



Chrysalis

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Dear Reader,

Just over a year ago, the Reverend William Barber II stepped down from his post as President of the North Carolina NAACP to lead a National Moral Revival in the spirit of Martin Luther King. Barber's Poor People's Campaign brings together those with a longstanding commitment to social justice in partnership with the Kairos Center at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

It was at Union that Barber met Karenni Gore, now Director of the Center for Earth Ethics, and just a year ago met Al Gore at a gathering in Alabama. Barber extended an invitation to Karenni and Al Gore to join him on an Ecological Justice Organizing Tour in North Carolina from August 12-13, 2018.

The three toured North Carolina and heard firsthand accounts from those personally impacted by ecological injustice in their communities. On Sunday, August 12th, they held a "Spiritual Call to Address Ecological Devastation" at Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro. The tour culminated in a Mass Meeting: An Ecological Justice Moral Monday at historic Shiloh Baptist Church in downtown Greensboro.

As I made my way to Shiloh early, I could see that all the parking lots were already full as over 1,000 people came from all walks of life to bear witness to an extraordinary moment of "integral ecology", where the voice of an oppressed Earth and the voices of those oppressed by Earth devastation were heard in unison.

The pre-event came alive with song and choral chanting. Shiloh's Rev. W. Steven Allen, Sr. opened with an invocation prayer on the sanctity of Creation. Clergy long involved in social justice issues in Greensboro followed with a choral reading. One felt these words from Pope Francis:

"An authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door. Will the promise last, in spite of everything, with all that is authentic rising up in stubborn resistance?"¹

¹Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2015), 77.



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Impacted local community members told their stories, including stories of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Robeson County, stories of hog waste contamination in Goldsboro, and the coal ash spill in Belews Creek. Heartfelt stories of illness and loss, told with courage and a solidarity with suffering. Stories of indignities where the ill effects of environmental devastation were felt disproportionately by the poor.

Reverend Barber and Al Gore spoke last and it was almost astonishing to see the coming together of these two men, one who has spoken so courageously on behalf of oppressed people, the other who has spoken so courageously on behalf of an oppressed Earth. I was reminded of these words by Greensboro native Thomas Berry and Martin Luther King, as if intertwined:

"The time has come to lower our voices, to cease imposing our mechanistic patterns on...the earth, to resist the impulse to control, to command, to force, to oppress, to begin quite humbly to follow the guidance of the larger community on which all life depends."²

"Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives."³

As Gore got up to speak, he was visibly moved. In all his years of trying to bring awareness to the ecological crisis that we face, he said he had moments of despair and moments of hope, but never did he feel more hopeful than he did at this moment. Sitting in the room, I felt the same deep hope. Finally, there was a sense of wholeness, a sense of the deep interrelatedness of all beings, a sense of moral imagination that underlies all. A historic moment that went deep and brought forth a new energy for this critical time. One had the feeling that the universe was evolving toward Love.

²Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), xiv.

³Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Echoes of this new integral ecology can be heard in the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, in Charles Eisenstein's recognition that we are in the midst of a transition from a Story of Separation to a Story of Interbeing⁴, and in Bayo Akomolafe's call for a "new ethos of reciprocity".⁵

We are being called beyond the fences and walls that have confined us for so long on a path of destruction. When we had the great privilege of hosting a day with Bayo Akomolafe last Spring, he reminded us that "these times of upheaval call on us to revisit what is implied in being human. Do we continue to insist that we are lords over all, masters of the universe – uniquely distanced from the fleshy, dirty, discourses of 'nature' or from weather – ravaging plagues burning soil and earth into asphalted forms of our own making? Or do we recognize our relatedness to all things, our real dependence on the land we supposedly transcend, and that to be human is not a magisterial decree of isolation, but a chorus...a syncretic process of shared ecological participation?"⁶

Pax Gaia,

Peggy Whalen-Levitt

Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Director



Back row: Eric McDuffie, Katie Kovach, Mary Hartsell, Marie Nordgren, Jim North, Bill Wallenbeck, Margery Knott. Middle row: Colette Segalla, Gabby Warren, Rosemary McCarthy-Mareka, Etsuko Kinefuchi, Stephanie Kriner. Front row: Morgan Josey Glover, Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Bayo Akomolafe, David Garcia.

⁴ Charles Eisenstein, *Climate: A New Story* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2018).

⁵ Bayo Akomolafe, *These Wilds Beyond Our Fences: Letters to My Daughter on Humanity's Search for Home* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2017).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 262.

