

Resources and Guide for OneEarth Jubilee Covenant Component— *Practicing The Sacred*

_____ I will embrace the worldview that sees the sacred in all things and all processes. I will see myself as part of nature, not above it, and integral with the interdependence of all that is.

— Part 1 —

Covenant Resources and Guide Created by OneEarth Jubilee

Throughout our work with the OneEarth Jubilee Covenant, it will be really helpful to have access to a copy of *From Egos to Eden: Our Heroic Journey to Keep Earth Livable*; also *Blinded by Progress: Breaking Out of the Illusion that Holds Us*. Ask your library to get copies. Or try getting copies online through either Thriftbooks or Alibris, neither is owned by Amazon. I avoid Amazon and subsidiaries as much as possible just because of their predatory market approach and exploitation of their workers. But Amazon and subsidiaries do carry these titles. If you must use Amazon, set up a smile.Amazon account and name Jubilee Economics Ministries or another nonprofit who will then receive a small % of your purchase.

Learning to Recognize the Sacred as More than (or Other Than) Religion

See the Table entitled “Contrasting MultiEarth and OneEarth Worldviews,” pp 8-14, in *Blinded by Progress*, you will be struck by 2 or 3 parts that are your current growing points. Focus your actions (discipleship, spiritual practice) on those.

Below is the segment of that table on “Religion and the Sacred.” You need not be part of any religious traditions or particular set of religious beliefs to recognize the significance of the contrasts in the two worldviews below. Substitute your own words and notice how your daily lives express one or the other worldview. Then share your observations in a group.

This table is not comprehensive, but suggestive. Revise and add to as suits you.

MultiEarth Worldview

OneEarth Worldview

God is believed in, usually as the God or deities of a religious tradition, is restricted to the private sphere; is invoked to address personal needs and bless human endeavors	God is the experience of The One of which we are all interconnecting parts. God is beyond and behind all religious traditions; is inherent in and beyond the evolutionary processes of Earth and Cosmos and seeks continuing co-creativity with all life
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Gods of civilization (e.g., wealth, sports, many more).receive daily devotion and are the deities of functional religion	Gods of civilization are relativized to the cosmic God of continuing Creation, thus losing their power over us
Sacred and secular have separate realms; sacred reduced to religious sphere and absent as a living Spirit or Mystery from economics, politics, business, and elsewhere	A deep sense of the sacred so infuses everything, everywhere that even the term “ secular ” loses meaning; no realm is separate from sacred presence
Religious power of nationalism and economics goes unrecognized and functions uncontained when sacred is confined to realm of religion	Religious power of nationalism and economics is recognized and contained and restrained within the greater sacred wonders
The primary revelation of the sacred comes through sacred texts, buildings of worship, temples, and priesthoods or teachers	The primary revelation of the sacred comes through the natural world, the interactive, evolutionary processes of continuing Creation
Having more than enough materially is considered a sign of divine blessing; giving back to the community can be seen as generosity, a waste, or, sometimes, a spiritual practice	Having more than enough materially is seen as a violation of the creational order, taking what rightfully belongs to others or the entire community of life; restoring the common good is essential

Actions — Group Actions Are Stronger

There is no one action by which we learn to practice the sacred. It is living with a OneEarth consciousness daily It is a practice as well as a choice and commitment.

1. Watch a nature documentary and practice being in the scenes, not an observer of them, being part of the sacred Presence there, interdependent with all the beings. Talk in a group about your experience. Build relationships with others who can share with you in ongoing ways of OneEarth living.
2. Notice in daily life, when you hear a newscast or in any interactions you have whether the sacred is absent or seen as integral with events, illness, laughter, work—all things and processes.
3. Listen to Earth and your deep creation-connected Self for your Call, your life purpose or simply your next step? Share it with another and be sure to act on it— with others, when possible.

Continue to Reflect and Share with Another or Group

Read the quote from Albert Einstein on the frontispiece page of *From Egos to Eden*.

Read “The Price of Taming the Wild: Our Wound of Disconnection,” pages 269-273, in *From Egos to Eden*.

