



*GreenFaith's mission is to inspire, educate and mobilize people of diverse religious backgrounds for environmental leadership. Our work is based on beliefs shared by the world's great religions - we believe that protecting the earth is a religious value, and that environmental stewardship is a moral responsibility.*

### ***Eco-Autobiography Project\****

The project is broken into three stages with the aim to help:

- Deepen your understanding of your own relationship and spiritual connection with Earth
- Deepen your understanding of the teachings, texts, resources, and roadblocks from your spiritual tradition/practice in relation to the environment
- Find your voice and strengthen your ability to share your story with your JV community and others

#### **Stage 1: Eco-Autobiography**

Stage 1 is intended to help you catalog important examples of your own experience of the sacred in the environment, so that you can refer to these as appropriate in your own study, prayer, meditation, writing or speaking. We hope that in listing and describing these experiences, you will be able to identify recurring themes in your spiritual experiences in relation to Earth.

In this stage, please describe the following experiences. Consider what you *felt* during each experience, and what resonated with you the most. What has this experience meant to you?

- a. Describe a significant spiritual experience you have had in the natural world during the following stages of your life:
  - i. Childhood
  - ii. Adolescence
  - iv. Adulthood



\*Adapted by Jess Ingman for JVs with Green Faith's permission

- b. Describe significant relationships you have had with
  - i. Landscapes or places – urban, suburban, rural, or wild
  - ii. Animals or other non-human forms of life
- c. Describe an experience of pollution or environmental degradation and what this taught you emotionally and morally.
- d. Offer a brief description of your own cultural and socio-economic background and the ways in which this influences your perceptions of the “environment.”

Are there any recurring themes to your answers above, or are there other reflections or observations after this exercise as it relates to your service as a JV?

## **Stage 2: Spiritual Resources**

Stage 2 is intended to help you identify the passages from sacred writings, prayers, theological statements, spiritual teachings, formal sources, literature, poetry or other writings that express your beliefs about the environment. There are a wide range of applicable texts and teachings from many spiritual traditions – and the history of the use and interpretation of these in relation to the environment is young. We invite you to identify passages that are meaningful to you, and offer a brief interpretation of each that you could communicate to members of your community. In this stage, please describe the following:

- a. Three inspirational or sacred texts that inform your eco-theology and a description of what these texts mean to you
- b. Two spiritual teachings which have influenced your eco-spirituality and a description of each
- c. One roadblock within your tradition or community in regards to eco-spirituality. In other words, what elements of your tradition or community block your eco-spiritual development? Please describe each roadblock in just a few sentences.
- d. One spiritual/ritual/liturgical/worship practice that strengthens your connection with the natural world. Please describe the practice.

- e. Drawing from your eco-autobiographical statement (Stage 1) and the passages/texts/prayers that you have identified in Stage 2, identify 2-3 themes that form the basis of your spiritual beliefs about the environment. For example, themes could include: spirituality, stewardship, justice, awe, beauty, revelation, conversion, unity, interconnection, kinship, renewal, sin/redemption, etc.

### **Stage 3: Communal /Public Expression**

The final stage of the eco-autobiography project is intended to help you express yourself in a communal context about your spiritual belief on the importance of protecting the earth. You're invited to share this through some form of public expression – artistic, written, spoken, or other - addressing at least one of your core beliefs about the environment. You could share this expression during a JV community/spirituality night or more broadly with a local faith community, in a letter to your representative, or at a local action addressing an ecological concern, for example.

*Consider—how do you intend to express the powerful story and narrative you have learned through this eco-autobiography exercise?*

As examples:

- A story of a nature-based spiritual experience you've had, seen, or learned of, followed by a reflection on the value or belief that it expresses.
- A teaching – from sacred texts, theological tradition, worship-tradition, formal religious source or literature, poems or other writings – that you explore in regards to its ecological meaning. This statement could include a direct quote of the text you select, followed by your reflection on its meaning.
- A commentary on a public environmental issue, addressed from a spiritual perspective. This can take the form of a sermon or presentation to a faith-based community, or something similar.
- An artistic project that expresses your beliefs, values or perspective on the environment.
- Talks, reflections, sermons that address themes and teachings you have identified in sections 1 and 2.

If you enjoyed this exercise, learn more about Green Faith's resources, leadership opportunities, and advocacy campaigns online at <http://www.greenfaith.org/>