Our Children: Their Future

by

Thomas Berry



Our children will live, not in our world but in their world, a future world that is rapidly taking on its distinctive contours. Our exploitative industrial world, despite all our scientific discoveries, technological skills, commercial abundance and stock market advance, is in a state of decline. The long-term survival of our children will depend on a new relationship between the human and the natural worlds. A change is taking place from exploitative relationships to one of mutual enhancement between the natural and the human worlds. The type of prosperity known through the industrial process of the twentieth century will never again be available.

A new creative period, however, will be available. Our children must activate these new forms of delight in existence in the great variety of human activities. Indeed we ourselves have begun this process. Already we are aware of the following conditions the children need if they are to attain the fulfillment for which they are destined.

Health and Environment

Our children need a healthy Earth on which to live. A sickened planet is not conducive to healthy children physically, or to emotional or psychic security. They need pure air and water and sunlight and fruitful soil and all those living forms that provide the context in which human existence can be properly nurtured. Only if we provide this context will we fulfill our obligations to our children.

The Great Community

Our children need to become members not only of a local or even of the human community. They need to become conscious members of that wonderful community of all the living and non-living beings of the world about them. Human community as such is an abstraction. The only real community is the integral community of the entire continent, the entire planet or even the entire universe. We are awkward at this manner of thinking because our religions as well as our humanist traditions carry a certain antagonism toward the natural world. But now the refusal of human beings to become intimate members of the community of the Earth is leading to devastation of the entire planet. The next generation can survive only as functional members of this larger community. Our children are instinctively aware of this. We need only foster this awareness.



Literacy

Our children need to learn not only how to read books composed by human genius but also how to read the Great Book of the World. Again, reading this Great Book is natural to children. Alienation from this primary educational experience has been, in our generation, the source of unmeasured disaster to every aspect of human existence. The New Prosperity requires a new language, a language of nature that presently begins to be understood by those involved in solar energy, by the new architects, the new educators, the environmentalists. This new language is primarily the language of the Earth, a language of living relationships that extend throughout the universe.

We have here on the North American continent a superb natural setting in which our children can become literate, capable of understanding what their world is telling them. Above all this natural world is telling them about a new prosperity, a new richness of life, new energies that are available, new experiences to enjoy.

Energy

Our children must understand how to function with the energy of the sun and the wind and the water rather than with the energies of fossil fuels or of nuclear processes. Our inability to use these other energies properly has led to a situation in which the planet Earth is covered with grime that is not only harmful to all forms of life but which is eating away with its acids the very stones and structures of all the great cities of the world. The understanding of more benign energy forms and the skills to interact with them effectively, these are absolute necessities for the survival of our children in a sustainable life context.



Food

Our children need to learn gardening. The reasons for this reach deep into their mental and emotional as well as in their physical survival. Gardening is an active participation in the deepest mysteries of the universe. By gardening our children learn that they constitute with all growing things a single community of life. They learn to nurture and be nurtured in a universe that is always precarious but ultimately benign. They learn profound reasons for the seasonal rituals of the great religious traditions.

More immediately, however, is the question of physical survival. With the every-increasing loss of soil on which food-growing depends, with the rising inflation in the economic situation, with the need for food grown in an organic context, and with the crowded situation in our urban centers, the capacity of local communities to grow a significant amount of their own food on very limited areas of Earth will become an increasing urgency. Community-supported agriculture projects are already developed throughout the North American continent.

Elementary education especially might very well begin and be developed in a gardening context. How much the children could learn! A language related to life! Emotional responses to blossoming and fruitful plants, social cooperation, death as a source of life. They could learn geology and biology and astronomy. They could learn the sources of poetry and literature and the arts. They might even be saved from the sterile and ephemeral world of electronic games.

The Managerial Role

Our children need to be prepared for their role in the fruitful functioning of the Great Earth itself, the first and greatest of all corporations. They need to learn that the managerial role in all human cooperative enterprises is to enhance the functioning and meaning and value of this primary corporation of the planet on which we live. If the Earth becomes bankrupt there is no future for anything that lives on the Earth. The remarkable achievement of the Earth in its natural state is its ability to renew itself and all its living forms. There is a minimum of entropy in the Earth system. Energies are cycled and recycled indefinitely. The infrastructure renews itself. No human process can do this. Neither automobiles nor roadways, nor subway systems, nor fossil fuels, nor railways, nor power plants, nor nuclear stations renew themselves. They last a few years and then rust away and the resources of the planet are no longer sufficient to renew them.

A completely new managerial role begins to identify itself. It will function in a different fashion and with different ideals from the manner in which management functions at present. This new mode of management begins to manifest itself in development of new courses and programs of Ecological Economics.