Discuss questions #4, #6, and #7 on taming the Wild or tending it and on interdependence—all from *From Egos to Eden*, p. 292,.

Share your feelings and thoughts about question #3 (Herman Daley-John Cobb quote) in *Blinded by Progress*, p. 54.

Part 2

Covenant Resources and Guide Created by Progressive Christianity

Progressive Christianity will soon release Year 3 of their new curriculum. The following study guide is taken from that curriculum, entitled, *A Joyful Path*. Co-authors are Rev Deshna Charron Shine and Rev Lauren Van Ham. A segment is used here with permission. A contribution has been made for its use.

[WEEK 10]

SEASON: AUTUMN

LESSON EIGHT: Each Creature is a Book Full of God

STORY: Jenny, Part 1: “Wolf and Sheep”

SPIRITUAL AFFIRMATION: I learn about God from every creature.

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE LESSON

Meister Eckhart, a 12th century mystic proclaimed, “Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature – even a caterpillar – I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature.”

The late Thomas Berry, catholic priest and geologist, sounded a lot like Eckhart when he urged us forward with these words, “The greatest of human discoveries in the future will be the discovery of human intimacy with all those other modes of being that live with us on this planet... and with which we exchange the very substance of life.”¹

There is a creation story shared by the original people's throughout Turtle Island (North America) Great Lakes regions² that tells of a Skywoman falling in a column of light from

¹ 1999. Berry, Thomas. “The Extractive Economy,” in *The Great Work*, p.149.

²The Great Lakes region of North America is a bi-national Canadian–American region that includes portions of the eight U.S. states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin as well as the Canadian province of Ontario.

a hole in the sky, darkness all around her as the animals of the Earth watched. The geese caught her in the fall and held her atop the ocean water. The animals held a council. A great turtle offered her his back upon which to rest. The animals understood she needed a land to live on, so a small muskrat dove deep into the ocean and returned with a fist of mud. Skywoman spread the mud over the turtle's back and danced her thanks to the animals. As Skywoman danced, the land grew and grew until the whole earth was made.

This is a beautiful creation story, showing the interconnectedness of creation. Even more important is what followed. Skywoman had brought gifts to offer as well. She brought seeds and fruits of all kinds of plants which she carefully tended until the Earth was covered with green and abundance. "It is said that the Creator gathered together the four sacred elements and breathed life into them to give form the Original Man, named Nanabozho, before setting him upon Turtle Island," a world already fully formed with plants and animals, winds and water. The world was in balance and all lived in harmony. The Creator gave Nanabozho the "Original Instructions" to walk in such a way "that each step is a greeting to Mother Earth,"³ and to follow the paths made by all those whose home this already was. He was told to learn the names of all the beings, to watch how they lived and to learn what gifts they carried, to learn from all the creatures how to find food, how to clean the food, how to build and make tools, how to sit quietly and ask permission to take, how to live in right relationship with the land and creatures and that he must protect life on earth.⁴

These quotes and stories provide the message of this week's lesson. Every creature (animate and inanimate) is full of God. We are full of God. How does the world feel different when we claim this to be true? How do our attitudes or actions change when we relate to all creatures as holy friends, reliable teachers, and, as Eckhart said, "books about God"? Every being has something to teach us.

TEACHER REFLECTION/ACTIVITY

Some reading and a 10-20 min exercise (more if you have time and wish to take it) so you are able to experience the teachings offered through this week's lesson.

Psalm 8:6 in Hebrew Scriptures often uses the word "dominion" to describe the relationship God has given humans in our stewardship of Earth. We have been short-sighted when this text or others are interpreted to mean other creatures are "lesser than" human beings. All creatures possess value and potency. Mosquitoes, bacteria or poison oak possess a great deal of potency, regardless of size or appearance. Medicinal herbs and plants heal sicknesses and save lives. Psalm 8:6 has never meant our species has God's blessing to use our power over other forms of life. Instead, we

³The traditional teachings can be found in The Mishomis Book, by Eddie Benton-Banais

⁴ Adapted from stories in Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Wall Kimmerer

are called to take full responsibility for the power we have been given, to use the privilege we hold as humans, to care for all Creation and to develop intimacy with all beings.

