

An Earth Communion

I was here back in 2019 in October, and we celebrated a world communion by having an earth communion. While world communion is a Christian holiday to unify Christians through the Eucharist, my sense of the significance of world communion was that of unifying humanity by interacting with our common Mother, Gaia. So today we will have an earth communion do just that. We have already combined the soil(s). Earth from around our community. Earth that has some significance to it. Earth from our towns, our beaches, soil from our gardens. We have combined these together with our affection and good cheer. So let us reflect on the significance of this.

Earth is the stuff we are made of. We come from the earth, dirt, sand and soil. Many religious creations myths tell us so. From the Chinese middle kingdom there is the story of the Goddess Nuwa creating humanity out of droplets of mud.

From her tears from loneliness, and clay she used a cane to tap the ground to create clay figures. With her breathe she breathed life into them. She kept tapping the ground and made more and more humans. According to Chinese folklore, this was the beginning of humankind. Humans from the tears and mud.

And so it was with the Chinese

For the Ojibwe Indians, the start of humanity comes from the earth as well. Long before Mother Earth Existed, the Creator sat alone in darkness thinking, and with their thoughts they created Mother Earth. Covered Earth with plants and trees and birds and animal and crawling insects. But they became lonely. So from the soil of the Earth, they created two companions a man and a woman. Then the Creator blew life into the woman and man. Then the Creator said, take care of Mother earth and she will take care of you. Don't get greedy. Take only what you need and remember to put down tobacco before you take anything from Mother Earth.

And so it was for the Ojibwe people..

Lori Whittemore

05.01.22

Earth Communion

And from the Jewish and Christian tradition. God created man out of dirt and blew life into him.

His name was Adam. Adamah is the Hebrew word for earth/mud/soil. And when Adam became lonely, took one of his ribs which would have also been earth and created Eve or the first woman.

And so it is for the Jewish and Christian people

And so from these traditions and many others, humanity emerged from the earth, dirt, sand and soil that we walk on today. It is the cradle of our existence. Most creation myths and sagas link humanity's origin to the earth, to earth. I feel we can be confident that we came from the earth.

And in many of these same traditions, our first vocation was to garden and take care of the earth. Ojibwe woman was sent to sow. Adam and Eve were the first gardeners, present to enjoy the fruits of the Garden and after they left the abundance behind, they had to work to sow and reap from the earth. And many of the parables of the Bible explain God's grace through the sowing, caring for and reaping the harvest. They acknowledge the life-giving properties of earth, dirt, sand and soil as our responsibility to cultivate and care for them... We came from earth, we were made to tend the earth, the soil.

What is this earth this soil? Soil is a mixture of organic, minerals, gases, liquids, and organisms that work together to support and sustain life. The earth's body of soil is a medium for plant growth, water storage, a modifier of the Earth's atmosphere and a habitat for organisms. It is a product of several factors: the influence climate, elevation, weather, organisms, and the soil's parent materials (minerals) and the combination and mixing of these things over time. It is the major and one of the most important components of Earth's ecosystem. I wonder if you considered that when you poured your soil into the bucket this morning.

Soil acts as an engineering medium, a habitat for soil organisms, a nursery for nutrients and plant, a regulator of water quality, a purifier, a regulator of atmospheric conditions, a medium for plant growth. And these are just a few of its ecosystem services. It serves many purposes and scientists say that a tablespoon of soil contains the greatest amount of the Earth's genetic diversity than in any other atmospheric medium.

My friend, the Rev. Kate Albert Dawn is a horticulturist and botanist and offered these words. *When speaking of the environment, one aspect that people frequently overlook is our living soil – the very top layer of Mother Earth’s crust. So many people call it dirt, I must call it soil because it is alive.*

The soil ecosystem starts with minerals and moisture and air spaces. The organic matter of soil is composed of insects and worms and billions of mostly microscopic creatures like bacteria and fungi. All of these components constitute soil.

Dirt is what accumulates on the bottom of your shoes. Soil is what plants grow in and where they extract their nutrients. A type of magic happens; it is called the cation exchange capacity of soils. Elements are bound on soil particles and released in response to environmental factors such as temperature, moisture, and pH levels. These are the nutrients that most plants need for growth.

Through the process of photosynthesis plants provide our food, clothing, medicines, shelter, fuel, and livelihood. Without that constant continual circulation of elements from air, plants, and soil, we would not exist. Soil is everything.

That is what we speak of when we say earth.

We come from earth, we are made of earth, we are to tend earth, and earth has everything in it to take care of us.

Something else to consider. Soil is matter. Matter never ceases. The functions that the earth and soil perform have been transforming the world, the atmosphere CONTINUOUSLY since the dawn of time. Molecules that were present 10,000 years ago, 1000 years ago, 100 years ago, last year, last week are present right now in this earth. The air we breathe is composed primarily of nitrogen gas and oxygen gas with a small amount of other gases, including carbon dioxide. All of these individual molecules are constantly rearranged and recycled through biochemical and geochemical processes.

The individual atoms making up those molecules that make up our soils, have been on earth for a long time — very little carbon, oxygen or nitrogen is lost to outer space. The gases that were

Lori Whittemore

05.01.22

Earth Communion

here years ago and the molecules in them are still here. Only the occasional meteor brings a small extraterrestrial source of new carbon or oxygen to this planet. So, every breath you take is composed of particles, matter, that has been here for a long time.

This earth we have combined had meaning to you AND it represents our forebears from our creation at the very start of time until this very moment. The ministers that were here 100 years ago, left molecules in the soil that are still with us. And so it is true of the loved ones that have passed. Their molecules are in the soil around this building and in many molecules of the soil around their homes. Our interacting with it is a communion of our lives and all those who went before us.

So let us bless these elements..this earth, dirt, sand and soil. **(bring around bucket of soil and sand to have people stir it up and touch it)** Anne will bring around the soil that has been combined for all of you to stick your hands in and stir it. Turn it. Mix it. Or dip your finger into it. Mix in some of your molecules. Combine your matter with other's matter and with what matters about this soil for you and for them.

This soil communion represents our acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of ourselves to the earth and to each other. By bringing together our soils. Some from the beach, some from by the river, some from by our homes, we are offering our mixed soils, our Sacred soils to be a sign of our interconnectedness to each other and to all things. We bind our molecules to this earth, to each other here and now and to all that come after us. We bind ourselves through this specific earth and we declare our stewardship to protect its well-being, to protect each other's well-being. We declare that we belong to this earth. Each of us. And we belong together as this community.

As we leave this company of good people today, we will scoop some combined soil back into your baggie or container. Take it with you. Use it to plant a house plant, or turn it in your garden, put it in the jar or baggie you brought and take it home to keep or spread it on your lawn or return it to the river or sea. Remember that what you leave with today is the birthplace of all of creation. Of humanity. Remember that people from all different places and times recognized and still do recognize the holiness of earth. People from all different times and places have

Lori Whittemore

05.01.22

Earth Communion

always known it is theirs, it is ours to tend. See it for it's complexity and richness. Whatever soil is left over, can be turned into our front garden. Remember that everyone who is, was, or has ever been remains with us in the molecules that are present in this soil. An earth communion indeed!

Let us pray

Holy One we give thanks for the gift of our life as you drew us from the cradle of the earth. We acknowledge this gift and the sanctity of the earth, dirt, sand and soil and ask that you bless these soils that we have combined together in our earth communion this day. May we take this sacred soil, share this sacred soil and care for this sacred soil as a symbol of our gratitude for the gift of life and sustenance that comes from it. And may we help it create and sustain new life that will be a blessing to those who come after.

So be it, Amen