Revelatory Experience

Our children need to understand the meaning and grandeur and sacredness of the Earth as revelatory of the deep mysteries and meaning of the world. Rather than teaching them to disdain the natural world as unworthy of their concern, it would be most helpful if our religious traditions would move toward a stronger emphasis on the glorious phenomena of the universe about us as modes of divine communication.

In a special manner our children need to observe and esteem the spontaneities of nature in the various bioregions of North America. These spontaneities give expression to genetic diversity which is the most precious endowment of the living world. Without the marvelous variety of living forms that swim in the sea and live and move upon the Earth and fly through the air, our own human understanding, our emotional life, our imaginative powers, our sense of the divine, our capacity for verbal expression; these would all be terribly diminished. If we lived on the moon our sense of the divine would reflect the lunar landscape; our emotions, sensitivities and imagination would all in a similar manner be limited to a lunar mode of expression. So with our children, they are what they are and have such remarkable expansion of life because they share in the natural world that they have here on the North American continent. The radiance of their surroundings is even now reflected in the radiance of our children's countenances.



A Sense of History

Our children need a sense of their unique historical role in creating this new ecological age. This future world is something that has never existed before. We are involved in an irreversible sequence of planetary developments. For the first time an integral form of the planet Earth with all its geological contours, its living forms and its human presence has become possible as a vital, functioning reality expressing itself in its unbroken sequence of splendors in movement and song and an infinite variety of color in the sky and throughout the five continents.

There is a certain truth in the expression: "The Dream drives the Action". Among the greatest contributions we can make to our children is to assist them in their dreams of a world of pure air and water and sunlight and soil, where the company of living beings would flourish as this has not happened in recent centuries.

America

As this country has often been the leader in the great industrial-technological experiment that has been taking place in these past two centuries and as this country has suffered severely from the devastation consequent on the petrochemical period through which we are passing, so now we might well become the leaders in guiding the children of the world toward this more splendid future that is presently in the making. If we see the aurora, they, hopefully, will see the dawn.



(Since the Center's beginnings in 2000, we have consistently sought to deepen our consciousness of the Earth and our relationship to it, inspired and encouraged at all junctures by the presence and writings of Thomas Berry, who was known both nationally and internationally as a cosmologist, eco-theologian, geologist and who we knew at the Center as a dear and personal friend. His books *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme), *The Great Work*, *Evening Thoughts*, and *The Sacred Universe*, affirm both an ancient and a new understanding that human beings and nature are one . . . that we are all part of the one story of the universe itself. Thomas Berry urged us to enter into a truly human intimacy with the Earth, and it is to this new mode of human presence to the Earth that our programs point. Thomas granted us permission to publish his article, "Our Children: Their Future" in our first issue of *Chrysalis* in the Spring of 2004).

Belonging to Earth: Our Common Home

by

Stephanie Kriner

(Stephanie Kriner graduated from the Center's Inner Life of the Child in Nature program in 2017. A freelance writer, Stephanie has brought her children to our summer programs and has encouraged her children's schools to attend our programs for schoolchildren. We asked Stephanie if she would be willing to shadow our programs for immigrant and refugee children from the Doris Henderson Newcomers School this year and write a piece that would bring our readers into the lived experience of these children. Thank you, Stephanie, for your words and images that capture so many moments of deep and personal connection with the natural world for these children).

A heavy stillness embraced a class of third and fourth grade refugee and immigrant children stepping into the shadow of the forest. On that October morning, the clouds hung low and blanketed the sky, making the universe seem small and cozy. The sun did not shine, and a barely visible filtered morning light seeped into the woods with a yellow-gray tint, casting the land in a disorienting and magical mixture of dawn- and dusk-like shades. Boys who just minutes before were bouncing off trees, scrambling along downed trunks and dashing off to chase squirrels eased into soft, rhythmic steps behind Sandy Bisdee, the Director of Children's Programs at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World.

Smiles of anticipation lit the children's faces as they delved into the mysteries of the woods. They walked with soft, deliberate steps and ducked beneath spider webs glittering with beads of water. For the immigrant and refugee children who participate in the Awakening to Nature Program, a walk along the Creeping Cedar Trail — a path laden with bright green moss as thick as lush carpet; springy, joyful mushrooms dotted in yellows, pinks and oranges; twisted roots rolling out of the ground; fall leaves cascading to Earth in delightful dances; and pebbles sparkling with microscopic quartz crystals — inspires imagination, curiosity and, often, moments of connection with the natural world.

These children from the Doris Henderson Newcomers School, a Greensboro public school for newly arrived immigrant and refugee students, had not been in America for long; their visit to Timberlake Earth Sanctuary in Whitsett marked their first experience in an American forest. The sanctuary probably seemed like a world away from their homes, mostly in countries steeped in poverty, civil war, oppression and unimaginable hardships that most Americans only glimpse on the news.

