

VOX GRATA

presents

“Our Sacred Earth”

to benefit



Saturday, April 27, Bethel Presbyterian Church
Thursday, May 2, 2024, Second Presbyterian Church
Monday, May 6, 2024, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Conducted by
Jeanette MacCallum, Susan Kelly and Ashley Vance
John Semingson, Accompanist

“Our Sacred Earth”

*We acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the Cherokee (East TN),
S’atsoyaha (Yuchi) and Shawandasse Tula (Shawanwaki/Shawnee).
We pay our respects to their elders, past and present,
and express gratitude for their stewardship of this land.*

The Earth in all her Splendor

Make the Earth Your Companion

Bronwen Yoncak, soloist

Braeden Ayres

This We Know

Ron Jeffers

Here

*Amanda Craft, Hannah Elliott, Elaine Bailey and Suzanne Stiles, soloists
Marie Winget, violin*

Joan Szymko

The Peace of Wild Things

Marie Winget, viola

Sean Ivory

The Earth is Tired

Kasar Mie La Gaji

Alberto Grau

Earth Song

Frank Ticheli

A Call to Action

Metsa Telegram

Uno Naissoo

River

Amy Finka, soloist

Joan Szymko

Song Texts

Make the Earth Your Companion

Make the earth your companion. Walk lightly on it, as other creatures do. Let the sky paint her beauty; she is always watching over you. Learn from the sea how to face harsh forces. Let the river remind you that ev'rything will pass. Let the lake instruct you in stillness. Let the mountain teach you grandeur. Make the woodland your house of peace. Make the rainforest your house of hope. Meet the wetland on twilight ground. Save some small piece of grassland for a red kite on a windy day. Watch the icecaps glisten with crystal majesty. Hear the desert whisper hush to eternity. Let the town weave a small basket of togetherness. Make the earth your companion. Walk lightly on it, as other creatures do.

---text by J. Patrick Lewis

This We Know

This we know: the earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. This we know: all things are connected like the blood that unites one family. All things are connected. Whate'er befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth. This we know: we did not weave the web of life. We are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. This we know.

---text by Chief Seattle

Here

Horseback on a Sunday morning, harvest over, we taste persimmon and wild grape, sharp, sweet of summer's end. In time's maze over the fall fields, we name names that went west from here. In time's maze over the fall fields, we name names that rest on graves. We open a persimmon seed to find the tree that stands in promise, pale in the seed's marrow. Geese appear high over us, pass and the sky closes. Abandon, as in love or sleep, holds them to their way, clear. In the ancient faith, what we need is here. And we pray, not for new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart, and in eye clear.

---text by Wendell Berry

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me, and I wake in the night at the least sound, in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things, who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars, waiting with their light. For a time, I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

---text by Wendell Berry

Kasar Mie La Gagi (translation)

The earth is tired.

Earth Song

Sing, be, live, see....
This dark, stormy hour,
the wind, it stirs.
The scorched earth
cries out in vain:

O war and power,
you blind and blur.
The torn heart
cries out in pain.

But music and singing
have been my refuge;
And music and singing
shall be my light.

A light of song
shining strong: Alleluia!
through darkness, pain and strife, I'll
Sing, be, live, see....

Peace.

Metsa Telegram (translation)

Tok, tok, tok, the woodpecker pecks; Tok, tok, tok, don't break the trees' branches. Tok, tok, tok, above the forest, amidst the silence. Tok, tok, tok, woodpeckers' message echoing everywhere: Preserve the beauty of forest life. Be a friend to every tree. And let's protect the forest's beautiful garment. Then the forest will always murmur for us. And birds' nests will echo birds' joyful call.

---Estonian text by Ira Lember

River

There is a river now flowing very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel that they are being torn apart. There is a river now flowing very fast.

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And because I can't do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do. What I can do, I should do. And what I should do, by the grace of God, I will do.

Let go! Let go of the shore! Push off into the middle of the river. See who is there with you and celebrate! We are the ones we have been waiting for.

