Earth Teacher

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON

BEES



JOURNALING PROMPTS

- **Wisdom**: What wisdom (caution or inspiration) does this Earth Teacher have to share with me? What do I need to do to be receptive?

- **Resilience**: What does this Earth Teacher have to offer to help me deepen my personal resilience? My community's collective resilience?

QUOTES

And like bees, amid planetary upheavals of all kinds, we, too, must develop the capacity to envision astonishing possibilities in our own backyards. ~ Ruha Benjamin

❂❂❂

But the aspect of bee sociality I found most striking was that due to their relatively short life spans, the little creatures I observed working during the summer months to produce enough honey to sustain the hive throughout the winter would not live long enough to enjoy their handiwork. When it comes to promoting radical interdependence, then, I think bees have much to teach us. ~ Ruha Benjamin

❂❂❂

“Not only are we dependent on the honey bee for much of what we eat, there is, of course, a grace and elegance they bring to the natural world that would diminish us all were they to disappear.” ~ Bill McKibben

❂❂❂

“Bees do have a smell, you know, and if they don't they should, for their feet are dusted with spices from a million flowers.” ~ Ray Bradbury

POETRY

For Eyes of the Heart by James Crews

for Mary Oliver

If you keep your eyes open,
you will see the carpet of dandelions
spread across the greening yard,
and a grateful bee rolling in the petals
of each one. You will see the pollen
gathered in sacs on the back legs
of a bumblebee, but you must keep
the eyes of the heart open to feel
the need that drives the hovering body
from flower to flower. You must sense
with a wise heart the wild desire
of a dandelion's taproot to stay alive.
Even with its leaves and blooms
ripped away, still the root remains,
clinging to soil as you hold fast
to what feeds your heart too, refusing
to let go, though others beg you,
though they tug and tug

❂❂❂

A Beehive on my Grave by Sue Monk Kidd

Place a beehive on my grave
And let the honey soak through.
When I'm dead and gone,
That's what I want from you.
The streets of heaven are gold and sunny,
But I'll stick with my plot and a pot of honey.
Place a beehive on my grave
And let the honey soak through.

❂❂❂

Hum by Mary Oliver

What is this dark hum among the roses?
The bees have gone simple, sipping,
that’s all. What did you expect? Sophistication?
They’re small creatures and they are
filling their bodies with sweetness, how could they not

moan in happiness? The little
worker bee lives, I have read, about three weeks.
Is that long? Long enough, I suppose, to understand
that life is a blessing. I have found them — haven't you? —
stopped in the very cups of the flowers, their wings
a little tattered — so much flying about, to the hive,
then out into the world, then back, and perhaps dancing,
should the task be to be a scout-sweet, dancing bee.
I think there isn't anything in this world I don't
admire. If there is, I don't know what it is. I
haven't met it yet. Nor expect to. The bee is small,
and since I wear glasses, so I can see the traffic and
read books, I have to
take them off and bend close to study and
understand what is happening. It's not hard, it's in fact
as instructive as anything I have ever studied. Plus, too,
it's love almost too fierce to endure, the bee
nuzzling like that into the blouse
of the rose. And the fragrance, and the honey, and of course
the sun, the purely pure sun, shining, all the while, over
all of us.

✪✪✪

Letter to Someone Living Fifty Years from Now by Matthew Olzmann

Most likely, you think we hated the elephant,
the golden toad, the thylacine and all variations
of whale harpooned or hacked into extinction.

It must seem like we sought to leave you nothing
but benzene, mercury, the stomachs
of seagulls rippled with jet fuel and plastic.

You probably doubt that we were capable of joy,
but I assure you we were.

We still had the night sky back then,
and like our ancestors, we admired
its illuminated doodles
of scorpion outlines and upside-down ladles.

Absolutely, there were some forests left!
Absolutely, we still had some lakes!

I'm saying, it wasn't all lead paint and sulfur dioxide.
There were bees back then, and they pollinated
a euphoria of flowers so we might
contemplate the great mysteries and finally ask,
"Hey guys, what's transcendence?"

And then all the bees were dead.

❂❂❂

Navigation by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Abducted, drugged and left
abandoned in a field, a bee
will still discover a way back
to its hive. Though day is night
and night is day, though
anesthetized, disrupted,
foggy, dazed,
the faithful bee returns.
Is it any wonder then,
the heart with its
ecstatic buzz, though dissuaded
by time, discouraged by
loss, deterred by neglect
or rejection, still manages
to navigate its way home?
Sometimes I feel it—
its beat, like the flutter
of wings, saying *trust me,*
I'll lead you, finding home
is what I do best,
though the field is unfamiliar,
though I have
lost the path.

❂❂❂

Happiness by Mary Oliver

In the afternoon I watched
the she-bear; she was looking
for the secret bin of sweetness -
honey, that the bees store
in the trees'soft caves
Black block of gloom, she climbed down
tree after tree and shuffled on
through the woods. And then
she found it! The honey-house deep
as heartwood, and dipped into it
among the swarming bees - honey and comb
she lipped and tongued and scooped out
in her black nails, until

maybe she grew full, or sleepy, or maybe
a little drunk, and sticky
down the rugs of her arms,
and began to hum and sway.
I saw her let go of the branches,
I saw her lift her honeyed muzzle
into the leaves, and her thick arms
as though she would fly -
an enormous bee
all sweetness and wings -
down into the meadows, the perfection
of honeysuckle and roses and clover -
to float and sleep in the sheer nets
swaying from flower to flower
day after shining day.

