EARTH DAY SERVICE

Gathering Song : For the Beauty of the Earth

Welcome (Donna)

Welcome to our Sunday services at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville. My name is Donna Janesky, your Worship Assiciate for this special Earth Day service. For those of you who are new to our faith, ours is a religion of diversity and inclusion. We promote seven principles and draw our worship materials from six sources, all described on our website. We encourage many paths of spiritual exploration, and our services reflect that diversity. Sign up for our weekly e-blast to discover upcoming opportunities.

No matter your age, faith background, economic status, skin color, or who you love, you are welcome here – the whole of you. Do we have any first time visitors? Give us a wave, please, so we can welcome you. Please join us for a social time following this service in the Social Hall just below this space so we can greet you more personally.

Opening Words (Donna)

This is our annual Earth Day service, which we celebrate in the spirit of E.E. Cummings: “I thank you God for this amazing day – for the leaping greenly spirits of trees and a blue true dream of sky, and for everything which is natural, which is infinite, which is YES! Now the ears of my ears awake and the eyes of my eyes are opened.”

Choral Response (sung) Remember, We and the Earth are One

Chalice Lighting (Donna)

We light this chalice symbolizing our collective life, and invite those of you with us on Zoom to light your chalice or candle and hold it up to mark your presence.

In this season of new flourishing, may the light of this fellowship shine hope on the beauty before us. May we go joyfully into the mystery of life.

Wisdom for All Ages (Donna)

Today we celebrate a festival that is as old as human history, rituals inherited from pagan ancestors who venerated the earth. As people once gathered around Maypoles and made offerings to Pan, the earth god, we take this moment to enjoy a video version of the old song, Come by the Hills, played by B.E. Skilling.

video from drive.google.com – Come by the Hills

Joys and Sorrows (Donna)

As a religions community, our own faith journey includes sharing the significant milestones of one another’s lives. I invite you to come to the microphone on your right, light a candle, and in a brief statement let us know what is in your circle of concern. If you are with us via Zoom, please write your message into the chat box, and Krystalle will read those for us.

ask if Krystall has additional messages

We light this last candle for those unexpressed concerns that remain in our hearts.

Sharing Our Abundance (Donna)

As the physical year goes on, so does the fiscal year. We grow more conscious of our obligations and how well we can meet them. So does our church. We have obligations to support our minister, our staff, and the many worthy programs that respond to the world’s needs. We depend on your financial support and appreciate your generosity. Besides our collection plate, you may mail a check, text it, or even call it in. Directions are found on our website, UUCJ.org.

As we pass the plate, we invite you to enjoy our choir’s performance of the UUA commissioned anthem for Earth Day, 2022. All of Us, by Dana Clark.

Choir: All of Us

Speaker introduction (Donna) Speaker, Allen Tilly

Earth Day Choral Service

Narration (Donna)

These are the seasons of our lives, the rich, changing panoply of time. We humans have grown from nature and return to nature as to kindred, seeing ourselves reflected in the combative behavior of territorial species, the hovering care of mother ducks, the preening display of male peacocks. Yet we regard nature with a human perspective unlike that of other beings in our understanding of the forces behind appearances. The mathematical intricacy of a flower, the breath taking glitter of a galaxy are sources of that special human feeling of wonder, in encountering, aghast, the intricacy of it all. Kneeling in a meadow in early spring, we may spy a wild violet, and enter a world almost too small to see, too delicate to touch. Such is the expression of the choral anthem: Wonder, by Sharon Scholl

Choir sings Wonder

Donna Continues: The earth has many moods – from the violence of a snowstorm to the placid face of a summer pond. Some of the most interesting and varied occur on great rivers. Mark Twain, who was a Mississippi River pilot, describes the morning mood of that river:

“The face of the water was a wonderful book which told its mind to me, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if spoken. It was not a book to be read once and put aside, for it had a new story to tell every day. At sunrise there were graceful curves of water, delicately traced, the mist brightening to gold. A floating log made a ruffled trail that shone like silver.” Mark Patterson captures Mark Twain’s vivid description in the choir’s anthem, Mist on the River. They are joined by Tim Edwards.

Choir: Mist on the River

Donna Continues : For pure spectacle, little can match the glory of a moonless sky in the desert. The countless stars, their untouchable distance, they remain the mysterious “other” beyond our mind’s grasp. Even the triumph of our space probes have done nothing to dispel the austere beauty of that display. Eugene Butler’s anthem, “I Cannot Count the Stars”, reflects on the human humbleness before them. They are part of one great harmony that resonates inside us. We feel their calm and glory.

Choir: I Cannot Count the Stars

Closing Words – Donna

Our closing words are chosen from delicious bits of thought in Mary Oliver’s poetry collection, “Owls and Other Fantasies”. “How important it is to walk along, not in haste, but slowly, looking at everything. Birds will never sing for the kingdom of dollars or grow pockets in their wings. Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us! Imagination is better than a sharp instrument. To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.”

Our closing hymn is Earth Song, found on the handout sheet. It is a new hymn to celebrate Earth Day and the wonder of evolution.

Hymn Earth Song

Chalice Extinguishing (Donna)

We close this service by extinguishing our chalice candle. If our members on Zoom will hold up your candles, we will read together the words on your screen; 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 are together again.

Congregational affirmation (Donna)

Love is the doctrine of this church. The quest for truth is its sacrament, and service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace, seek knowledge in freedom, serve humanity in fellowship, to the end that all shall grow in harmony with the divine - this we covenant with one another.