

Vox Grata Women's Choir presents
"Our Sacred Earth"

Thursday, May 2, 7:30 PM at Second Presbyterian Church
Monday, May 6, 7:30 PM at Westminster Presbyterian Church

This program will include works that celebrate our beautiful earth.
The concert will conclude with a Call to Action.

Both concerts are free and open to the public.

A free-will offering will benefit Bell Garden, a hybrid school and community garden in Bellevue. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Bell Garden offers garden-based service, education, volunteerism and food distribution to those in need.

Both concerts will be live streamed. For more information or for live stream links, please visit www.voxgrata.com.

"Our Sacred Earth" will begin with an introspective, chant-like melody titled "Make the Earth Your Companion" by American composer Braeden Ayres. The text by poet J. Patrick Lewis is a quiet plea for humanity, an invitation to learn from the earth herself, and to "walk lightly on it, as other creatures do."

The choir will then sing a well-known text by Chief Seattle, "This We Know," set sensitively by the American composer Ron Jeffers. These words come from the Point Elliot Treaty, a document which stripped the Duwamish tribe of their ancestral home in the Pacific northwest. A peaceful people, the Duwamish enjoyed a rich culture, tied closely to the plants and animals, air, water and land that surrounded them.

Two works with texts by Wendell Berry will follow. The first, "The Wild Geese," is set to music by one of our favorite composers, Joan Szymko. It features a violin soloist in a lively dialogue with the voices. The central message is conveyed in the final section – that all that we need is here if we can only be quiet in heart, and in eye, clear. The second, "The Peace of Wild Things" has been set for choir by a number of composers, this one by American composer Sean Ivory. The somber tones of a violist accompany the voices, sensitively expressing the opening words of the poem. The piece invites us to rest in "the peace of wild things," ultimately carrying us to a place of grace and freedom, if only for a time.

The central portion of the concert gives voice to our tired earth. "Kasar Mie La Gaji" ("The Earth is Tired") was composed by the Venezuelan composer Alberto Grau. It is a call for the human race to save the earth and reduce our environmental impact. The composer uses only one line of text 'Kasar mie la gaji' (The Earth is tired) throughout the piece, manipulating it in many ways; sometimes the choir whispers or speaks the words instead of singing. The slow introduction and middle section of the piece are a lamentation for and a depiction of our tired planet. The contrasting energetic rhythmic sections are an encouragement, perhaps demand, to change our

ways. Hand clapping and foot stamping in the final section build up to a mighty shout and scream to save our planet.

Frank Ticheli's "Earth Song" continues the lament with a poem by the composer. He refers to "the scorched earth" which "cries out in vain." Despite the anguish, the text refers to music and singing as a refuge. The harmonies are warm and lush with messa di voce markings throughout adding to the expression.

To close out the program, two pieces continue the call to action. The first, "Metsa Teleggram" was composed by the Estonian composer Uno Naissoo. The title is translated as "The Woodpecker's Warning." The text, sung in Estonian, is in essence an edict from the woodpecker, that we should preserve and protect the beauty of the forest. The second, "River," composed by Joan Szymko features a text by Hopi Elders as well as several directives from the late Edward Everett Hale – "I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I should do. And what I should do, by the grace of God, I will do."