

**BLESSING OUR SACRED EARTH**  
**AN INTERFAITH CELEBRATION OF GOD'S CREATION**



**INNISFREE GARDEN**  
**MAY 22, 2022**  
**12 NOON**

**Blessing Our Sacred Earth**

# **An Interfaith Celebration of God's Creation**

**Innisfree Garden**

**May 22, 2022**

## **Station 1**

### **Welcoming music**

*People gather on the overlook. Please contribute what you can to an offering to support the work of Innisfree Garden and the Dutchess Interfaith Council.*

### **Welcome and introduction**

Matt Calkins

### **Opening Reflection:**

Kate Kerin

On the history and spiritual ethos of this place

### **Hudson Valley Cantic**

Alison Quin and others

All you *big* things, bless the Lord.  
The Catskills and the Hudson River,  
Wappinger's Creek and Lake Taghkanic,  
Red oaks and tall pines,  
Black bears, bobcats and coyotes  
Bless the Lord.

**Praise and extol God for ever and ever.**

All you *tiny* things, bless the Lord.  
Busy black ants, ticks and fleas,  
Wriggling tadpoles and mosquito larvae,  
Bumble bees and pollen dust,  
Field mice and water droplets,  
Bless the Lord.

**Praise and extol God for ever and ever.**

All you *loud* things, bless the Lord.  
Thunderstorms and howling winds,  
Woodpeckers and screaming crows,  
Cicadas and katydids,  
Waterfalls and spring peepers  
Bless the Lord.

**Praise and extol God for ever and ever.**

All you *quiet* things, bless the Lord.  
Turtles and garter snakes,  
Butterflies and dandelion seeds,  
Queen Anne's Lace and goldenrod,  
Sunlight and green grass  
Bless the Lord.

**Praise and extol God for ever and ever.**

adapted by Alison Quin from a traditional African Canticle collected in Desmond Tutu's *An African Prayer Book*

**An Iroquois Thanksgiving Prayer** Ohstonha Ohskennonoton (Donna Coane)

We greet and give our thanks to all of the people walking here on our turtle Island in harmony and peace together.

We greet and thank our Turtle Island our earth for all she provides for us as everything we need for survival.

We greet and give thanks for all of our 4-legged furred ones for providing for us, food, clothing, shelter and tools. Our winged ones for their songs that reminds us we are alive, our bold eagle who delivers our prayers to our creator, and to the finned ones who cleanse our water ways and nourish us.

We greet and give thanks to our sun for rising with warmth and setting at night to rise again, our grandmother moon who leads us women, for birth to elder years, and lighting our path at night, and the stars for their guiding our way at night.

We greet and give thanks for our trees for their shade, fruits and our great white pine; tree of peace, our food plants; the three sisters; corn, beans and squash, medicine plants for their healings and our flowers for their beauty.

We greet and give thanks to our Thunder beings for replenishing and cleansing our water ways and earth. We are grateful and give thanks to our water for continuing life.

We are thankful for our teachers to lead us on the right path.

We are grateful and give thanks to you creator for all life you have given here on earth.

I am only human and meant to make mistakes, so I leave it up to you to if I left out a thanksgiving for I am only human.

We agree and our minds are now one.

**Mountain Flower: A Mohawk Song**

Ohstonha Ohskennonoton

*While the song is played, the people walk on to the second station, following the banner.*

## Station 2

### The Blessing of Sacred Earth

Rabbi Daniel Victor

### A Reading from the Torah

### Genesis 7-9, 15

Genesis 2:7-9,15

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפֹּחַ בָּאָזְנוֹ נְשִׁמַּת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה׃<sup>7</sup>  
וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים גֹּן־בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשָּׂם שָׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר׃<sup>8</sup> וַיִּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאֲדָמָה כָּל־עֵץ  
נֹחַמָּד לְמַרְאֵה וְטוֹב לְמַאֲכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הָגֶן וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע׃<sup>9</sup> וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם  
וַיַּנְחֵהוּ בְּגֶן־עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ׃

7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

### Song: *Lord of all hopefulness*

1. Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,  
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
2. Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,  
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
3. Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

4. Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

### **Station 3**

#### **The Blessing of Water**

*A Hindu story about a cobbler who was once visited by a great teacher.*

“I have just been to see Vishnu,” said the teacher. “And he thought you might have some questions.” The cobbler’s mind went blank; but he dredged up a question. “What was Vishnu doing when you saw him?” he asked at last. “He was threading an elephant through the eye of a needle,” came the answer. “Oh yes. Only Vishnu could do that!” the cobbler laughed.

