

## **Candlelight Vigil Program**

### **July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

***Everything* we do tonight is prayer, because we care about each other and because we care about creation.**

Take a deep breath. And breath it out slowly. Be aware of the movement of your body in response to your breath. Be aware of your breath as it leaves your body. Now, be aware of your broken heart. Tears are appropriate. Wailing or groaning are appropriate..... (Pause)

This (*point*) is about death. (Consuming trees, so we can consume BJs stuff is death) Tonight is about LIFE!

*Silence while we open our hearts to ourselves*

**Introduction** to the evening: Gabriella:

Black Elk, a spiritual leader from the Lakota Nation, said:

All the world's religions are like the spokes on a wheel. They all have the same center. So tonight, we celebrate many different religious and Spirit centered ways of being.

Program

Blessings

Readings

Candle distribution

Litany

And close with a special

**Mosque: Call to prayer**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHOEGSMniaI>

**Blessing:** You may want to hold your hand or hands up in the spirit of a blessing and in the direction of the wetland

Holy One, Creator of all that is, we have come here to ask your blessing and protection for our sister and brother, forest, trees, the shrubs, mushrooms, cinnamon fern, deer, possums, frogs and all living beings within this wetland. We ask your blessing and protection for the communities and small businesses that dwell around this wetland.

- **Speaker:** Bless the trees who have life energy, who are humanity's partners in breathing. Bless the trees who talk to each other and who heal one another. Bless the trees who are filled with Viriditas, moisture, fecundity or fertility, says Hildegard of Bingen.
- **All:** Amen
- **Speaker:** Bless are the waters of the vernal ponds who provide life for frogs, salamanders, turtles and creatures who live in these seasonal ponds in safety, from birds
- **All:** Amen
- **Speaker:** Bless the wetland soil, moist, rich in minerals as it sequesters carbon and filters polluted air keeping all surrounding it, safe.
- **All:** Amen
- **Speaker:** Bless your creation, Holy One, your gift of beauty to us, cooling and filtering the air.
- **All:** Amen
- **Speaker:** Bless your creation, Holy One, who praise you, Creator, just by being who they are.
- **All:** Amen
- **Speaker:** Blessed are those who work to protect creation.....and those who sometimes lose their lives because greed and power which is the enemy.
- **All:** Amen

**Music: Karen Drucker – You are the Face of God.**

Sung to the wetland and the Spirit within her.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXNMUAHzvSw>

**Remembering some of our martyred, ancestors and saints. They model courage for us.**

## Readings:

### Catherine:

1. **Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores** was a Honduran environmental activist, an *indigenous leader*, co-founder and coordinator of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras *and* she was a mother of four.

**In 2015, she received the Goldman Environmental prize. These are some of the words from her acceptance speech:**

“In our world views, we are beings who come from the earth, from the water, and from corn. The Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers, in turn protected by links of young girls, who teach us that giving our lives in various ways for the protection of the rivers is giving our lives for the well-being of humanity and of this planet.

Walking alongside people struggling for their emancipation, validates this commitment to continue protecting our waters, the rivers, and shared resources and nature in general, as well as our rights as a people.

Let us wake up! Let us wake up, humankind! We're out of time. We must shake our conscience free from *capitalism, racism and patriarchy* that will only assure our own self-destruction. The Gualcarque (Gual-cark) River has called upon us, to help other gravely threatened rivers. We must answer their call. Our mother earth is militarized, fenced in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systemically violated – our mother demands that we take action...*Pause*.. I dedicate this award to all the rebels out there, to my mother, to the Lenka people, to Rio Blanco and to the martyrs who gave their lives in the struggle to defend our natural resources. *Pause*...On March 3, 2016 a group of people broke into the home of Berta Cáceres and murdered her.

