

3. A Litany of the Circle

Inspired by Chief Seattle*; author of Litany Unknown

This well known piece can be used as a reading with alternating voices, a spoken chorale, a chant, with actions, movement, or music. How can you imagine it?

Every part of this earth is sacred,
every shining pine needle, every sandy shore,
 Every mist in the dark woods,
every clearing and humming insect is holy.
 The rocky crest, the juices of the meadow, the beasts and all the people,
all belong to the same family.
 Teach your children that the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth.
 The water's murmur is the voice of our father's father.
We are part of the earth, and the earth is part of us.
 The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst.
The perfumed flowers are our sisters.
 The air is precious,
for all of us share the same breath.
 The wind that gave our grandparents breath also receives their last sigh.
The wind gave our children the spirit of life.
 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 which unites one family.
 All things are connected.
Our God is the same God, whose compassion is equal for all.
 For 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.
 Let us give thanks for the web in the circle that connects us.
Thanks be to God, the God of all.¹

¹Note: In 1854, Seattle (more correctly, Seathl) made his speech to Isaac Stevens, Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the new Washington Territory, expressing his wish to cede his land peacefully to the government while affirming deep reservations and sadness for the fate of the land. Today his words, frequently interpreted and embellished, have a worldwide life of their own. (C.F. David Rothenberg, Resurgence, No.178, p. 5.)