



ESC Liturgy

7 – 7:30	Community Building Exercise Check in		
7:30	Invocation (poem or song)	2 min	
	Centering Meditation	5 min	10 min
	Song or chant	3 min	
	Activity (video/reading)/Response	30 min	
	Sharing Joys and Concerns	2 min	
	To Our Common Cause	4 min	
	Song	3 min	15 min
	Commissioning	2 min	
	Ending blessing		

**Let's Declare Our Interdependence.**

Welcome to our NC Interfaith Power & Light Earth Sabbath Celebration tonight. I'm Nancy Carnes, and I will be facilitating these celebrations the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month.

Earth Sabbath Celebrations are one of North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light's (NCIPL) four programs. Our intention is for this to be an interfaith celebration that provides those of us who love the earth with a place for connection, sharing and replenishing our spirits.

We as a staff and team of volunteers try to create an interfaith space at each service. You are invited and encouraged to share your gifts and creativity in helping this Earth Sabbath Celebration to evolve. If you feel moved to contribute in any way, let me know!

I'm glad that each of you are here tonight.

The theme tonight is "Let's Declare Our Interdependence!"

The Declaration of Independence, which we celebrated last week, didn't just happen. Philosophical ideas were circulating and being debated for a long time before it was possible to adopt it as the founding principle for a new way of governance.

We've come a long way since then. We have been working diligently to make sure that our actions consider the rights of all people, not just white males. And we are beginning to learn that our continued existence requires the well-being of all parts of the Earth community, not just our own species – that all beings have rights.

Tonight, we are going to explore what would go into a Declaration of Interdependence, and we are going to convene a Council of all Beings to do so. This is very important work. So I am going to

change the order of service a little. We'll have a short participatory reading as an invocation, followed by contemplation and song. And then the community building exercise and check in. Does that work for everyone?

Thomas Berry lists 10 basic precepts to explain why rights are not a human concept, but a universal reality for all of nature, and this is where I think we should start tonight. So, if you have the slip of paper numbered 1, please start, followed by whoever has #2, etc. Please read slowly, and allow a short pause between each one.

## **Reading**

1. Rights originate where existence originates. That which determines existence determines rights.
2. Since it has no further context of existence in the phenomenal order, the universe is self-referent in its being and self-normative in its activities. It is also the primary referent in the being and activities of all derivative modes of being. (This means the Universe is that which determine all aspects of existence.)
3. The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. As subjects, the component members of the universe are capable of having rights.
4. The natural world on the planet Earth gets its rights from the same source that humans get their rights, from the universe that brought them into being.
5. Every component of the Earth community has three rights: the right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing processes of the Earth community.
6. All rights are species specific and limited. Rivers have river rights. Birds have bird rights. Insects have insect rights. Difference in rights is qualitative, not quantitative. The rights of an insect would be of no value to a tree or a fish.
7. Human rights do not cancel out the rights of other modes of being to exist in their natural state. Human property rights are not absolute. Property rights are simply a special relationship between a particular human "owner" and a particular piece of "property" so that both might fulfill their roles in the great community of existence.
8. Since species exist only in the form of individuals, rights refer to individuals and to their natural groupings of individuals into flocks, herds, packs, not simply in a general way to species.
9. These rights as presented here are based upon the intrinsic relations that the various components of Earth have to each other. The planet Earth is a single community bound together with interdependent relationships. No living being nourishes itself. Each component of the Earth community is immediately or mediately dependent on every other member of the community for the nourishment and assistance it needs for its own survival. This mutual nourishment, which includes the predator-prey relationships, is integral with the role that each component of the Earth has within the comprehensive community of existence.
10. In a special manner humans have not only a need for but a right of access to the natural world to provide not only the physical need of humans but also the wonder needed by human intelligence, the beauty needed by human imagination, and the intimacy needed by human emotions for fulfillment.

7:10

### **Song**

We have three rights:  
The right to be  
The right to habitat  
The right to fulfill our role

7:15

### **Contemplation**

You were asked to draw a card when you entered. That card is the being you will help represent at our Council tonight. In the next two to three minutes of silence, consider this being, its shape, its ways of being, its needs. Connect with it in whatever ways seem best to you. You may find it helpful to wonder what it is like to *be* this lifeform, to have the perspective and powers it has been given, and to explore what relationships nourish you and what relationships you nourish in turn.

