**Earth Sabbath Celebration January 28, 2016 Gallup, NM**

**Theme: “Winter’s Invitation: Experience Divine Presence Within”**

**Introduction:** During cold winter months, bears go underground to hibernate, not because of freezing temperatures, but because of the absence of food essential for life. Through hibernation, bears have learned to survive as a species. During this “winter sleep,” a bear’s heart rate, breathing rate, and metabolic rate slow down, and body temperature is reduced. Amazingly, during the denning period, bears can go for more than 100 days without eating or drinking. Drawing wisdom from our kin species, the bear, we humans are encouraged to discover within ourselves amazing inner sources of inspiration, creativity, vitality, strength and hope through silent contemplation and prayer.

**Musical Reflection: “Inner Sea” -** from*Natural Wellness CD*

**Winter Reflections:**

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| **In Winter Time,** Andrew Downing, 1815-1852  Though leafless are my trees –my trees so tall and stately  and silently from there my birds have flitted lately;  Though many joys I’ve known, as sweet as baby laughter,  which have forever flown – and sorrow follows after;  Though dead my summer flower, and winds are bleak and  dreary,  I shall not waste the hours in vain lament, my dearie,  nor miss the gay carouse of bobolink and linnet,  If still my heart shall house a singing bird within it. | **Our Quiet Time,** Nancy Wood  It is our quiet time.  We do not speak, because the voices are in us.  It is our quiet time.  We do not walk, because the earth is all within us.  It is our quiet time.  We do not dance, because the music has lifted us to a  place where the spirit is.  It is our quiet time.  We rest with all of nature. We wake when the seven  sisters wake.  We greet them in the sky over the opening of the kiva. |

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| **To Go in the Dark,** Wendell Berry  To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.  To know the dark, go dark.  Go without sight,  and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,  And is traveled by dark feet and dark wings. | **Winter Darkness,** Joyce Rupp  Winter darkness swaddles the long evenings  with comforting covers of stillness,  Greets the brightness of the waxing moon,  Fills the clear royal blue sky  with patterns of shining stars,  Applauds the vigor of determined dawns,  Receives the bowed head of setting sun. |

**Reading**: Excerpt from: ***“Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind,”*** *by Shunryu Suzuki*

When you are meditating, you are within the complete calmness of your mind; you do not feel anything.

You just sit. But the calmness of your sitting will encourage you in your everyday life. So actually you will find

the value of Zen in your everyday life, rather than while you sit. But this does not mean you should neglect

meditation. Even though you do not feel anything when you sit, if you do not have this meditation experience,

you cannot find anything; you just find weeds, or trees, or clouds in your daily life; you do not see the moon.

That is why you are always complaining about something…. By continuing your practice with this sort of

understanding, you can improve yourself. But if you try to attain something without this understanding,

you cannot work on it properly. You lose yourself in the struggle for your goal; you achieve nothing;

you just continue to suffer in your difficulties. But with right understanding you can make some progress.

Then whatever you do, even though not perfect, will be based on your inmost nature, and little by little

something will be achieved.

**Prayer Psalm: “A Winter Blessing”** Joyce Rupp

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| **R:** Blessed are you, winter, dark season of waiting,  you affirm the dark season of our lives,  forecasting the weather of waiting in hope.    **R:** Blessed are you, winter,  frozen and cold on the outside,  within your silent, nurturing womb  you warmly welcome all that longs for renewal. | **L:** Blessed are you, winter,  you faithfully guard a life unseen,  calling those who listen deeply  to discover winter rest.  L: Blessed are you, winter,  you teach us valuable lessons about waiting in darkness  with hope and trust. |

**Reading: “Dark Night of the Soul”** by Wendell Berry in *Life Prayers*

Nothing in the history of humanity has prepared us for what our generation is now living through. We hear

phrases such as “the death of Nature” or the need to “save the planet.” But by using such sweeping terms

we may be avoiding the deeper truth. It is not the Earth or nature that will die – the vast forces that create

and maintain life will certainly survive our carelessness – it is a loss much closer to ourselves and to our souls.

In our pursuit of material “progress” and consumer products, we are compromising the quality and meaning

of our lives and the future of many members of the Earth community. It has been said that during the next

fifty years one quarter of the Earth’s life forms will become extinct. With the loss of each species we are

losing a mode of Divine revelation that will never appear again. Beneath this reality lies a great despair.

Human civilization itself is going through a dark night of the soul.

It is the destruction of the world

in our own lives that drives us

half insane, and more than half.