### Linda:

2. **Ken Sero-Wewa-** was a Nigerian writer, television producer and environmental activist. In 1990, Saro-Wiwa began devoting most

of his time to human rights and environmental causes, particularly in Ogoniland (O-gohni-land). He was a member of the Ogoni people, an ethnic minority in Nigeria. The Ogoni people were targeted for crude oil extraction since the 1950s. They suffered extreme environmental damage from decades of indiscriminate petroleum waste dumping.

Ken was one of the earliest members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which advocated for their rights. They had a list of demands, the Ogoni Bill of Rights including increased autonomy and remediation of the environmental damage caused by Royal Dutch Shell. Ken and others were arrested on rigged up charges, had a rigged up trial and on November 1995, at the age of 54, Ken and the others were hung. Shell oil and a corrupt government were behind this murder. Ken's last words were, *"Lord take my soul, but the struggle continues."*

Ken won the Right Livelihood Award as well as the Goldman Environmental Award.

**Janet:**

**3. Dorothy Stang** was born in Dayton, Ohio to a large family of farmers. As a young person, she entered the Cincinnati convent of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in 1948.

Most of her adult life was spent in the usual teaching positions in the life of a nun back then, until she studied Creation Spirituality with Matthew Fox. She traveled to Brazil as a missionary where she spent the rest of her life. She became a tireless advocate for the poor and landless for more than three decades. She taught the indigenous people how to preserve their land, the forest and how to stand up for their rights.

Stang was outspoken in her efforts on behalf of the poor *and* the environment and had previously received death threats from loggers and landowners.

**This comes from the National Catholic Reporter:**

Over the years, Dorothy wore a favorite T-shirt that read: '*The death of the forest is the end of our lives.*' *Pause*.....She knew firsthand what the destruction of the Amazon meant, not only for Brazil *but for the planet*..... After she completed her study of creation spirituality, she attended the historic **1992** first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. A few weeks later, she wrote her family, "Tell all that we must make great efforts to save our planet. Mother Earth is not able to provide anymore. Her water and air are poisoned and her soil is dying of exaggerated use of chemicals, *all in the name of profit*. Pray for all of us and for a world where all can live -- plants, animals and humans -- in peace and harmony."

In 2002, the death threats intensified. The mayor of the nearby town said, "We have to get rid of that woman if we are going to have peace." A list of people with "bounties" on their heads circulated. Atop the list was her name -- Stang, \$20,000.

But she was undeterred. "I know that they want to kill me," she said, "but I will not go away. My place is here alongside these people who are constantly humiliated by the powerful." Visiting her family and community in Ohio a few months before she was killed, she told one sister, "I just want to sink myself into God."

On her return she was met with a trumped-up charge, organizing armed rebellion. This should put her in her place, water down her gumption. And off to trial she went. It was in the middle of the trial that she was killed. She said a few days before her death, "I look at Jesus carrying the cross, and I ask for the strength to carry the suffering of the people." A day before she died, she said: "If something is going to happen, I hope it happens to me, because the others have families to care for.".....*Pause*

**Jack:**

"Let Dorothy inspire you--her great spirit, her work for justice and peace, her service to the poorest, her defense of the earth. Especially her trust in God, her steadfast determination, her carrying on -- no matter what. She will teach us how to do

likewise, how to live in hope, despite these despairing, deadly times.” – Statement by John Deer, former Jesuit.

On the morning of 12 February 2005, Stang woke up early to walk to a community meeting. Ciero (See-er-o), a farmer Stang invited to the meeting, was going to be late. Ciero was a couple of minutes behind Stang, but he was able to see her and hid from the two, armed men, who followed her. She progressed on and was blocked by the two men. They asked if she had any weapons, and she claimed that the only weapon she had was her Bible. She then read a passage from the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit ..." She continued a couple of steps but was suddenly stopped. One of the men shot at Stang, and then many more. She fell to the ground.

