

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
WICHITA, KS
“ECO SPIRITUALITY PRESENTATION” 04/19/09
Rev. Connie Pace-Adair

Thank you, Corey, Dianne, and the GS Committee for your invitation to me today to speak, for a few minutes, about eco-spirituality, which is very important to me. Thanks, also, to Dan Rutledge, and to Melody, his lovely wife, for being here today to share that lovely example of Indian faith practice.

This is not a sermon. Simply a few remarks among friends. I hope you enjoy these examples I've found, only some of very many I could have brought. Shall we begin?

Half of the six living traditions of Unitarian Universalism say that:

- “direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;” and
- “humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn against idolatries of the mind and spirit”; and
- “spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.”

These traditions form a triangle affirming eco-spiritual practices, or ecology and spirituality. That is, all partners in the community of life are afforded equal consideration. That we give place to the mystery and to the truth that life quickens, forms, dances, collides, expires, rebirths, and saturates each of us: rocks, plants, humus, waterfalls, centipedes, aardvarks, homo sapiens, wind, sand, and stars.

We would also be reminded in the words of the final entry of the UU Principles and Purposes, a covenant to affirm and promote “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” It seems that all living matter is being described in this passage. Rocks, plants, etc., etc., etc., as mentioned before. Even centipedes. Or even more startlingly thought-provoking: cockroaches! Shudder! But again, this seems clearly stated support for the context of eco-spirituality as a tenet of UU's stated beliefs.

I could almost say, this concludes my message. But shall we look at a few examples of two cultures who practice eco-spirituality?

I love quotations, and in reviewing eco-spirituality, I found in Desmond Tutu's words confirmation of what we've just heard. In *God has a Dream* he said, “The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation.”

The Ancients seemed to practice this tenet in not only their activities of daily living, but integrated into their Creator-worship. The Indian's Medicine Wheel in which

Dan shared the illustration of life's interconnectedness, and the drumming and singing he did for us show how Indians understood the relationship between earth and all her creatures.

The web of life. Interdependence. Our Mother, Earth. Many of you here are working diligently to care of Earth and her creatures. I know that care comes out of love, reverence, appreciation of the mystery, poetic connection, and spiritual investment.

We love out of our diversity. Wiccans, process, creation, and contemporary feminist theologians, agnostic vegans, atheistic scientists, including those studying quantum physics and the string theory, to name a few.

A sense of mystery, of wonder, even awe at what has been and is being discovered is found even in the words of scientists. More than 30 years ago, Astronaut Edgar Mitchell looked at earth from space and experienced an epiphany that caused him to pursue the proof of the interconnectedness of consciousness, and to establish the Institute of Noetic Science. Mitchell experimented in thought projection from space, and the results were proven beyond mere chance. Since then, Mitchell and other scientists around the globe continue to share descriptions of the amazing interaction of cause and effect, of intention and perception. The remote viewers work that the CIA funded, work with the sympathetic pain of plant leaves, Dr. Emoto's work with the changes in water crystals when exposed to either positive or negative words and thoughts all point to much that is beyond traditional scientific thought. Donald Mackay wrote in *Science, Chance and Providence*, "Ask a physicist to describe what he finds as he probes deeper and deeper into the fine structure of our solid world, and he will tell you a story of an increasingly dynamic character. Instead of a frozen stillness, he discovers a buzz of activity that seems to intensify as the magnification increases." Pythagorus said, "Rocks are frozen music." Same idea, I think.

Another scientist, Ervin Lazlo, writes on the Integral Theory of Everything, which he believes encompasses The Akashic Field. Within this field, also called the Zero Point Field, is said to reside memory of all that has occurred, and possibly all that will occur, within our universe. Actually, Lazlo says that all time is occurring right now. That is, to the most remote points of our Universe which can be projected. Yes, it is a theory. Held by many of Lazlo's colleagues, but yes, theories are not proven incontrovertibly. However, that a scientist such as Lazlo, a systems theorist, cosmologist, holder of four PhD.s, who is said to be the most profound thinker of our day with published books on this subject, has stated his conclusion, based on forty years of empirical research.

In the 1970s, James Lovelock formed the Gaia thesis, with the idea that the whole world is a living organism bound together by reciprocal ties of dependency." (Bradley: 42).

The basis for these ideas seem to be derived from Celtic thought. It has been said that from the Druids, the intelligentsia of the Celtic tradition, came the judges, chiefs,

priests (or Shamans) who taught the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. The natural world was integrated into daily Celtic life, and traditional celebrations such as Winter Solstice, with the birth of their Sun God Bel, Imbolc, celebrating St. Brigid. The Spring equinox particularly marks the rebirth of the vegetation deities. Beltane, May 1st, marked the welcome of Summer and the fertility, purification, and protection from disease of their livestock. Autumn's equinox marked the time of harvest. Last in the Wheel of Seasons was Samhain, All Souls and Day of the Dead. The traditional ceremonies practiced at these times marked the birth-death-rebirth cycle which ancient peoples observed in the earth's seasons.

Dan's Medicine Wheel ceremony illustrates one of the tangible ways indigenous people remembered the partnership of all living things. Another notable Indian ceremony is the Sun Dance, which took place at the Full Moon or nearest it in Midsummer. Purification, earth renewal, and male puberty were the themes of this ceremony which lasted one to four days.

Connection with the seasons and with the power of the sun can be seen in such native peoples' sites as Bighorn Medicine Wheel, a stone circle in Wyoming. There, the Summer Solstice sunrise and sunset is marked. Another astronomical site is at the top of Fajada Butte, a mountain in the Anasazi ruins of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. At midday on the Summer Solstice a thin shaft of light named a "sun dagger" by archaeologists, intersects a spiral petroglyph engraved on a cliff behind large slabs of rock which shadow the carving at all other times. The real need to mark accurately the times to plant and harvest was cause for the agricultural calendars used by Indian and other cultures.

Karen Singh's words

Karen Singh wrote, "In the light of the globalization of human civilization taking place before our very eyes, the evolution of a global consciousness is needed if mankind is not to destroy itself and all life on this planet by its inability to manage its technological ingenuity. For such a global consciousness to arise, a worldview in which science and spirituality converge is a necessary development."

Robert Siroco's words

It has been said that, "Eco-spirituality, is far from being a type of armchair spirituality. For some, it will mean a "mysticism of service." For others a conversion to a simpler style of living. For still others it may mean a contemplative awareness of the beauty and fragility of our planet, and a sense of solidarity with all living and non-living beings. For all of us, a commitment to eco-spirituality is like the leaven that will slowly raise human consciousness in our post-industrial age. In this way we may be able to transmit a truly human quality of life, both interior and external life, to future generations. (Sirico, *New York Times*, 11/23/97)

I will close with Chief Seattle's words

"The earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth."
Thank you.