✪✪✪

Gathering Nectar by Julia Fehrenbacher

"Do you know that sometimes,
when gathering nectar,
bees fall asleep in flowers?" Andrea Gibson

When I am flitting ahead to the next

very important thing, I do not land long enough
to notice steam rise from the mug of mint tea, do not
breathe in the sweet scent of fresh honey the bees
worked so long and hard to make, do not notice
the moment on this Monday morning when sun smiles through
the layers and layers of sorrow. When my head is bent
to the brutal, mind buzzing no no no, I do not notice
when my old dog looks up for a pet. Later,
I will notice the trees still alive with so much
vibrant color—as if God was up all night
with her paintbrush. Later, I will land long enough
to taste the sweetness. Or, perhaps, I might remember
that sweetness can not find me when I am not here. Maybe
the only very important thing is to stop, stop now—
to fill myself with nectar like the bees do, work with others
to make honey, and then offer spoonful after spoonful
to those who have forgotten that no matter
how bitter the bitter, still and always—
we can gather nectar, still and always, we can
fall asleep, and wake, in the flowers.

❂❂❂

To Make a Prairie by Emily Dickinson

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

❂❂❂

bees came by Rupi Kaur

bees came for honey flowers
giggled as they undressed themselves
for the taking the sun smiled

JOKES / PUNS

What is small, yellow and black, and drops things? **A fumble-bee**

What do bees chew? **Bumble-gum**

What goes zzub-zubb when it travels? **A bee flying backwards.**

Why was the bee fired from the barbershop? **It only knew how to give a buzz cut.**

Why did the bee go to the dermatologist? **It had hives.**

MEDITATION

And when i rise,
let me rise
like a bird, gracefully

And when i fall, let me fall,
like the snow,..
joyfully with no regrets.

And when i stand, let me stand
like the trees, strong with life.

And when I serve, let me serve,
Like the air, ‘tween you and me,
Connectedly.

And when i work, let me work,
like a bee, prayerfully.

And when i pray let me pray,

With the earth (or water), deep and full
With my life.

(from Plum Village, adapted by Rev. Ron Phares)

Here are several musical versions of the same song, all based on words by Wendell Berry, each with different lyrics:

- When I Rise (Monica Max West) - this includes the bee lyrics
- When I Rise Worldwide Choir
- When I Rise (Joe Holtaway)

❁❁❁

Ramadan Day 14 Reflection by Rev. Ranwa Hammamy

> *"And your Lord inspired the bee, saying 'Build yourselves hives in the mountains, and trees, and what people construct. Then, feed on all kinds of fruit and follow the ways made easy by your Lord.' From their bellies comes a drink of many hues, within which is healing for humankind. Indeed, there truly is a sign in this for those who think."*
> *-Sura Al-Nahl (The Bee)*

How we treat bees is a reflection of how we treat God.

We all belong to intricate, intersecting, fragile, and resilient ecosystems. There is nothing we can do to separate ourselves from them. Like it or not, we are each and all part of something so much larger and beyond our (full) control. But for so long now, we've been living in ways that have been designed to elevate us above those connections - that pull up on the threads holding all of Life together so hard that they are beginning to snap. With each break, the ecosystem shudders and weakens, and our own existence is that made that much less. Each thread we pull away from or break unravels the knot of our own survival - each time we try to separate ourselves from other expressions of Life, we chip away at our own.

The bees know this. They cross pollinate as they feed, and in doing so, help all sorts of plant life grow. That plant life in turn sustains and nourishes animals of all kinds, including humans, and not just as food. As cleaners of our air, as stabilizers of our earth, as our shelter, clothing, and medicines.

Honeybees especially know the cost of damaging other expressions of Life. When they sting, they are stuck in the being they have stung. At that point their lives are totally dependent on that connection in a new and devastating way - to rupture this connection

forged in harm is to die. To choose to separate, particularly after moving from a state of mutual care to harmful injury, is to further separate oneself from Life.

Humanity may not have barbed stingers, but we certainly have done our fair share of injuring and poisoning others in our web of Life. And we are witnessing how those injury-to-separation interactions are killing us as well as the rest of the world. It's hard to tell if there is still a way to alter this trajectory of eradication - I'd like to hope there is, but it will require us recognizing that the relationships we have with Life now cannot be what we have in the future. That the ecosystem is different - and some of those threads are irreparably lost/broken - so we ourselves are different.

How we treat bees is how we treat Life. How we treat the gifts we receive without ever asking for them. How we treat the forces sustaining our existence that we have barely even begun to understand. How we treat the wisdom they are guided by, the wisdom they offer us for how to support our shared survival. How we treat bees is a reflection of we treat God.

FOR KIDDOS

MUSIC

Flight of the Bumblebee by Rimsky-Korsakov

IMAGES FOR CONTEMPLATION








LIFE
SHELTER