The importance of this lesson is to begin to relate to all beings - human and more-than-human, animate and inanimate – as our relatives and teachers. Whether this is a new practice for you, or a perspective you have held for some time, the following exercises will help you continue to expand and explore your intimacy with life in all forms:

Option 1: Recall a book or a movie where trees, animals, or mountains have been given personalities, power and can speak for themselves. What have you appreciated in these stories? What have these non-humans shown you about you or your role in creation? Journal about this if you wish.

Option 2: Spend time with your pets, relating to them on their level. Quiet some of your large, human energy to receive the wisdom only they can impart as canine, feline, etc. What wisdom do they offer you? Maybe they are teaching you about rest, adoration, mindfulness, and unconditional love.

How are you aware of the divinity present in each being? How does this awareness change the way you engage in daily activities? How can you invite greater intimacy with the life all around you? How do you relate to the water coming from your showerhead, the spider crawling across your ceiling, the bird chirping beyond the window, the piece of gravel caught in your sandal? The tomato you pick from the vine? As you develop awareness of all your relatives, do you see, feel or hear God around you in new ways?

Read through the lesson before your time with the children. Decide which Activity Exploration will work best for your class (There are usually two options; choose one). Just below the heading, “Children’s Lesson and Story” you will find the preparations checklist for this lesson so you can collect any needed materials or make arrangements to support your selected activity.

SACRED TEXT QUOTES

Sikhism. Guru Granth Sahib

There is but one all pervading Spirit, and it is called the truth. It exists in all creation, and it has no fear. It does not hate and it is timeless, universal and self-existent! You will come to know it through the grace of the Guru.

Christian Scriptures. Ephesians 4:6 (NRSV) There is one God and Father (Mother) of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism). Upanishad 4.2-4

Thou art the fire

Thou art sun

Thou art the air

Thou art the moon
Thou art the starry firmament
Thou art Brahman Supreme;
Thou art the waters - Thou, the Creator of all!
Thou art woman, thou art man,
Thou art youth, thou art the maiden,
Thou art the old man tottering with his staff;
Thou facest everywhere.
Thou art the dark butterfly,
Thou art the green parrot with red eyes,
Thou art the thunder cloud, the seasons, the seas.
Without beginning art Thou,
beyond time and space.
Thou art He from whom sprang
the three worlds.

WISDOM QUOTES

The chimpanzee study...taught us perhaps more than anything else to be a little humble; that we are, indeed, unique primates, we humans, but we're simply not as different from the rest of the animal kingdom as we used to think.

— Jane Goodall

The sun shines not on us, but in us. The rivers flow not past, but through us. Thrilling, tingling, vibrating every fiber and cell of the substance of our bodies, making them glide and sing. The trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies as well as our souls, and every bird song, wind song, and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song, our very own, and sings our love.

— John Muir

"This here," he said playing with it, "is a stone, and perhaps at a certain time it will be soil and will, from soil, become a plant or an animal or a human being. ...This stone is a stone, it is also an animal, it is also God, it is also the Buddha, I love and honor it not because it could become this or that someday, but because it is everything long since and always..."

— Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*

CHILDREN'S LESSON AND STORY

Preparation for teaching: *Choose ONE of the Exploration Activities below. Then prepare for that activity, as needed, with the instructions here.*

✓ (Activity One) Bring a basket with a few items from nature (or symbolizing nature). For example, an apple, a walnut, a stuffed bear or other animal, leaves or flowers, a rock, and several photos of trees, mountains, or of animals in their natural habitats.