“Surely you don’t believe it,” said the teacher, “I was just teasing.” “But why can’t he?” asked the cobbler, picking up a seed from beneath the banyan tree that was shading them. “Inside this seed is a tree as big as this one. If Vishnu can squeeze a whole banyan tree into such a tiny seed, then surely he can thread an elephant through the eye of a needle.” And the teacher realized that this was a wise man because he could see the hand of God in everything.

*from Ranchor Prime, Hinduism and Ecology. London: Cassell, 1992. Page 2*

#### **A prayer of peace for all beings and our sacred earth**

*May peace radiate in the whole sky as well as in the vast ethereal space everywhere. May peace reign all over this earth, in the water and in all the herbs, trees and creepers. May peace flow over the whole universe. And may there always exist in all peace and peace alone. Om peace, peace and peace to us and all beings. (Yajurveda 36:17)*

*Please engage in quiet meditation as we walk to the next station. Passers-by may dip their fingers in the bowl of water and make a sign of blessing.*

*"There is enough for everyone's need, but not for their greed." Mahatma Gandhi.*

## Station 4

### The Blessing of Earth

Ani Lhadrun

#### excerpts from A Letter to Mother Earth by Thich Nhat Hahn

Dear Mother Earth,

The human species is but one of your many children. Unfortunately, many of us have been blinded by greed, pride, and delusion, and only a few of us have been able to recognize you as our Mother. Not realizing this, we have done you great harm, compromising both your health and your beauty. Our deluded minds push us to exploit you and create more and more discord, putting you and all your forms of life under stress and strain. ...

We know that, in the ultimate dimension, you transcend birth and death, being and nonbeing. Nonetheless, we need to protect you and restore balance, so that you can continue for a long time in this beautiful and precious form, not just for our children and their children but for five hundred million years and beyond. We want to protect you so you can remain a glorious jewel within our solar system for eons to come.

We know that you want us to live in such a way that in each moment of our daily lives we can cherish life and generate the energies of mindfulness, peace, solidity, compassion, and love. We vow to fulfill your wish and respond to your love. We have the deep conviction that generating these wholesome energies, we will help reduce the suffering on Earth and contribute to alleviating the suffering caused by violence, war, hunger, and illness. In alleviating our suffering, we alleviate yours.

Dear Mother, there have been times when we suffered greatly as a result of natural disasters. We know that whenever we suffer, you suffer through us. The floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis aren't punishments or manifestations of your anger, but are phenomena that must occur on occasion, so that balance can be restored. The same is true of a shooting star. For balance in nature to be achieved, at times some species have to endure loss. In those moments, we have turned to you, dear Mother, and asked whether or not we could count on you, on your stability and compassion. You didn't answer us right away. Then, beholding us with great compassion, you replied, "Yes, of course, you can



## Station 6

### Parable of the Seeds

Heather Sisk

While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." *Luke 8:4-15 New International Version (NIV)*

*Please join our leaders in a Chant from the Taizé Community in France*

Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's ho - ly name.

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me in - to life.



*The service concludes at the flat rock with a series of blessings.*

### **Blessing of the Fields**

**AJ Stack**

For favorable weather, temperate rains, and fruitful seasons, that there may be food and drink for all your creatures, *we pray to you, O Lord.*

For your blessing upon the lands and waters, and all who work upon them to bring forth food and all things needful for your people, *we pray to you, O Lord.*

For all who care for the earth, the water, and the air, that the riches of your creation may abound from age to age, *we pray to you, O Lord.*

From “Rogation Procession,” *The Book of Occasional Services*, (TEC)

### **Blessing of the Seeds**

*All are invited to bring any seeds they have brought to the rock altar. These bean seeds are heirloom varieties. All are free to take some home and plant them. All read prayer in unison.*

