Earth Teacher

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON



JOURNALING PROMPTS

- **Relationship:** What is my current relationship with this Earth Teacher? What do I like about my current relationship? What do I want to change about it?
- **Widom**: What wisdom/caution/lessons does this Earth Teacher have to share with me? What do I need to do to be receptive?
- **Deep Time:** What relationship might this Earth Teacher have had with an ancestor of mine? What relationship might this Earth Teacher have with a descendant of mine?

QUOTES

Early summer days are a jubilee time for birds. In the fields, around the house, in the barn, in the woods, in the swamp - everywhere love and songs and nests and eggs. ~ E.B. White

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"Little by little the bird makes his nest." ~ Haitian Wisdom

"A foolish bird fouls her own nest." ~ Japanese Wisdom

"A bird may be ever so small, it always seeks a nest of its own." ~ Danish Wisdom

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The human bird shall take his first flight, filling the world with amazement, all writings with his fame, and bringing eternal glory to the nest whence he sprang. ~ Leonardo da Vinci

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To be fully alive, fully human, and completely awake is to be continually thrown out of the nest. ~ Pema Chodron

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The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship. ~ William Blake

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To find the universal elements enough; to find the air and the water exhilarating; to be refreshed by a morning walk or an evening saunter... to be thrilled by the stars at night; to be elated over a bird's nest or a wildflower in spring - these are some of the rewards of the simple life. ~John Burroughs

POETRY

Mimesis by Fady Joudah

My daughter
wouldn't hurt a spider
That had nested
Between her bicycle handles
For two weeks
She waited
Until it left of its own accord

If you tear down the web I said
It will simply know
This isn't a place to call home
And you'd get to go biking

She said that's how others
Become refugees isn't it?

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Nest by Marianne Boruch

I walked out, and the nest was already there by the step.
Woven basket of a saint sent back to life
as a bird who proceeded to make a mess of things.
Wind right through it, and any eggs long vanished.
But in my hand it was intricate pleasure,
even the thorny reeds softened in the weave.
And the fading leaf mold, hardly itself anymore,
merely a trick of light, if light can be tricked.
Deep in a life is another life.
I walked out, the nest already by the step.

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Nest by Jeffrey Harrison

It wasn't until we got the Christmas tree
into the house and up on the stand
that our daughter discovered a small bird's nest
tucked among its needled branches.

Amazing, that the nest had made it
all the way from Nova Scotia on a truck
mashed together with hundreds of other trees
without being dislodged or crushed.

And now it made the tree feel wilder,
a balsam fir growing in our living room,
as though at any moment a bird might flutter
through the house and return to the nest.

And yet, because we'd brought the tree indoors,
we'd turned the nest into the first ornament.
So we wound the tree with strings of lights,
draped it with strands of red beads,

and added the other ornaments, then dropped
two small brass bells into the nest, like eggs
containing music, and hung a painted goldfinch
from the branch above, as if to keep them warm.

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Nesting by Janet Grace Riehl

The door
to my parents' bedroom is ajar.
I poke my head
around the door and peek in.
There they are,
not a peep out of them.

Cuddled in Mother's hospital bed
he cradles her head under his armpit.
Pop grins his head off.
Mother looks like she died and went to heaven.
Not a bad way to go, when you think about it.

“Tuck your head under my wing
and go to sleep,” Mama used to cluck
when I was her baby chick.

Here they are, nestled together,
under each other’s wings.
Nesting, with no eggs to hatch.

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Nests by Jena Schwartz

Something about nests
so carefully assembled
and surprisingly sturdy,
airtight, able to hold
the most fragile beings.
Something about how
my own nest fills
and empties, fills
and empties, children
flying into their lives
then returning as I sit
sentry, tending, constructing
a life and a home
out of mud and words and
bits of memory and whatever’s
in the fridge that day,
and how they know no matter
when they come through
the door again I will hug them
as tightly as the day they left.
How many nests do we weave
in a lifetime, how many homes
do we create and lose and leave?
Where do the birds go
when their handiwork
falls to the ground, ruined
by weather or human interference?
They do not call this resilience
or perseverance, no,
it is the heart compass
of taking care, of protecting
our young and providing shelter
that tells them what to do next.
And so it is with us, with me,

always wanting to tuck my babies in
close under wing, even as they fly away.

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The Exposed Nest by Robert Frost

You were forever finding some new play.
So when I saw you down on hands and knees
In the meadow, busy with the new-cut hay,
Trying, I thought, to set it up on end,
I went to show you how to make it stay,
If that was your idea, against the breeze,
And, if you asked me, even help pretend
To make it root again and grow afresh.
But 'twas no make-believe with you to-day,
Nor was the grass itself your real concern,
Though I found your hand full of wilted fern,
Steel-bright June-grass, and blackening heads of clover.
'Twas a nest full of young birds on the ground
The cutter-bar had just gone champing over
(Miraculously without tasting flesh)
And left defenseless to the heat and light.
You wanted to restore them to their right
Of something interposed between their sight
And too much world at once—could means be found.
The way the nest-full every time we stirred
Stood up to us as to a mother-bird
Whose coming home has been too long deferred,
Made me ask would the mother-bird return
And care for them in such a change of scene
And might our meddling make her more afraid.
That was a thing we could not wait to learn.
We saw the risk we took in doing good,
But dared not spare to do the best we could
Though harm should come of it; so built the screen
You had begun, and gave them back their shade.
All this to prove we cared. Why is there then
No more to tell? We turned to other things.
I haven't any memory—have you?—
Of ever coming to the place again
To see if the birds lived the first night through,
And so at last to learn to use their wings.

JOKES / PUNS

What kind of bird always gets stuck in the nest? A velcrow.

What do you call a bird that's good at making nests? An "archi-tweet"!

Why did the mother bird bring string to the nest? To tie up loose ends!

What do you call a bird that's always getting lost? A distracted "nest-explorer"!

MUSIC

"Bird Nest on the Ground" by Muddy Waters

"Bird Song" by the Grateful Dead

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IMAGES FOR CONTEMPLATION



















