

**Opening music : 'Earth Song' Sung by 'Voces 8'**

[Find it here: https://youtu.be/4p8PYuzx5iM](https://youtu.be/4p8PYuzx5iM)

**Welcome:** Good morning and Welcome, whether you are here in the church, joining us online, or watching on youtube at a later date. Welcome, whoever you are, and however you are feeling, whatever you carry in your heart, and bring with you: cares, concerns or celebrations, sadness or joys, you are welcome, especially so if you are joining us for the first time. However we join in, each one of us is part of our community, contributing by being connected in spirit, and all are equally valued. We begin, as is our custom, by lighting our chalice as a symbol of our free religious faith. If you are at home and have a candle, you may like to light it now.

**Chalice Lighting:** *(Rev Audrey W. Vincent)*

We light this chalice this morning for Earth, our home.

Earth abundant, source of what was before we were and will be after we are gone.

As each cell proves our common destiny, may we know Earth, our mother of old, as our friend; as we were bred of dust and stars, may we know her fate as ours.

Blessed are our bonds to the earth,  
Blessed are our bonds to all of life,  
Blessed are our bonds to the Source of life itself.

**Opening Words:**

Our church Green Team is pleased to offer today's Service, marking Earth Day, which actually occurred last Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> Earth Day, is a global event celebrating our home Planet Earth, raising awareness of the threats to it, and what we humans can do to overcome them. It was first celebrated in USA in 1970, not long after the Apollo 8 astronauts sent back the images of the Earth as seen from space – a beautiful, fragile blue and white globe, spinning alone, amidst the vast darkness of space. Earth Day went global in 1990, and has been publicly observed every year since then, except during the pandemic.

Our Opening words are an extract from the Jewish Declaration on nature from the meeting of leaders of the world faiths organized by WWF in Assisi in 1986:

“At the very beginning of time, humankind accepted responsibility before God for all creation ..... Humankind was commanded to behave towards the rest of creation with justice and compassion ..... Humanity always lives in tension between its power and the limit set by conscience. Some 20 centuries ago, they told a story of 2 men who were out on the water in a rowing boat. Suddenly one of them started to saw through the wood under his feet. He maintained it was his right to do whatever he wished with the place that belonged to him. The other answered him that they were both in the rowing boat together; the hole that he was making would sink them both ..... We have a responsibility to life, to defend it everywhere, not only against our own damaging actions, but also those of others..... We are all passengers together in this same fragile and glorious world. Let us safeguard our 'rowing boat' – and let us row together.”

Our first hymn celebrates the wonder of our world, all its qualities and the many species with which we share it:

**1st Hymn: Green Book no. 27 'A World of Wonder'**

The sun at high noon,  
The stars in deep space,  
The light of the moon  
On our upturned face,  
The high clouds, the rain clouds,  
The lark song on high –  
We gaze up in wonder  
Above to the sky.

The green grassy blade,  
The grasshopper's sound,  
The creatures of shade  
That live in the ground,  
The dark soil, the moist soil,  
Where plants spring to birth –  
We look down in wonder  
Below in the earth.

The glad joys that heal  
The tears in our eyes,  
The longings we feel,  
The light of surprise,  
Our night dreams, our day dreams,  
Our thoughts ranging wide –  
We live with a whole world  
Of wonder inside.

*Tune: 'Laudate Dominum' Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, 1848-1918*  
*Words: Sydney Henry knight, b 1923 1881 – 1965 used by permission*

**Prayers:** let us turn to a time of Prayer and reflection.

**Prayer by Maryell Cleary**

Knowing that we do not always live up to our best expectations of ourselves, let us in quietness seek the good within, which some call 'The Inner Light', and some 'A Spark of the Divine'. P A U S E

Knowing that we live in a society that falls far short of the ideal, let us in quietness resolve to do one thing this week to aid those suffering from want and injustice

P A U S E

Knowing that the Earth is our home and that humankind is making it a dirty and even poisonous home, let us in quietness consider how we might be part of making it more healthful for all living things P A U S E

Knowing that each of us has some sorrow or worry hidden within us, let us consider in quietness how we may reach out to one another with our smiles, our handclasps and our encouraging words. P A U S E May it be so, A M E N

### Readings:

#### From 'Frost at Midnight' Samuel Taylor Coleridge , read by Delphine

*Poet wishes that his child shd grow up seeing and feeling nature as teacher, that wd "mould thy spirit and by giving make it ask", as ' god ' is in every manifestation of nature.*

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,  
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,  
Fill up the intersperséd vacancies  
And momentary pauses of the thought!  
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart  
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,  
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,  
And in far other scenes! For I was reared  
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all, and all things in himself.  
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould  
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,  
Whether the summer clothe the general earth  
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing  
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch  
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch  
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall  
Heard only in the trances of the blast,  
Or if the secret ministry of frost  
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,  
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