Awakening to Nature for the Newcomers School is a specially designed program for refugee and immigrant children, part of the Center's commitment to an educational practice that embodies contemplative, intuitive and imaginal ways of knowing for children and adults. "Our deepest intention for this program is to give the children a sense of belonging to Earth, our common home, and to provide a gate of welcoming for those new to America," says Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Director of the Center, which has been offering this opportunity to the Newcomers School since 2015. Funded initially by the Congregation of St. Joseph Gift Committee, this year The Hummel Family Fund stepped in to keep it going for four classes of third through fifth graders in October.

On that particular October morning, an unusual quiet permeated the woods. Crows did not squawk, birds did not flutter about in the trees and squirrels did not rustle the fallen brown leaves. Yet the eagerness and energy of the children brought the forest alive. At first, as is often the case with school groups, the children could barely control their excitement. When one child stooped and reached his hand out to pick a wild mushroom, Sandy bent down beside him and uttered this soft reverence, enunciating carefully to be sure the child could understand her English, “These are wild mushrooms. We do not pick them. This is their home.” Observing quietly from a distance at first, Kenya, a thin energetic girl from Tanzania, shrieked in delight, “What? Yes!” — reacting as if dwelling in a place where mushrooms could grow freely touched her very soul.

Further up the trail, Lindel from Aruba beckoned Sandy in Spanish and pointed excitedly to the ground. “Aqui! Aqui!” he shouted. The children gathered around to witness tiny green cricket frogs hopping as high as their waists. “I can’t believe it! They are cricket frogs,” Sandy announced, and, sensing her joy, more children gathered, some bent to try and capture one in their tiny-cupped hands. But the frogs were too fast and unpredictable, and Sandy did not stop the children this time because she knew they were learning to be gentle despite their excitement.

For refugee and immigrant children, the opportunity to commune with the natural world in America can be especially impactful on their young lives. “Our staff will never know the hardships and horrors that many of these children have endured, and yet we have some inkling when we hear the names of countries that the children have come from: Congo, Miramar, Nigeria, Guatemala and El Salvador,” Sandy says. “Knowing what we do know, we feel overwhelmingly grateful to welcome these children to our program, to an earth sanctuary in the foothills of North Carolina.”

The Earth Guides have learned to take notice of each child from the moment they arrive, to understand what each one may need to fully experience their time at the Earth Sanctuary. There are those children who thrust themselves into the day’s music and nature activities with an excitement that is infectious to the others. Like Kenya who shouted “Woohoo!” during morning circle each time that Sandy introduced the name of a new animal living at Timberlake or 8-year-old Paulo (pronounced “Poe”) whose round cheeks swelled into a smile and whose body could not seem to stop swaying to the music as he shared a beat from his native Angola (“Boo boo bah! Boo boo bah bah!” he sang during circle time one morning).

There are also those who may seem tentative, reserved or even afraid at first, whose eyes and body language communicate a profound sadness. For one such child, Amelia, a quiet, tall girl from Mexico with a serious face, the sadness came out as she wept when her teacher asked her to part with a rock she had found on a trail and carried lovingly throughout the woods.

For another child, a 9-year-old African boy named Elishafat, a shield seemed to separate him from the others. When he stepped off the bus one sunny morning, his eyes stared somewhere else and his senses did not appear to take in the new and unfamiliar surroundings: rays of sunlight casting patches of wiggly brightness amid shadows of branches on the ground; the smells of mud, dried leaves and fresh air; and the chattering of birds and squirrels. A small boy dressed in a hoodie with camouflage sleeves, Elishafat avoided eye contact, seemed to stumble along and veered from the group during the Earth Walk. His teachers said that he came from Tanzania, an eastern African country that hosts some 300,000 refugees (most of whom are fleeing violence and civil wars in Congo and Burundi). Throughout most of the morning, he seemed distant and rubbed his eyes in shy discomfort when asked to join in singing in his native tongue Swahili.

Witnessing his pained shyness, the way his eyes seemed to search for a different place, Sandy quickly took the spotlight off him by introducing her own song to the group. Sandy and the other Earth Guides know that each child will eventually find comfort in the visit, and they never push a child to participate.

Understanding that some of the children may feel uneasy in this new setting, and not knowing the details of past traumas they may have faced, the Earth Guides set a tone of acceptance and peace. “For me, creating a very welcoming experience right from the start is very important. That is why we begin our day with hearty and happy welcomes as they leave the bus and follow with songs to celebrate and welcome each child individually,” Sandy says.