**Creator of the universe, Lord of the harvest,  
you place the gifts of creation into our hands  
you call us to till the earth and make it fruitful.  
We ask your blessing as we prepare to place these seeds in the earth  
May they sprout and grow in health and vitality  
May their flowers, fruits and grains be full  
and may the care we show these seeds  
remind us of the tender love you have for your people  
and for all that which you have made.  
We ask this in your Name, however you are named among us.**

From “Order for the Blessing of Seeds at Planting Time,” *Book of Blessings* (RC)

*"Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there and I am prepared to expect wonders."*

*Henry D. Thoreau*

**Blessing of the People** –as stewards of creation

*all religious leaders share in this prayer adapted from The Iona Community*

May God's goodness be yours,  
and well, and seven times well, may you spend your lives;  
may you be an isle in the sea,  
may you be a hill on the shore,  
may you be a star in the darkness,  
may you be a seed in rich soil  
may you be a staff to the weak,  
and a light to the world;  
may the love God gave to all creation, fill every heart for you  
may the love God gave to all creation, fill you for everyone.

*together all say*

**We bless you,  
God of Seed and Harvest  
And we bless each other  
That the beauty of this world  
And the love that created it  
Might be expressed through our lives  
And be a blessing to others  
Now and always  
AMEN**

**Final song: For the beauty of the Earth**

1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the glory of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies.

Refrain: **Lord of all, to you we raise  
this, our hymn of grateful praise.**

2 For the wonder of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale and tree and flower,  
sun and moon and stars of light, [Refrain]

3 For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth, and friends above,  
for all gentle thoughts and mild, [Refrain]

**Dismissal: Go in peace to love and serve God, earth and each other!**

*Sow everywhere the good seed given to you. Sow in good ground, sow in sand, sow among the stones, sow on the road, sow among the weeds. Perhaps some of these seeds will open up and grow and bring forth fruit, even if not at once.*

*Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) Russian monk*

**We dedicate this year's service to the memory of two spiritual giants: Desmond Mpilo Tutu (1931-2021) and Thich Nhat Hahn (1926-2022)**

## **PICNIC AND CELEBRATION.**

We are grateful to all our participants and especially to Kate Kerin, Landscape Curator of Innisfree Garden, and the Board of Directors of this enchanted place. We are invited to enjoy its beauty and serenity and please ensure before we all leave that all we have brought in will respectfully be taken out.

**Participants:** Participating religious leaders include the Rev. Dr. Matthew Calkins, Grace Church Millbrook; the Rev. Alison Quin, Grace Church, Millbrook; Ohstonha Ohskennonoton (Donna Coane), Schaghticoke First Nations; Rabbi Daniel Victor; Lama Lhadrun, Palpung Thubten Choling (PTC) Monastery, Wappingers Falls; Br. Bader Isman, Imam, Masjid al Noor; the Rev. A.J. Stack, St Thomas, Amenia; the Rev. Heather Sisk, St Paul's, Pleasant Valley; Music led by Molly O'Neil Frank, Grace Church, Millbrook with help from others.

**Sponsors:** This event is sponsored by Grace Episcopal Church, Millbrook, and Innisfree Garden in Millbrook as part of the Food/Farm/Faith Initiative of Grace Church. This initiative seeks to grow community, nourish dialogue, and plant the future by connecting members of various food, farm, and faith communities in New York's Hudson Valley through events and partnerships. To learn more about The Food/Farm/Faith Initiative and to pursue possible collaborations, contact Matt Calkins at Grace Church Millbrook: [calkins@gracemillbrook.org](mailto:calkins@gracemillbrook.org) 845-677-3064.

**Take-home thanksgiving:**

O Lord, how lovely it is to be your guest: You brought me into this life as into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky, like a deep blue cup ringing with birds in the azure heights. We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the sweet-sounding music of the waters. We have tasted fragrant fruit of fine flavor and sweet-scented honey. How pleasant is our stay with you on earth: it is a joy to be your guest.

*from "An Akathist in Praise of God's Creation," Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Tryphon (Turkestanov), 1934*

