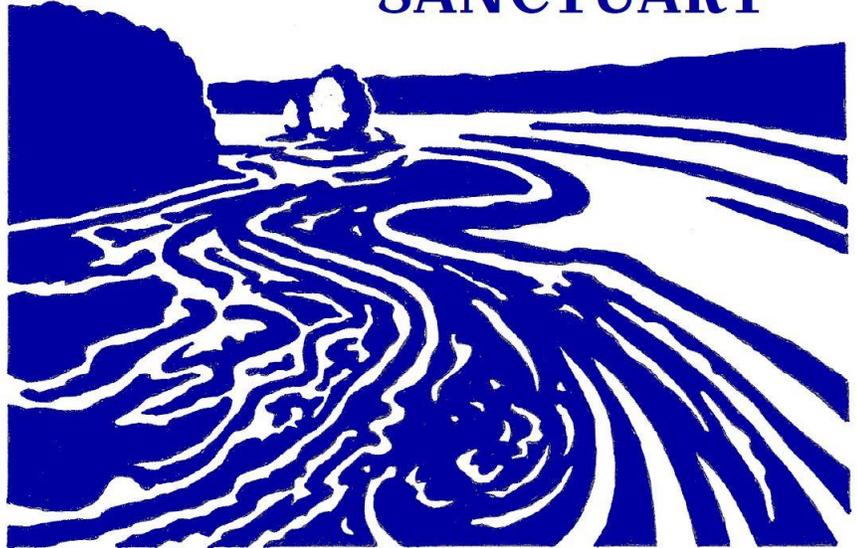


Ebb and Flow

REVERSING FALLS SANCTUARY

*Earth Day
Edition*

April 2020



Anne Ferrara composed the “Passion of the Earth” that follows here for the annual Good Friday observance we have at Reversing Falls Sanctuary. Obviously, that event was canceled this year. But it seemed to us that what Anne wrote is very fitting for Earth Day. So, we offer it to the RFS community as an opportunity to think deeply about the health of the earth in this time of pandemic.

The Reversing Falls Sanctuary building is closed and locked up until such time as we can begin programming and meeting there again. However, Bob Poole and his crew continue work to restore the steeple. I’m sure many of you are finding ways to support local

businesses and your neighbors. As steeple work continues, RFS needs to continue to raise money to pay for this essential work that is being done by a “very” local business that employs our neighbors and friends.



Passion of the Earth
Reversing Falls Sanctuary
Good Friday, April 10th, 2020

Upon leaving Montgomery to pastor in Atlanta, Martin Luther King, Jr. reflected on the beginnings of the civil rights movement and spoke of *Kairos* as the fullness of time when “history is pregnant, ready to give birth to a great idea and a great movement.” It is this awareness of time, this fierce urgency of now, that people can bring to the current global situation saturated with suffering and isolation, anxiety and disruption. We are all carrying or witnessing the trauma – physical, mental, economic and spiritual. Some have the privilege to have time for reflection, time for re-evaluating, time for visioning how this suffering Earth could look if deep change is birthed from the labor of this coronavirus pandemic. On this sacred feast, when we remember the passion and death of Jesus of Nazareth, one who spent his days healing, feeding, teaching and loving all those who sought him and followed him, let us remember our suffering sisters and brothers around the globe; let us remember the cry of Mother Earth whose lungs are being polluted by our activity, whose animals are being brought to extinction by our disregard for their habitats, whose waters are being poisoned by our over-consumption. Degradation of the Earth and Pandemics go hand in hand. Let us walk these 14 stations, 14 situations that cause us to weep, 14 places that cry to us for help, 14 petitions for us two-leggeds to wake up and co-create a world whose arc is bending toward justice, equality, belonging, beauty and wonder for all beings on this beautiful, but suffering, Earth.

We are reminded today of the words of Joanna Macy: ***“Now, in our time these three rivers – anguish for our world, scientific breakthroughs and ancestral teachings – flow together. From the confluence of these three rivers we drink.”*** On our pilgrimage today, we are invited to drink from all three of these rivers. Every loss must be grieved; every scientific revelation must be acknowledged and acted upon; and we must look to the wise ancestors to guide us in these perilous times.

Please take your time as you walk (outdoors, if weather permits) from tree to tree, or shrub to shrub or rock to rock or room to room and allow your heart to open to the agony of our sisters and brothers and to the agony of our beloved Mother.

First Station: The Coronavirus spreads from animal to humans. Our sisters and brothers in Wuhan Province are the first ones to be felled by this transmission. We think of the young doctor who sounded the alarm, was silenced and then died from the virus. We think of all those who died and all those who grieve them. We think of the imbalance that occurs in nature when we destroy the habitat of so many wild animals and when we allow wild animals to be a lucrative business for unscrupulous business people.

*Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.*

Second Station: The Coronavirus spreads from China to S. Korea, Japan, Italy, France and Spain. Many of our sisters and brothers in these countries have died painful deaths, often on ventilators, separated (necessarily) from their loved ones. It is so painfully clear that borders are arbitrary and no match for a virus. Clearly, this pandemic is teaching us again that we are all One, interconnected and interdependent. We are all part of the web of life; what we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

*Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.*

Third Station: The Coronavirus spreads to the United States, finding its way into a nursing home, sickening many and overwhelming health care workers. The outbreak in New York overwhelms citizens and the city's hospitals. A call goes out for retired and former health care professionals to return to the front lines, to come back to work and risk their lives for the common good. And tens of thousands sign up. "This is why I was born," says one such respondent. (A reminder of Simon and Veronica and the Women of Jerusalem who aided Jesus as he carried his cross to Golgotha). We are awed by such goodness, such courage, such humanity. We call down blessings upon all these generous, selfless persons.

*Just as long as I have breath,
I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace
the whole world.*



Fourth Station: In these strange times when farm workers are deemed necessary to guard the food supply chain, undocumented persons are now illegal, but essential. They work long hours for little pay and no health benefits. 29% of medical professionals in our country are foreign-born. Among the dreamers (Daca), there are 3,000 registered nurses, 5,000 nursing and home health aides, 4,000 medical assistants and 200 current students in medical schools. How does this inform our ideas about immigration? How can it inspire our actions for just immigration policy?

Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.

The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.

Fifth Station: The reports of TSA screeners, hospital janitors, grocery workers, bus drivers, delivery persons, Amazon packers, restaurant cooks, police and fire personnel, health care workers testing positive for Covid-19 are increasing each day. Medical science instructs us how to flatten the curve which demands behavioral changes for all of us. How are we embracing our role in this pandemic, our response to the demands of sacrifice, to the demands of the common good? How are we spending our forced “at home” time? Are we learning, are we growing, are we listening to the teachings of the virus and Mother Nature who, like her children, wants to be healthy and wants to live.

Just as long as I have breath,

I must answer Yes to life.

*The heart broken open can embrace
the whole world.*



Sixth Station: The Coronavirus spreads exponentially to New Orleans, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Native American reservations. Medical supplies are not sufficient to keep health workers safe or to adequately treat the most severely ill. China and Russia send supplies. Ordinary citizens step up to make masks, shields. Manufacturing companies step up to fabricate ventilators and other breathing devices. Epidemiologists across the country agree to be interviewed in order to share their specialized knowledge and advice. University labs, private labs, public labs join forces to work on treatments and a vaccine. The National Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers and Simon’s

Purse collaborate to build field hospitals. Humanity is responding to this crisis with creativity, cooperation and deep caring. Let us celebrate this response.

*Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.*

Seventh Station: Our sisters and brothers in the Middle East are being felled by Covid-19. Palestinians, Yeminis, Iranians, Pakistanis are all suffering exponentially because of occupation, sanctions, and inadequate health facilities. Refugees in Greek internment camps are now experiencing the spread of the virus among them – a situation which does not allow for social distancing. Only the virus does not discriminate. We are witnesses to this anguish, fear and hopelessness. Let us not turn away our eyes, but let us commit to creating a new world where every being on this Earth is valued infinitely and equitably.

*Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.*

Eighth Station: Refugees from Central America have been gathering on both sides of our Southern border for many months. They are fleeing starvation (drought causing farms to fail), violence, poverty. Their living situation, whether in Mexico or the United States, is desperate; their hope is flagging and now comes the Coronavirus pandemic. We think of them - the women, the men, the children separated from their parents -and we honor their courage that led them to leave everything that they knew and cherished in order to find a safer and better life for their families. We commit to studying the “why” of their need to migrate. We commit to learning the history of American policy in El Salvador, Guatemala and

Honduras, the effects of NAFTA on Mexico so that we will have some understanding of the trauma these refugees carry with them.



*Just as long as I have breath,
I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace
the whole world.*

Ninth Station: Jesus was arrested by the Roman occupiers of Israel. He was tortured, he was mocked, he was beaten and crucified. Let us call to mind the shocking numbers of persons incarcerated in our prisons today where the Pandemic is finding its way. Let our own shelter-at-home experience give us a tiny glimpse into the inhumane practice of solitary confinement. Let our feelings of isolation birth compassion in us for those who have lost their way. Let us speak up for mercy for non-violent offenders who fear contracting the virus in the confines of jail or prison. Let us work for an end to the death penalty which continues to kill the innocent, which continues to harm people of color disproportionately.

Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.

The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.