Part of this expression of acceptance and love involves responding naturally to what the children both need and offer of themselves while at the Earth Sanctuary, not a pre-planned itinerary or curriculum. When a teacher from the first class of Newcomers to arrive this fall shared a song with the Earth Guides, it became a natural opening for each subsequent class that gathered outside in a circle after exiting the bus. Going around this circle, each child, teacher and Earth Guide would sing the song to introduce himself or herself and where he or she was from, followed by a greeting from the group: “Hello, my name is Po and I am from Annngolllla!” ...“Welcommme Po!” For each class, this song offered an opportunity for every child to be heard.

After more songs and sharing in the outside circle, the children enter the “TreeHouse.” Then, inside a cozy room overlooking the forest and lake, they huddle on throw pillows in a circle around a small wooden table adorned with treasures from the natural world (shells, pebbles, animal bones, dried flowers and sticks) surrounding a burning candle.



Here, Sandy takes special care to reach a group of children who may not understand English, using music and exploration to ease fears and create a sense of comfort and love, always singing from her heart. She teaches them songs about love, nature, friendship and celebration from a mix of languages and cultures. The children, even those who seem tentative or confused at first, enthusiastically respond to her invitations to sing and make music, echoing her intonations and notes with a pure, vibrant beauty.

“By singing songs from so many different traditions, including African and Native American, it is my hope that the children will feel comfortable with the wonderful repetitions of vowels and sounds, and I trust that they will sense the deeper meanings of the songs,” Sandy says. “The singing together lightens up our start and I believe it stays with us for the whole day as our voices blend together as one voice.”

When Sandy first introduces the gourds, an instrument chosen because it is played across many cultures, she pantomimes the planting of the seed before illustrating the plant’s growth cycle: showing them a tiny gourd, followed by a gourd with a stem, a green gourd and a dry brown gourd. Finally, she holds out the gourds that are painted in vibrant colors and beautiful designs, and the children’s faces lighten as it dawns on them that they have just witnessed the whole process from seed to rattle.

When they get to play the gourd instruments, the room erupts in a harmony of joy. “It is a powerful experience for children to clap, drum or rattle together at the same time and beat. And then when I add my flute onto the beat, we create a masterpiece of music together that is different each time,” Sandy says. When she collects the gourds and plays her flute alone, they are mesmerized and settled in a new place of calm attention. Then they willingly play “listening games,” shutting their eyes to listen to a chime and raising their hands when they can no longer hear its reverberations.

Each class of children visibly grows more comfortable as the morning goes along, leading up to their Earth Walks into a forest that has been luring them through large sliding glass doors that reveal scampering squirrels pausing to peek curiously in at them, a placid lake and a deep, shadowy forest.

“There is such a healthy curiosity for the life of the forest, the dry creek beds, the ant life, the acorns, and the mushrooms. In all of our other programs we do not tell the children the names of things to enhance their wonderment, but with Newcomers, it is important for their English and connecting to the earth to learn the names, so we readily share them,” Sandy explains.

During their walks, the Newcomers students usually can’t seem to get enough of spotting, collecting and identifying their discoveries. As they start to see the world around them in a new way, the children in each Newcomers class inevitably begin to access the inner life of the imagination.

This shift in consciousness that the children experience is subtle but the Earth Guides are trained to notice when the children respond to “the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the universe.” Sometimes the change comes through when they begin to cradle clamshells or leaves in their hands, tuck gumballs and pebbles into their pockets or dig up tiny snails, then lovingly return them to the mud. During one Earth Walk this fall, Earth Guide Katie Kovach saw this shift when the children spontaneously and in silence worked together to create the image of the sun out of fallen yellow leaves. One by one, the children collected and placed their leaves upon the path to paint their image.

In another group, Fransine, a Congolese girl with watchful eyes that looked wise beyond her years, became the protector of the mushrooms. Each time she spotted one, she ordered the other children away while she brushed aside fallen, brown leaves that covered them and tenderly stroked their cool, spongy surfaces.



On another day, Kyaw, a boy from Myanmar who did not seem to understand a lot of English, crept out onto the jagged, tippy rocks of the Creeping Cedar Creek with the agility and grace of a cat. Balancing his weight just right, and never tipping, he gently and methodically turned over the stones, and he intuitively knew to set them back down gently to avoid clouding the water as he searched for his catch. Squatting with the grace of a yogi and focusing completely on his objective, he expertly caught a crayfish with his bare hands (“No easy feat,” says Sandy, “He has obviously done this before”). Holding up the tiny critter to share it with the group, he beamed to applause from his teacher and classmates. When it was time to go, he naturally took over for Sandy, leading the group back to the TreeHouse. Although Kyaw did not seem to understand Sandy’s rule that she lead the group throughout the Earth Walk, she let him stay in the lead. Not in a hurry like most children who try to run up front, Kyaw had “awakened to the landscape” and Sandy felt comfortable allowing him to take her place.