- ✓ (Activity Two) Help the children create their Joyful Path Journal or Folder if you have not already done this. This spiral-bound sketchbook or 9"x12" envelope will safely keep the artwork and/or written reflections the students create over the year. If sketchbooks are not possible, staple (or hole punch and use a brad or ribbon) 15-20 pieces of unlined paper to create booklets for each child. Bring markers, crayons, or stickers so children can decorate their Journal/booklet/folder.
- ✓ Select one Sacred Text or Wisdom Quote from the collection above that, with some help from you, the children will understand. Write or print your selection on paper or a dry erase/chalkboard so the quote can be read during the session. [NOTE: Some of the Wisdom Quotes are intended for teachers and will be too difficult for the children's comprehension.]
- ✓ Prepare the Affirmation page for children to take home at the end of your time together. You can print out the full page Spiritual Affirmation art from the digital file or make copies from your handbook.

°°°Music option: When children are entering, cleaning up or as a movement break.
Chapter of the Forest, by Trevor Hall

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3eDYjWD8Axyj50BPtxq2R7?si=64db202e7d6e42f9>

I. OPENING THE LESSON

Gratitude Circle (standing if possible)

We encourage you to begin each week with some moments of mindfully noticing where you are geographically and ecologically located with respect and curiosity. A simple way to do this is to acknowledge and give thanks for those who were living on the land before it was settled or colonized, and then by inviting everyone present to share something for which they feel grateful.

Additional ways to honor your surroundings include: *Do you know the name of the people who, long before you arrived, called this land home? Do you know the name of the watershed that brings fresh water to the faucets where you are right now? What season are we in? What is Earth doing now? What did you see today or this week that let you know what season we are in or what Earth seems busy doing?* Then, proceed to this week's lesson...

II. STORY

TEXTS and QUOTES: Before reading the story for the lesson, invite a volunteer to read the Sacred Text or Wisdom Quote you have selected. Ask the children for their ideas about what these words might mean. Then proceed to the story....

Jenny, Part 1: "Wolf and Sheep"

Age 9
Ojibwe⁵ Peoples
Wisconsin, USA

[NOTE: The Ojibwe, also known as the Chippewa, are a group of Algonquian-speaking bands who amalgamated as a tribe in the 1600s in what is currently southern [Canada](#) and the northern [Midwestern United States](#). In the United States, they have the fifth-largest population among [Native American](#) peoples, surpassed in number only by the [Navajo](#), [Cherokee](#), [Choctaw](#) and [Sioux](#). In Canada, they are the second-largest [First Nations](#) population, surpassed only by the [Cree](#). They are one of the most numerous [Indigenous Peoples](#) north of the [Rio Grande](#). See links below for more education.]

My name is Jenny. I am 9 years old.

There is a creation story shared by my grandmother's ancestors, the Ojibwe peoples, who lived on the land of the Great Lakes regions and in Canada. The story tells how our Earth and people came to be. Curled up on the rocking bench on the porch with my grandmother, she tells me about Skywoman and the Original Man. The sun has just set but there is still some pink, orange light lingering in the sky and through the tall maple and aspen trees that line our yard.

My grandmother's long grey-white hair is loose, out of her normal thick braid, and it falls over her chest in waves. Her voice is deep and thick, but sweet like maple syrup. I struggle to keep my eyes open because this is one of my favorite stories. The swinging of the bench and my grandmother's gentle, husky voice is comforting and familiar.

I can see the story in my mind so clearly as she speaks, it is like I was there too.

"Skywoman fell in a column of light from a hole in the sky, darkness all around her as the animals of the Earth watched. She fell like a maple seed, pirouetting on an autumn breeze. As she fell, she clutched a bundle tightly in her hand.

The geese caught her in the fall and held her atop the ocean water.

The animals held a council and a great turtle offered her his back on which to. The animals understood she needed a land to live upon, so a small muskrat dove deep into the ocean to the bottom and returned with a fist of mud.

⁵ In addition to A Joyful Path's cultural editor team, Jenny and her story were developed using research and information from the following sources:

<http://www.mpm.edu/content/wirp/ICW-151.html>
<https://www.pbs.org/video/wpt-documentaries-wolves-in-wisconsin/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norwegian_Americans
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Lakes_region
<https://project.geo.msu.edu/geogmich/ojibwe.html>

Skywoman spread the mud over the turtle's back and danced her thanks to the animals. As she danced, the land grew and grew until the whole earth was made, from a mixture of her gratitude and the animals' gifts. The land formed what is now called Turtle Island.