**'When I am among the Trees' by Mary Oliver from 'Thirst' Read by Margaret**

*'Mary Oliver Illustrates the role of humans in natural world " you have come into the world to do this". When she wants to find a role, she wants the hope of goodness, and the trees'message is ie " it's simple, shine".*

*The relationship is between human and trees, the message is a conversation, literally here the trees speak, humans can listen.*

When I am among the trees,  
especially the willows and the honey locust,  
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,  
they give off such hints of gladness,  
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.  
I am so distant from the hope of myself,  
in which I have goodness, and discernment,  
and never hurry through the world  
but walk slowly, and bow often.  
Around me the trees stir in their leaves  
and call out, "Stay awhile."  
The light flows from their branches.  
And they call again, "It's simple," they say,  
"and you too have come  
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled  
with light, and to shine."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hymn: Purple no. 66 'How wonderful this world of thine'**

How wonderful this world of thine,  
a fragment of a fiery sun,  
how lovely and how small,  
where all things serve thy great design,  
where life's adventure is begun  
in God, the life of all.

The smallest seed in secret grows,  
and thrusting upward answers soon  
the bidding of the light;  
the bud unfurls into a rose;  
the wings within the whole cocoon  
are perfected for flight.

The migrant bird in winter fled,  
shall come again with Spring, and build  
in this shady tree;  
by secret wisdom surely led,

homeward across the clover field  
hurries the honey bee.

O thou, whose greater gifts are ours –  
a conscious will, a thinking mind,  
a heart to worship thee –  
O take these strange unfolding powers,  
and teach us through thy Word to find  
the life more full and free.

*Music: 'Nesfield' David Dawson, 1939 - 2020*

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### **Trailer clip of NE Film 1 minute 4 seconds**

Instead of a story today, we are showing a short video trailer of a film showing the concerns of a variety of people about the serious threat which many human activities pose to our home, planet Earth, and ultimately, to us and all the species with whom we share it. This film was created after the National Emergency Briefing in November 2025, which brought together experts in climate science, who presented their latest findings around climate and nature crisis to an audience of politicians, third sector leaders, and faith representatives.

The organisers created a film documenting all of the speakers at the event and are now calling on communities around the UK to host screenings. This would be a perfect event to get engagement with the wider community, especially your local Councillors and MP's.

The entire film will be shown in Plymouth in a few weeks, and we hope to also show it at this here church during the summer

After the video clip, Marianne will read a piece entitled 'Active Hope' by Joanna Macy. Then we will pass around a collection of natural objects and invite everyone who would like to, to choose one for a time of quiet contemplation as we play some music accompanied by a video of a Wildflower Meadow.

Find it here:

<https://mail.aol.com/d/list/referrer=newMail&folders=1&accountIds=1&listFilter=NEWMAIL/messages/AAGfbFL2jwUUpRIh9qWMSXsmfu#:~:text=The%20National%20Emergency,publicise%20it%20further!>

### **'Active Hope' from 'Trusting the Spiral' by Joanna Macy read by Marianne**

Active Hope is not wishful thinking.

Active Hope is not waiting to be rescued  
by the Lone Ranger or by some saviour.

Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life  
on whose behalf we can act.

We belong to this world.

The web of life is calling us forth at this time.

We've come a long way and we are here to play our part.  
With Active Hope we realise that there are adventures  
In store,  
strengths to discover, and comrades to link arms with.  
Active Hope is a readiness to engage.

Active Hope is a readiness to discover the strengths  
in ourselves and in others;  
a readiness to discover the reasons for hope  
and the occasions for love.  
A readiness to discover the size and strength of our hearts,  
Our quickness of mind, our steadiness of purpose,  
our own authority, our love for life,  
the liveliness of our curiosity,  
the unsuspected deep well of patience and diligence,  
the keenness of our senses, and our capacity to lead.  
None of these can be discovered in an armchair or  
Without risk.

**Time for reflection:** Pass around trays of natural objects for contemplation.

**Tranquil music video: of a wildflower meadow, a haven for bees 3 mins 53 secs**

Find it here: <https://youtu.be/5ivyA-wOkUY?si=tzPA1fvpNDwla6Dk>

### **'Earth Day' Reflective Address 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026 by Rev Dr Edgar Mihas**

On this Mother Earth Day, we gather not simply to celebrate the beauty of our world, but to reflect on our place within it, our responsibilities, our limitations, and our possibilities. From a Unitarian perspective, we stand at a crossroads of traditions, drawing wisdom from many wells, guided not by doctrine but by a shared commitment to truth, compassion, and reverence for life.

The Earth, in all its abundance, is not merely a backdrop to human activity. It is the ground of our being, the context of our stories, the source of our breath. In the Book of Genesis, we read that humanity was formed from the dust of the ground and animated by the breath of life. This image is not one of domination but of intimacy. We are not separate from the Earth; we are of it. The Hebrew word "adam" shares its root with "adamah," meaning soil, reminding us that our identity is inseparable from the living land.