“Once he took the lead after the creek, he was obviously in a flow of heightened attention. It was the rapidity with which he noticed details along the trail: frog, mushroom, this, that, pointing with great speed without missing a step or slowing down. He had done this before. He did not stop to commune. He pointed frequently with joy as he led us home to the TreeHouse,” Sandy recalled. For Kyaw, Timberlake seemed to reawaken an inner longing, returning him to a place he knew.

The Newcomers teachers and faculty have noticed the program’s impact too. “It’s just beautiful and serene [here],” says Tiffany Hinton, the Newcomers School’s vice principal who recently attended the program at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary for the first time. Rachel McGoldrick, a Newcomers teacher who has brought her class to Timberlake since the program’s inception, adds, “It’s an opportunity for them to be in direct contact with nature and I don’t think that’s something they get to do often.” The experience, says McGoldrick, teaches them to see life around them “with new eyes.”

Seeing the world around them differently, learning to behold the natural world as they come into a deeper connection with plants and animals, is part of the experience that Sandy and the other Earth Guides hope for all the children who come to the Center’s programs at Timberlake. They allow the process to unfold by sharing their own joy and excitement over the subjects they encounter along the trail. But they know that each child’s response will be as unique as the journeys that have inevitably helped to shape them before they arrived there.

Remarkable transformations unfold with each new group. Inside the forest of the Earth Sanctuary children who are naturally impulsive become more focused and careful, children who seem mournfully quiet begin to laugh, and children who are tentative start to experiment with the world around them.

On that overcast day, the most noticeable change seemed to happen for everybody at the same time, at the moment when the rain began tapping delicate melodies on the canopy overhead, the only sound in the woods aside from the children’s shrieks of laughter and the faint rustle of the leaves in the gentle breeze. The trees provided a natural umbrella, and the rhythm of the raindrops added to the silence engulfing the passage of time. Children, teachers and Earth Guides felt a sense of peace and calm that became a part of them all, connecting them, the trees and the animals as one, united together in that moment. As the silence and raindrops enveloped them on that still day, the children grew especially present and attuned.

This kind of soulful experience and its potential impact for both the children and the planet are best captured in the words of the Center’s mentor Thomas Berry: “There is a different way of knowing. The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is about this other mode of consciousness. What you are doing at the Center is fundamental and deeply important at this time in history. The children of the twenty-first century will determine the fate of this planet. The twentieth century was a century of death and destruction. The twenty-first must be a century of life. The Center is giving children integral experiences, validating experiences to give immediacy to the natural world in the course of their own human development as an emerging consciousness in our time.”

For most of the Newcomers students, immersion in the natural world is not accessible. In their new homes in Greensboro, it is unlikely that they have many opportunities to venture into natural settings. Many of Greensboro’s immigrant and refugee families live in apartment buildings surrounded by asphalt parking lots with few, if any, trees, let alone creeks or ponds. One Newcomers student, a boy from Guatemala, told Sandy he did not want to leave, that the sanctuary reminded him of his home. Others arrive with many questions about whether the woods at Timberlake are filled with lions, tigers, elephants and monkeys. For some children “knowing” comes through quite naturally, as if they have returned home, but for others,

those who may be experiencing their first venture into the woods, the knowing can be quite dramatic, undoubtedly filtered through the experiences they have had before coming to America.

“We really have no idea what the children have been through to get here. I just know that I have them for one day. I can show my love and welcoming for one day. I can plant a seed of love and care for the “lowly” snail (welcome snail!), true respect and interest in them, for one day. And that becomes a part of them, I have no doubt,” says Sandy.

Sandy and the other Earth Guides also have faith that the land possesses the ultimate connection point for the children. One of the favorite spots to visit for both students and teachers is the creek, where Bisdee remarks, “the healing presence of water always acts as a kind of equalizer and connecting point.” After gauging whether a particular teacher will worry about wet feet, Sandy often lingers with the Newcomers students at one of Timberlake’s creeks, where careful eyes can detect darting minnows, elusive crayfish and camouflaged snails.