Any questions? I'll ring the chime when it is time to come back to this group.

Water

Mountain

Air

Tree

Cockroach (decaying vegetation would smother tropical rainforests, part of food chain, extraordinarily well-engineered – design study)

Frog

Eagle

Snake

Dolphin

Wolf

Spider

Whale

7:20

### **Exercise**

Form groups of 3. Say your name, then share about the card you drew, the life form you will be representing in Council. Take about 3 minutes each to describe the alterations and difficulties you may be experiencing now, due to loss of habitat, pollution, toxic dumping, drift nets, clearcutting, factory farming, etc.

7:30

### **Check in**

Before I set the groundwork and convene our Council, lets do a quick check-in. Any one have anything to share since last time, or anything coming up that you want others to know about?

7:35

### **Setting up the Council**

There is now a global movement to make rights of Nature a global conversation.

Lawyer Cormac Cullinan explains the need for this: "Fundamentally changing our governance systems will require more than reforming existing laws or making new ones. We need to take a long hard look, not only at our legal systems, but, more importantly, at the legal philosophies that

underlie them. Only by creating a vision of an 'Earth Jurisprudence' will we be able to begin a comprehensive transformation of our governance system."

Ben Price of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund is working to create local ordinances, but he says: "Frankly, I don't really give a damn what the courts say. It's not simply a legal strategy. It looks like a legal strategy because we use local laws to create a movement, a historic community rights movement, and that includes nature in the definition of community. The local ordinances aren't necessarily designed to change laws, but to force a conflict between laws and values that will compel people to rethink the basic assumptions of our society. It opens the eyes of people, win or lose. People can see more clearly what exactly is at stake."

In developing the Declaration of Independence, I can imagine there were many gatherings to share concerns about what was befalling the colonists and their lives due to actions in Britain.

We are gathering tonight. And because their voices are essential in exploring any possible Declaration of Interdependence, we will give all the beings represented here time to share their concerns, to share what is befalling their Earth and their lives.

7:40

So I want to welcome each of you here. Let's do a roll-call. Could we go around, and can each of you introduce yourself in a ceremonial fashion: "I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I speak for the \_\_\_\_\_ people."

Please express the particular concerns you bring to this Council. You may speak at random.

- after several testimonies –

7:50

Hmmm, it would seem that all the suffering that we are describing seems to derive from the activities of the human species. It would be good for humans to hear what we have to say. Let us summon them to our Council, to listen only. Would 2-5 of you come to the center to be humans? Sit back to back, facing outward.

Hear us, humans. This is our world, too. And we've been here a lot longer than you. Yet now our days are numbered because of what you are doing. Be still for once, and listen to us."

- more testimonies – (if time, take turns in center being human)

8:00

This is a council, not a trial. We are not asking humans to try to defend themselves.

David Orr, in *Down to the Wire*, once asked students in his environmental studies class to assume that they were to represent *Homo sapiens* before a congress of all beings. The question for his students was "What defense might be made on behalf of humans? What supporting evidence could be presented? Who among the animals and plants would speak for humans?" Most concluded no good defense could be made on any terms.

However, we do recognize that all over the Earth humans are engaged in a momentous conversation about the terms and conditions that must be met in order to sustain life for all beings – for all of us on this planet. They have great capacity to learn, reason and empathize. And I

believe that they have an obligation to give voice to the journey of life on Earth; to writes its poetry, paint its pictures, fathom its meaning.

It does not serve all beings for humans to give up, for truly our life is in their hands. If they can awaken to their place in the web of life, they will change their ways. What strengths and gifts can each of us give them to help them now?

Thank you.

8:10

## **Song**

8:15

Instead of the Common Cause and Commissioning, we will do a joint reading of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth From [World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth](#), Cochabamba, Bolivia, 22 April – Earth Day 2010.

And please go on the website on your program and sign the declaration. So far 120,452 people from 113 countries have done so.

<http://therightsofnature.org/universal-declaration/>

8:25

And end with the Blessing song.