with nature's gifts. Do we give back?

Do we think about the needs of wildlife - where they will live and what they will eat?

We cut down forests so we can have views. We put our trash where it works for us, seldom thinking about what else lives there or uses the space for food or rest or shelter.

As people of faith, we are called to live in harmony with others, to be part of a healthy, living system. That means being in harmony with nature and the many species that inhabit our world. That also means being aware of how our life practices affect others. It means making changes in our actions and habits. What should those changes be?

How can we care for those who have no voice?

Let us clean up after ourselves. Let us commit to reuse products and recycle others. In so doing, we reduce the waste we leave for the earth and future generations to clean.

Holy One, may we be more loving in all we do.