This is where the knowing seemed to happen for one particularly detached child, mentioned at the beginning of this story. On that afternoon, Sandy helped a group of Newcomers children climb down a bank to search for crayfish while others, on their stomachs, dangled their heads over the Creeping Cedar bridge to spot the critters from above. Meanwhile, Elishafat, the small Tanzanian boy who had seemed so distant throughout his visit, wandered down the embankment alone, avoiding the group and not asking Sandy for help. As he neared the water, his eyes became more focused and his curiosity called him further. He set his gaze on a stepping-stone. Then he moved with a purpose, tentatively easing first one foot and then, with a surge of confidence, the other one onto that rock. Now he knelt, drawing his face to the water’s surface, as if being beckoned to search closer and deeper. When he looked back up (perched steadily on that wobbly rock), for the first time that day, his body loosened, his face lightened with budding confidence and his eyes came alive with a quiet satisfaction. He looked as if he had finally arrived home.

Programs for Adults

Presence to Living Earth in Spring

“We no longer hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. The trees and meadows are no longer intimate modes of spirit presence. The world about us has become an “it” rather than a “thou”. . . We continue to make music, write poetry, and do our painting and sculpture and architecture, but these activities easily become aesthetic expressions simply of the human. They lose the intimacy and radiance and awesome qualities of the universe. We have, in the accepted universe of these times, little capacity for participating in the mysteries that were celebrated in the earlier literary and artistic and religious modes of expression. For we cannot live in the universe in which these celebrations took place. We can only look on, as it were, as at something unreal.”

~ Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*

“Heron Mornings”

with Andrew Levitt

Date: Sunday, March 31, 2019

Time: 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Rd.

Whitsett, NC 27377

Cost: \$50

Register online at <http://www.beholdnature.org/livingearth.php>

Please join us for our Presence to Living Earth in Spring program that will open a space for being present with Earth in an intimate manner through poetry readings, solo walks within the sacred space of Timberlake Earth Sanctuary, and time for reflection.

Andrew Levitt holds a BA in English from Yale University and a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a mime with Marcel Marceau and with Paul J. Curtis at The American Mime Theatre. Andrew performed and taught mime professionally for over thirty years and then helped found the high school at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, NC where he taught Humanities and directed theater for seven years. Andrew co-created a performance piece, “The Meadow Across the Creek: Words from Thomas Berry” for the Thomas Berry Centennial in 2014 and is the author of *All the Scattered Leaves of the Universe: Journey and Vision in Dante’s Divine Comedy and the Work of Thomas Berry* (2015) and *Heron Mornings* (2017), his first book of poetry. Andrew received the Greensboro Public Library’s Thomas Berry Award in 2016. As Dr. Merryandrew, he currently works as a clown doctor in the Pediatric unit at Moses Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro.

Programs for Children

To register or reserve dates for our children's programs go to
<http://www.beholdnature.org/programsforchildren.php>



Awakening to Nature

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Grades K-5, maximum 24 children

Cost: \$250 per class (bring a bag lunch)

The Center's "Awakening to Nature" programs are intended to foster reverence for the natural world, develop the inner capacity to attend to the world around you, and create a deep, personal connection with nature. The programs bring the inner lives of children into a new relationship with the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the natural world.

"Awakening to Nature" programs begin in a circle where children are invited to slow down and make themselves at home in nature. Guided earth walks follow, led by experienced Earth Guides, with groups of 8 children. The small size of the group and the "beholding" practices of the Center enable the children to enter into a living and loving relationship with the natural world. Throughout the changing seasons, children are invited to enter into silence and experience the fullness of each moment – to take in the sounds, the smells, the feel of the air, the colors and movements of the world around them.

Children then return to the circle where they enjoy a bag lunch together. The day ends with a heartwarming circle of reflection. The rhythm of the day enables the children to assimilate their experiences and to enter into community together as they share what touched them about the day.

We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of children in grades Kindergarten-5.

We especially like to work with schools year after year so that the children can have sustained and meaningful connections with the natural world over time. From the returning children who have experienced our program over the course of several years, we have learned how one day spent in our program has lived in their memories and in their hearts for a whole year in between visits. They remember the peaceful sounds of the Native American Flute, the relationships with various creatures that they have encountered, the beauty of nature, and our practices, especially our Behold practice. We have also learned how much the children appreciate being in an atmosphere of peace and quiet.

Empathetic Listening

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Grades 4-8 (maximum 24 children)

Cost: \$250 per class (bring a bag lunch)

Our children live in a fast-paced, competitive and high-tech world, in a culture where continuous partial attention and multi-tasking are becoming the norm. Are we losing our ability to truly listen to each other? Do we carry an attitude of respect that allows us to listen to the meaning and feeling that come through another's words?

The "Empathetic Listening" program engages children in a practice of deep listening to each other and to the natural world. The program begins with an introduction to empathetic listening, a way of listening that creates mutual understanding, trust and respect. Can we learn to listen without judgement? Can we listen without interrupting? Can we reflect back what we think we have heard? Can we sense the feelings behind the words? These are some of the practices that children have an opportunity to explore together in pre-selected pairs.