Yet the biblical tradition also contains tension. Humanity is given "dominion" over the Earth, but how we interpret that word matters deeply. If dominion is understood as exploitation, we see the consequences all around us: environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and a climate in crisis. However, if dominion is understood through the lens of stewardship — care, responsibility, and humility — then it becomes a sacred

trust. The prophets repeatedly call for justice not only among people but within the whole of creation. The Earth itself is portrayed as groaning under the weight of human injustice.

Buddhist teachings offer another perspective, one that resonates deeply with this sense of interconnectedness. The principle of interdependence teaches that nothing exists in isolation. Every tree, every river, every creature arises in relationship with everything else. When we harm the Earth, we are not harming something “other” — we are participating in our own suffering. The practice of mindfulness invites us to become aware of this reality, to see clearly the web of life in which we are embedded.

Compassion, in the Buddhist sense, extends beyond human beings to all sentient life. It calls us to act in ways that reduce suffering and cultivate balance. This is not an abstract ideal; it is a practical ethic. It asks us to consider how we live, what we consume, and how our choices ripple outward. In this way, caring for the Earth becomes a spiritual practice, a form of awakening.

Karen Armstrong, in her writings on religion and the history of human belief, reminds us that the core of all major spiritual traditions is not belief, but compassion. She argues that the Golden Rule — to treat others as we wish to be treated — is the thread which binds religious wisdom across cultures. If we extend this principle to the Earth itself, it challenges us profoundly. What would it mean to treat the natural world as we would wish to be treated? To act not out of convenience or short-term gain, but empathy and respect?

Karen Armstrong also speaks of the importance of reclaiming a sense of the sacred. In many modern societies, we have desacralised the world, reducing it to a collection of resources to be managed or consumed; but when we lose the sense that the Earth is holy, that it possesses intrinsic value beyond its utility, we also lose our moral anchor. Re-sacralising the Earth does not require a return to superstition; it requires a shift in perception. It asks us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, to recognise that every living thing participates in a larger mystery.

From a Unitarian viewpoint, this resonates deeply. We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, but why stop there? Many Unitarian communities have expanded this principle to include all of creation. The Earth is not just something we use; it is something we belong to. Our ethical commitments — to justice, to compassion, to truth — must therefore include ecological responsibility.

Mother Earth Day is not only a celebration; it is a call to conscience. It asks us to examine the ways in which we are complicit in harm, and to imagine alternatives. It invites us to move beyond despair into action, not because we are certain of success, but because care itself is meaningful. Even small acts — reducing waste, protecting habitats, advocating for change — become expressions of a deeper spiritual commitment.

Perhaps most importantly, this day calls us to cultivate gratitude. Gratitude for the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food that sustains us. Gratitude for the intricate, fragile systems that make life possible. Gratitude, not as a passive feeling, but as an active force that shapes how we live.

In the end, the question is not whether we can save the Earth. The Earth, in some form, will endure. The question is whether we can transform ourselves — our habits, our values, our ways of seeing — so that we may live in right relationship with the world that sustains us.

May we listen more deeply. May we act more wisely. And may we remember, always, that we are not separate from this Earth, but part of its unfolding story.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Hymn: Purple 216 'Wide Green World'**

Wide green world, we know and love you:  
clear blue skies that reach above you,  
moon-tugged oceans rising, falling,  
summer rain and cuckoo calling.  
Some wild ancient ferment bore us,  
us and all that went before us:  
life in desert, forest, mountain,  
life in stream and springing fountain.

We know how to mould and tame you,  
we have power to mar and maim you.  
Show us by your silent growing  
that which we should all be knowing:  
we are of you, not your master,  
we who plan supreme disaster.  
If with careless greed we use you  
inch by extinct inch we lose you.

May our births and deaths remind us  
others still will come behind us.  
That they also may enjoy you  
we with wisdom will employ you.  
That our care may always bless you.  
teach us we do not possess you.  
We are part and parcel of you.  
Wide green world, we share and love you.

*Tune 'Schmucke Dich' melody Johann Cruger, 1598 – 1662*  
*Words C. June D. Bell b. 1918. Used by permission*

**Closing words:** To close, we leave you with this thought, from the Unitarian book 'Fragments of Holiness', which has quotations from many well known thinkers, poets, writers, and activists, one for each day of the year.

The quotation for April 22, Earth Day, is by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, who urges us, “Love all of God’s creation, both the whole and every grain of sand, in it. Love every leaf, every ray of light. Love the animals, love the plants, love every kind of thing. If you love each fragment, then everywhere God’s mystery will reveal itself to you. Once you perceive it, you will begin to understand it ever more deeply with each passing day. And finally you will be able to love the whole world with an all-embracing, universal love.”

- And from that love, we can each find the strength and will to do what we can...  
... its not a sprint, it’s a marathon!      *AMEN*

### **Extinguish Chalice**

**Closing Video: ‘Earth Day 2022’**

**2 mins 14 secs**

**Watch here: <https://youtu.be/HCDVN7DCzYE?si=kteVjbRiTkeXX8Bn>**