



## FAITH | ENVIRONMENT

### **Making Peace with the Earth: A Green Ritual of Passing the Peace**

*If your congregation is adventurous and usually moves around during the Passing of the Peace, you might try inviting them to make peace with the earth over the course of a few Sundays.*

#### **Week One: Reconciling with the Earth**

*Have several baskets of different kinds of soil sitting on pedestals around the sanctuary. (Have some towels alongside the baskets, for wiping hands.)*

Each basket would be accompanied by a card explaining what the soil needs to forgive humans for:

- the reduction of its fertility due to extensive use of petro-chemical fertilizers and pesticides,
- the compaction and destruction of its structure and the ruin of natural drainage systems by mass landscaping such as is practiced for new subdivisions,
- the erosion and loss of soil by those and other practices, etc.

Ask parishioners to extend the hand of peace to the dirt, by pressing their hands into the soil and praying for reconciliation.

#### **Week Two: Reconciling with the Waters**

*Create a similar set-up with large glass bowls and clear pitchers on each pedestal. Fill pitchers with water from various natural and human-managed sources. One pedestal should have commercially bottled water, rather than a pitcher.*

Placards with explanations can include:

- forgiveness for pollution from run-off from parking lots, pesticide and fertilizer use in our yards, and improper disposal of cleaning or painting supplies in the storm sewers,
- forgiveness for the commodification (selling) of water when scripture tells us clean water is a right of every creature (this should go with the pedestal with bottled water),
- forgiveness for the failure to share water with God's other creatures by our water use programs that literally dry up rivers and lakes.

Ask people to extend the hand of peace by pouring some water from the pitcher into the bowl and praying for reconciliation.

### Week Three: Reconciling With the Trees and the Forests

*Place potted saplings around the sanctuary. (Plan ahead of time to donate them to a public garden or the grounds of a shelter or to plant them on church grounds.) Alongside them have cut ribbons of varying colors.*

Placards can explain that we need trees' forgiveness for:

-cutting down old growth forest for disposable products like tissues and writing paper and disposable chopsticks,

-for failing to use recycled content paper of every kind,

-for allowing grading practices in home construction that permit contractors to cut down every tree on the acreage.

Ask people to extend the hand of peace by tying a ribbon on the branches of the sapling and saying a prayer for reconciliation.

**Making Peace with the Earth** was written by the Rev. Betsy Taylor Flory. Rev. Flory came late to ministry, discovered a passion for teaching young people and so was led to a passion for the creation - since our young people need a world to grow in. Currently she serves on the UCC Environment and Energy task force and is rearranging her life in order to do more education in churches about a proper relationship between humans and the many other parts of God's creation.



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