During the second half of the program, the children are invited to listen deeply to the natural world during a solo writing time in their own special sit spot within a beautiful earth sanctuary. They are invited to become still, to deeply notice the place where they are sitting. What makes this particular landscape special and unique? What are you hearing in your special place? What might nature reveal to you? In the rare experience of silence, a voice begins to emerge, their own, inspired by the wonders of nature. Our highly experienced staff members carry an attitude of deep respect for all life. We seek always to embody new ways of listening to nature and to each other, ways that are respectful, reverential and relational.

The Poetry of Nature

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Grades 6 – 12 (maximum 24 children)

Cost: \$250 per class (bring a bag lunch)

"Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over announcing your place in the family of things."

~ Mary Oliver

Poetry is a language of deep seeing that reveals dimensions of the world inaccessible to discursive thought, and so it is to poetry that we turn for our programs for middle school and high school students. Our Poetry of Nature program is a passage through three landscapes in the natural world where students listen to a poem, are asked to be fully present to the place, the moment and the feelings and images that arise within them. At each site, students are invited to find a solo spot, enter into a practice of presence, and record their inner experiences through guided writing practices. The poems and landscapes are carefully chosen to resonate with one another. The day culminates in a poetry reading after lunch where each contribution is deeply connected to the student's experience in nature and to his/her inner life. The students read poems, ask questions, and share reflections on the day and on their sense of belonging to the natural world. This program taps a deep wellspring within young adults that rarely is accessed at school.

Thomas Berry Summer Programs for Children

The Sacred Art of Fly Fishing



painting by Adriano Manocchia

Ages 11-15

Week One: June 11-13, 2019

Week Two: June 17-20, 2019

8:30 am – 2:00 pm

Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Cost: \$225 for Week One, \$300 for Week Two

Register online for one or both weeks at

<http://www.beholdnature.org/thomasberrysummerprogram.php>

Group size: 12

Timberlake Earth Sanctuary is a place of beauty graced with two ponds and encircled by Lake Mackintosh. It is a place devoted to a recovery of the sacred. Please join us for a week of contemplative fly fishing where we will deepen our relationship with the watery worlds of Timberlake. We will learn the art of fly fishing, including the traditional Japanese art of Tenkara fly fishing, and will bring our experiences with the watery world into expression in words and images.

Rods, lines and flies will be provided, as well as journals and art supplies. Plan to dress for the weather and bring sunscreen, a hat, a water bottle and solid water shoes. Please bring a bag lunch each day. Snacks will be provided.

Led by Eric McDuffie, Katie Kovach and Rosemary McCarthy-Mareka.

Eric McDuffie is a PhD student in Environmental Studies at Antioch University New England. Eric has been inspired by his childhood experiences of fly fishing with his grandfather and the writings of Thomas Berry to devote himself to the creation of contemplative fly fishing programs for children, young adults, and families that embody a sense of the sacred. Eric earned a BS in biology with a secondary science teaching certification from UNC-Chapel Hill, followed by a master of environmental management degree at Duke University's Leadership Program within the Nicholas School of the Environment. For over a decade he has taught middle and high school environmental science and has twice received Environmental Educator of the Year honors from the state of North Carolina. Eric graduated from the Center's Inner Life of the Child in Nature program in 2016.

Katie Kovach is an outdoor educator and naturalist who enjoys bringing people into a sense of being at home in the world. Her work, whether with people, plants, crafts, or her own family, is guided by the natural world and a deep connectedness and gratitude. She earned an MS in Forestry from Virginia Tech in 2009, a BS in Botany from NC State in 2005, and is a NC certified Environmental Educator. Katie's path meandered through many scientific research labs and environmental programs before she came to the Center. She began Earth Guiding at the Center after graduating from the Center's Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program in 2016.

Rosemary McCarthy-Mareka completed her MS in Special Education from George Peabody College for Teachers in 1977 and brings her love of teaching and over 30 years of experience to her work at the Center. She has taught children of all ages in a variety of settings. Rosemary's love of nature began as a child climbing trees, trail riding on horseback and visiting her grandparents farm in southeastern NC. Rosemary completed her certification with the North Carolina Environmental Education Program in 2008 and became a Center Earth Guide after graduating from The Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program in 2014. She has studied with Oasis, an Institute for Mindfulness-Based Professional Education and Innovation at the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society with the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Rosemary has a special interest in Native American insights and loves to play the Native American Flute out in nature and with friends.

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We wish to express a heartfelt thank you to the following individuals and foundations for their generous support of our work from January 15, 2018 – January 25, 2019

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