Skywoman had brought gifts to offer as well. She brought seeds and fruits of all kinds of plants. She carefully tended the seeds and fruits until Earth was covered with green and abundance.

It is said the Creator gathered together the four sacred elements and breathed life into them to give form to the Original Man, named Nanabozho. The Creator then set Nanabozho upon Turtle Island.

Turtle Island was a world already fully formed with plants and animals, winds and water when the first man was created.

The world was in balance and all lived in harmony.

To maintain this balance, the Creator gave Nanabozho the 'Original Instructions' to walk in such a way 'that each step is a greeting to Mother Earth,' and to follow the paths made by all those whose home this already was -- the animals and plants.

He was told to learn the names of all the beings, to watch how they lived and to learn what gifts they carried, to learn from all the creatures how to find food, how to clean the food, how to build and make tools, how to sit quietly and ask permission to take, how to live in right relationship with the land and creatures and that he must protect life on earth."

The Ojibwe creation story of Skywoman and the one of the first man, Nanabozho, and many others, have been passed down my family line for generations. They are important reminders of how to live in right relationship with everything that inhabits Earth.

The geese teach us how to be generous. The muskrat teaches us how to provide and the turtle teaches us how to offer our natural gifts back to creation. Skywoman teaches us how to be a co-creator and how to give back to the land so that all might thrive.

Skywoman reminds us to ask, "What will I give in return?"

Our creation stories remind us all creatures are interconnected and needed. We have so much to learn from watching our animal cousins.

The sheep on our farm teach me there is safety in numbers, to go with the flow, and to make a lot of noise. They teach us that each creature comes bearing gifts. The wool from our sheep keeps us warm and provides us with a resource that we sell to help pay

for our farm. Caring for our sheep and living in gratitude for the gifts we receive from them brings us joy and nourishment.

Once I saw a Wolf in the woods around our farm. At first, I was terrified! The Wolf was much taller than I was expecting! Wolves have extremely long legs. They can run fast for miles and they hunt as a team. They are shy, mysterious and cunning hunters with sharp teeth and strong muscles. For a while the wolves were all hunted out of Wisconsin but then laws were created to keep people from hunting too many of them. Wolves began to return to Wisconsin. They literally walked in from Minnesota.

That is a long way to walk...and somehow they knew it would be safe for them to return. And now there are over 700! The return of Brother Wolf to our lands is a gift to everyone. With the wolves here, the ecosystem stays in balance. The wolves keep the herds moving so the grazers like deer and elk do not eat all the baby trees and shrubs. Without wolves and other predators, the health of the rivers are affected and rivers can even collapse. Without water, the plants and animals struggle to survive.

Wolves teach me to stay alert, to work in a team, and to love fiercely. They teach me there is a natural balance to the world, between predator and prey, fierceness and gentleness, strength and vulnerability.

Sometimes I go running on the land as long, as fast and as hard as my legs will let me and I pretend to be a Wolf. When I get tired, I howl my best wolf howl in the direction of the Moon.

I feel my great, great, great Grandmother smiling at me from the stars.

After Grandmother finishes her story, we go inside where a warm fire is glowing in our fireplace. I cuddle up with my baby brother, in a pile, like baby wolves do. We lay on a rug made from sheep skin.

I pull him close to me and whisper stories of Skywoman and Nanabozho.

I pass along the wisdom to him as I imagine old sheep pass along their lessons to the new lambs.

“Stay in the herd.” they tell their lambs, “Watch your elders. Run when we run. Cuddle up when you are cold. Walk as you eat grass...”

I watch the fire and feel its warmth and notice how it brings light to our living room. The tree gives their life, so that we may live. From the trees, we learn about patience, strength, and exchange. They give so much - clean air, shelter, fire, food.

In the woods beyond our house, I know the animals are living in harmony with each other, a balance that allows all creatures and the land to thrive. We humans have a lot to learn about that.