Tenth Station: People of color are dying at much higher rates from this Coronavirus. We are being reminded by this pandemic that there are unacceptable health disparities for African Americans and other minorities who suffer from many chronic illnesses related to poverty. This national crisis has put attention on just how broken our health care system is. Let us work for a universal health care program so our sisters and brothers will not have to live in fear of bankruptcy, of losing health coverage when they lose a job, of being discovered as undocumented by seeking treatment. All flourishing is mutual. No one segment of society is more worthy than another.

Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.

The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.

Eleventh Station: We have all witnessed a glimpse of cleaner air due to the constraints on human activity required by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Himalaya mountain tops visible for the first time since World War II. Mother Earth is breathing a little easier in some places. As we all strive to flatten the curve of the Coronavirus pandemic for the common good, let us imagine how we can flatten the curve of greenhouse gas emissions which are causing our climate emergency. Let this current disruption shine a light on what the future will be for our children and grandchildren if we do not act now. Pandemics, 100 and 500 year floods, rare forest fires, rainforest destruction, sea level rise destroying cities – these will all be the new normal if we do not learn to live in accordance with the parameters of Earth's life systems. Let this current disruption shine a light on how our world could look if enough of us understand that we will heal as one people, one planet or we will not heal at all. Mother Earth is begging for our attention.



*Just as long as I have breath,
I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace
the whole world.*

Twelfth Station: Restaurant workers, small shop owners, school bus drivers, cleaning women/men, hairdressers, dental hygienists, artists, musicians, actors and so many others

have lost their jobs which puts them at risk of losing their apartments or homes. Food pantry lines have doubled all across the nation. Domestic abuse is on a sharp rise. Families confined to their homes with children out of school, some with learning, physical and behavioral challenges, are facing days without the support of professionals who accompany them on these painful paths. People whose lives were marginal to begin with are now faced with a frightening future. What does this tell us about the “robust economy” in America, pre-Coronavirus? Who was benefitting from this economy and who was just scraping by? How might we envision a new model, post pandemic, where the economy is integral with ecology, where people are more important than profits, where persons have more rights than corporations, where spending on defense gives way to spending on protection of the Earth, our one and only home? Mother Earth is inviting us to ponder these questions so that a new normal will ensure the well-being of all living beings, all eco-systems.

*Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.
The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.*

Thirteenth Station: More and more nursing homes and senior citizen apartment complexes are being impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. Because of contagion, those getting sick must be quarantined and isolated from their family and friends. The actual dying process with this virus is brutal, as the lungs fail and other organs follow. This is causing great fear and suffering for so many families. Let us hold in our hearts those who must die alone. Let us hold in high esteem those health care workers who are accompanying the dying and comforting the grieving families. Let us remember with gratitude those in the mortuary profession who are being overwhelmed with requests to bury with dignity those who have succumbed to the virus. Whatever our own fear or suffering, let us join

it with the universal suffering being experienced by so many around the globe on this Good Friday memorial, 2020.

Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.

The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.

Fourteenth Station: As we dwell in this time and place of uncertainty, let us imagine a new mode of consciousness characterized by the capacity for awe and wonder, for asking questions, for probing into meaning and the mysteries of life. We are that species in whom the Universe is reflecting on itself. We are discovering (and this Pandemic is emphasizing this) through the sciences what Earth-based people and mystics have always known intuitively, that we truly are all ONE, that all is ONE. This is Our Story – a fourteen billion year adventure of a Universe with countless breakdowns and breakthroughs. The story continues and we are the writers of the new Sacred Text being written in the lives of each of us. This is the fierce urgency of NOW when individual needs encounter the needs of our planet, when one paralyzed by fear comes to delight in the mystery of existence, when the competitive consumer is converted to enchantment with the natural world, when human imaginations are set free to co-create with Earth a vibrant community of life.

Just as long as I have breath, I must answer Yes to life.

The heart broken open can embrace the whole world.

Having walked these fourteen stations of our Earth's passion at this moment in our history, let us contemplate the words of two poets who invite us into expanded meaning of the pandemic and who challenge us to work for a world where humans learn to live in balance with all of Nature.

[Pandemic by Lynn Ungar](#)

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and
beautiful.

(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.



***It's 3:23 in the morning
and I am awake
because my great-great grandchildren
ask me in dreams
what did you do while the planet was plundered?
What did you do when the earth was unraveling?
Surely you did something
when the seasons started failing?
As mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?
...what did you do once you knew?***

Drew Dellinger: Hieroglyphic Stairway

Photo Credits: Steeple by Ames Assoc., Heart by Lynnsey Carroll, Water view by Pat Wheeler, Shore scene by Pat Wheeler, Earth Flags made by Brooksville Elementary Students by Daksha Baumann. The Earth with human figure is the *Anima Mundi*, a collaboration that extends from Socrates through Leonardo and A. T. Mann to Carol Gregor who has supplied the photo of the image.

Information: www.reversingfalls.org