To destroy that which we were given

in trust: how shall we bear it?

**Prayer:**

**All:** Mother, Father, God, Universal Spirit.

Remind us daily of the sanctity of all life.

Touch our hearts with the glorious oneness of all creation,

as we strive to respect all the living beings on this planet.

Penetrate our souls with the beauty of this Earth,

as we attune ourselves to the rhythm and flow of the seasons.

Awaken our minds with the knowledge to achieve a world in perfect harmony

and grant us the wisdom to realize that we can have heaven on Earth.

Jo Poore

**Reading: “Wild Joy,”** Interview with Terry Tempest Willaims**,** *Yes! Magazine,*  Fall 2015

This generation doesn’t have illusions. They’re interested in source, be it in growing their own food

or issues of sustainability. They’re well-traveled, and yet I think many of them are now cleaving

closer to home, figuring out where to take root. Their question is always, “So what do we do?” And

for me, it’s not “What can we do?” but “Who are we becoming?” … I think this is where we are.

We’re in this time where everything is being turned inside out, including us. Do we have the

stamina to not walk away, to stay in this hard place of transformation? I think we do. And to me,

that’s evolution. I can’t imagine being alive at a more thrilling, challenging time where what is

called for is acts of imagination, direction, and stillness.

**Psalm Prayer: “Beginners”** - Denise Levertov

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| **R:** But we have only begun to love the Earth.  We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life.  How could we tire of hope? - so much is in bud.  **R:** Surely our river cannot already be hastening  into the sea of nonbeing?  Surely it cannot drag, in the silt, all that is innocent?  Not yet, not yet | **L:** How can desire fail? – we have only begun  to imagine justice and mercy,  only begun to envision how it might be to live  as siblings with beast and flower, not as oppressors.  L: There is too much broken that must be mended,  too much hurt we have done to each other  that cannot yet be forgiven. |

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| **R:** We have only begun to know  the power that is in us if we would join  our solitudes in the communion of struggle. | L: So much is unfolding that must complete its gesture,  so much is in bud. |

**Silent Meditation:** (10 minutes)

**Sharing Circle:** passing around hawk feather

Each is invited to share experiences and reflections on ways in daily life one finds inner sources of renewal,

hope, inspiration, creativity and strength to continue the work we are being called to for all Earth community.

Prayers of gratitude and petition also.

**Commissioning to Empower the Work toward healing Earth Community** (Prayed at each service)

**Leader:** Grant us a spirit of concern for the future of our environment; bring an end to the exploitation of the

Earth’s scarce resources; encourage us to be responsible stewards of your creation.

**Response:** Creator God, Holy One Beyond All Names, make us prophets of our time.

**Leader:** Grant us a spirit of respect, recognizing the value and integrity of all creation; encourage us to be accepting of ourselves and of others.

**Response:** Creator God, Holy One Beyond All Names, make us prophets of our time.

**Leader:** Help us to become advocates of peace, bringing an end to conflict and division; renew our commitment to challenging the causes of injustice.

**Response:** Creator God, Holy One Beyond All Names, make us prophets of our time.

**Leader:** Grant us a spirit ofopenness to see God within and around us; help us to rejoice in the good we have

experienced as we move forward to the future; help us to use our senses to celebrate beauty and

creativity in the world.

**Response:** Creator God, Holy One Beyond All Names, make us prophets of our time.

**Leader:** Grant us a spirit of truth to recognize failings, which have hurt us, others and the Earth; give us humility to ask forgiveness for our part in any wrongdoing.

**Response:** Creator God, Holy One Beyond All Names, make us prophets of our time.

**Leader:** Grant us a spirit of generosity to reach out in trust to those whom we encounter; help us to embody

God’s love in our relationships with one another and with all creation.

**Response:** Creator God, Holy One Beyond All Names, make us prophets of our time.

**Earth Body Prayer** - sending out our love to heal the Earth Community

O great Spirit, Source of all life, behold us here in your presence.

I open my heart to the blessings from your creation and welcome them into me:

blessings of Earth and cosmos and blessings of my religious faith.

I acknowledge that the first Revelation was in the Earth and cosmos and I awaken that

memory in my body.

My body is a bridge between the universe and my tradition, all its beliefs and insights.

I embrace my faith and ground it through my body to the whole of creation so that I may become

a blessing to the other than human world.

I acknowledge and accept the reality of differences.

I embrace all the gifts of life, drawing them into my heart.

I send forth my breath in love throughout the Earth

for the healing of all people and all creation.