---text by E.E. Hale and Hopi elders

Program Notes

Make the Earth Your Companion

Braeden Ayres

This piece is an invitation to be active participants in the beauty of our world, and to recognize the sacredness of all that it has to offer us. This meditative musical setting not only beckons us to partake in the wonders of mother nature, but also reminds us how we are to treat her: with gentleness, compassion, and appreciation.

This We Know

Ron Jeffers

Chief Seattle was nearly 70 years old in the spring of 1855 when he signed the Point Elliot Treaty, a document which stripped his people of their ancestral home in the Puget Sound area of the northwest Pacific Coast. His tribe, the Duwamish, were a peaceful people with a rich culture tied closely to the plants and animals, air, water and land that surrounded them. After putting his name to the document [he] rose to address the crowd. His simple, eloquent statement about the interdependence of all life includes the text *This We Know*. (Notes by MUSE, Cincinnati Women's Choir.)

Here

Joan Szymko

Szymko's musical setting of this Wendell Berry poem is contemplative and serene, with melodic simplicity and cyclical accompaniment - a representation of the stillness and movement that coexist in nature. Chant-like sections draw the listener in for the apex of the poem, a sacred meditation: "What we need is here."

The Peace of Wild Things

Sean Ivory

Wendell Berry's poem is a beautiful reminder of the peace that can be found even in the midst of darkness. Sean Ivory dedicated this piece to his long-time friend and music collaborator, Paul Caldwell, after a terrible hit-and-run accident. Caldwell claims that music literally saved his life, after he was hit by a driver and fell on the pavement on top of his bag full of sheet music, softening what could have been a fatal fall.

Kasar Mie La Gagi

Alberto Grau

"Kasar mie la gagi" is a translation from the African Sahel region, meaning "the earth is tired." Alberto Grau, a renowned Venezuelan teacher and composer, wrote this piece to bring awareness to the environmental threats that we see on a global scale — and to call people to action. The dissonance and jarring energy of the piece reflect the urgency and importance of our collective mission to save the earth.

Earth Song

Frank Ticheli

Frank Ticheli masters the art of simplicity in *Earth Song*. This a cappella piece is quietly powerful, with slow and deliberate harmonic rhythm that colors each phrase with yearning and hopefulness. This piece is a wholehearted representation of Vox Grata's mission — to use our voices to lift each other up and raise awareness of our community's needs, in an effort to bring peace and togetherness.

Metsa Teleggram

Uno Naissoo

From Cora Scholz, editor: "*Metsa Teleggram* (literally translated to "*Forest Telegram*") celebrates our growing world-wide concern for the environment — a true "green" song. Oddly enough, Uno Naissoo wrote the music to the song first and then asked the poet Ira Lember to write the words to fit the music.

River

Joan Szymko

The lyrics in Szymko's *River* are adapted from a text source often referred to as "Message from the Hopi Elders." The urgency of the poem is reflected in the overlapping melodies, and unreliable but continuously moving accompaniment. From the composer: "The 'river' is our destiny; it is the inevitability of change — and the river won't stop and wait ... So let us each do our part, remembering that we have one another."

Vox Grata Women's Choir

Sopranos

Nicole Allen, Jan Allison, Bailey Anderson, Hannah Baisley, Sidney Campbell, Brittany Carnegis, Carissa Cascio, Amanda Craft, Kathryn Duncklee, Joslyn Ellis, Kathleen Fink, Amy Finka, Isabella Hord, Susan Kelly, Katherine Kimbrough, Lauren King, Amanda Max, Diana Neely, Kathryn Nobbe, Emma O'Neal, Anne Osborne, Deborah Torgersen-Paul, Ashley Vance, Kelly Walsh, Bronwen Yoncak

Altos

Annabelle Absar, Elaine Bailey, Kelly Christie, Jane-Coleman Cottone, Allison Craig, Hannah Elliott, Bri Givens, Abigail Hawkins, Nicole Keller, Katelyn Lover, Jeanette MacCallum, Linda Ray Miller, Isabella Ortiz, Lily Norton, Kara Richardson, Mareike Sattler, McKenna Schmidt, Sandra Shepherd, Channing Shippen, Haley Smith, Rosie Smith, Suzanne Stiles, Karen Weir, Becky Yates

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