**Gabriella: If you recall other martyrs, say their names!**

**Music:**

**This was the music that was played on the streets of Brazilian as people prayed on those same streets. The video is very powerful.**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRpAm6HMHI8>**

**Let us remember the prophets of today, still alive, who model for us resistance and a courageous life. Let us acknowledge those whose shoulders we stand on.**

**Jack:**

4. **Steven Danziger** represented over 30,000 farmers and indigenous people from Ecuador in a case against Chevron related to environmental damage and the health effects caused by oil drilling. The Ecuadorian courts awarded the plaintiffs \$9.5 *billion* in

damages, which led Chevron to withdraw its assets from Ecuador and launch legal action against Danziger in the US. In 2011, Chevron filed a RICO law suit against Danziger in New York City. The case was heard by U.S. District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan, who determined that the ruling of the Ecuadorian courts could not be enforced in the US because it was procured by fraud, bribery, and racketeering activities. Danziger was disbarred from practicing law in 2018. He has been under house arrest since August 2019 awaiting trial on charges of criminal contempt of court, which arose during his appeal against Kaplan's RICO decision.

In 2020, twenty-nine Nobel laureates described the actions taken by Chevron against Danziger as "judicial harassment" and human rights campaigners have described Chevron's actions as an example of a strategic lawsuit against public participation. In April of 2021, six members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus demanded that the Department of Justice review Danziger's case.

The contempt case, the judge wrote, has nothing to do with any responsibility Chevron might bear for pollution in the rainforest in Ecuador, where Chevron's predecessors drilled for oil in the previously pristine jungle. The company has repeatedly denied any culpability.

**Gabriella:**

What we, on Staten Island, are going through is nothing new. This is capitalism metastasized. Profits are ever so much more important than the lives of people.

**Gabriella:**

**5. James Gustave Speth: an American environmental lawyer and advocate**

I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change.

I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems

are selfishness, greed and apathy... And to deal with those we need  
a spiritual and cultural transformation  
And we scientists don't know how to do that "

**Linda:**

**6. Thomas Berry, "The University"**

As now functioning, the University prepares students for their role in extending human dominion over the natural world, not for intimate presence to the natural world. Use of his power in a deleterious manner as devastated the planet. We suddenly discover that we are losing some of our most exalted human experiences that come to us through our participation in the natural world. So awesome is the devastation we are bringing about that we can only conclude that we are caught in a severe cultural disorientation, a disorientation that is sustained intellectually by the university, economically by the corporation, legally by the Constitution, spiritually by religious institutions.

**Distribution of candles**

**After we distribute the candles, we will chant a litany of saints, prophets, martyrs and ancestors. If at the end you would like to add someone, please say their name!**

**We'll begin lighting the candles of two people. When your candle is lit, share the flame with someone near you, until all of us have spread the light.....**

**Then begin the litany of saints.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8In\\_mHLozY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8In_mHLozY)

Creator have mercy,  
Creator have mercy,



Wisdom have mercy,  
Wisdom have mercy,

Creator have mercy,  
Creator have mercy,

Berta Caseres,  
Pray for us.

Ken Sero-Wewa  
Pray for us

Dorothy Stang  
Pray for us

**All you holy men and women pray for us.**

Sojourner Truth  
Give us strength

Martin Luther King  
Give us strength

Daniel Berrigan  
Give us strength

**All you holy men and women pray for us.**

Susan B Anthony  
Pray for us

Harriet Tubman  
Pray for us

Shirley Chisum  
Pray for us

**All you holy men and women pray for us.**

Chief Seattle  
Hear our prayer

Kateri Tekekawitha  
Hear our prayer.

Black Elk  
Hear our prayer

**All you holy men and women pray for us.**

Hildegard of Bingen  
Pray for us

Francis of Assisi  
Pray for us

John of the Cross  
Pray for us

**All you holy men and women pray for us.**

Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah  
Pray with us

Abraham, Sara and Hagar  
Pray with us

Abraham Joshua Heschel  
Pray with us

**All you holy men and women pray for us.**

Quan Yin  
Hear our prayer

Great Spirit  
Hear our prayer

Creator of the Universe  
Hear our prayer

All you holy men and women hear our prayer.

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