Our dog, Grace, nuzzles up to us pushing us aside with her long legs for her spot in front of the fire. I think, "Grace teaches us about loyalty, protection, playfulness and rest."

I wrap my arms protectively around my baby brother and drift off to sleep with images of Skywoman floating down from the stars and all the animals waiting to welcome her and care for her.

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Select a few)

1. *What did Jenny learn from her study of the wolves? Have you ever seen a wolf? Would you want to?*
2. *Do you know where wool comes from? Have you ever seen a sheep have its hair cut? It's called "shearing" the sheep.*
3. *What is your favorite animal? What do you learn from that animal?*
4. *Do you see God or Spirit in animals? How? Which ones?*
5. *Do you see God or Spirit in flowers, plants? What about rocks or mountains?*
6. *What gifts did Skywoman bring to offer the animals as Turtle Island was being created?*
7. *How do plants or animals show us how to live in the world?*
8. *Now that we've heard the story for this lesson, let's return to the Sacred Text and/or Wisdom Quote we heard a few minutes ago. Why are these words important? What do you think we should remember?*

IV. ACTIVITY/EXPLORATION 1

Looking for God in All Things

Sitting together, invite the children to share about a being – a pet, or person - they really love. *Is God in that being? (Yes) How is God visible in this being? (i.e., They are kind, patient, beautiful, loving, etc).* Every one of us is a book about God. By listening well and being curious, we learn to see God in one another and the world around us.

Next, bring out the basket filled with different representatives from creation. *Are these books about God? Do these things tell a story about God?* Select a piece of the food from the basket. *This food has life in it and that life is a bit of God -- beauty, color, health, sweetness. How is this _____ (rock, shell, blade of grass, etc) a book about God? What might we learn from this _____?*

OR,

If you are able to take the group outside, stand together silently for a few minutes. *Then ask, What do you see first? (I see Ben, or I see my shoe.) Yes, that's true, now look even more closely. Is there something looking at you A tree? A leaf? A butterfly? (There's a ladybug! That squirrel in the tree!) What do you hear? (I hear a bird or I hear a car.) What is it saying to you? Listen carefully. What might God be saying through that*

bird? (That singing is good for us. That the world is nice. That there is a hawk up there and we should be careful) Wow! Right, all of those are ways God talks in the sounds around us. The life we see in the world around us – our pets, other animals, plants, trees, the wind and rivers – is one of the ways God talks to us. Each bird or leaf or person is a book. Every book teaches us something about God. Let's remember, this week, to look and listen for God in one another and in the living system all around us!

ACTIVITY/EXPLORATION 2

God Circle

Every one of us is a book about God! As able, ask the children to stand in a circle. *Where do I see or feel God in myself? (Share in circle) Sometimes when we are discouraged, we cannot find God in ourselves. When that happens, it can be really helpful to hear from someone else. Let's go around the circle and share a bit of God we see in the person next to us (I see God in you when you smile. I see God in you when you sing. I see God in you when you make art. I see God in you when you are nice to your sister – even when she's being annoying, etc.).*

Pass out the Joyful Path Journals/booklets/Folders and invite the children to draw or write observations from today on a page of their journal/booklet (or on a loose sheet of paper that will go in the Folder).

Over the course of this year, we will keep filling the pages of this book with your ideas and pictures and memories from our time together. Before class ends, explain that the Joyful Path Journal/booklet/Folder will be kept here and that, at the end of the year, they will take them home. Invite the children to write their name on their Journal/booklet/folder and, using the markers and/or stickers provided, to decorate as they wish.

VI. CLOSING THE LESSON

Summarize: We can learn so much from all the creatures on Earth. Every animal and plant carries innate wisdom and lessons to share. Every being is animated with a Spirit and purpose. Every creature - including me - is a book about God and Creation.

Hand out the **Spiritual Affirmation Page** if you have printed it or open the book to that page. Read the Spiritual Affirmation out loud to the children, then have everyone repeat it together, three times...joyfully!

Spiritual Affirmation for the Week:

I LEARN ABOUT GOD FROM EVERY CREATURE.

NEXT TIME: We will be talking about how we all can talk to God.