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"We are losing splendid and intimate modes of divine presence.
We are, perhaps, losing ourselves."

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skyline
Twenty Years of
EARTHLINES

By Diane Pendola

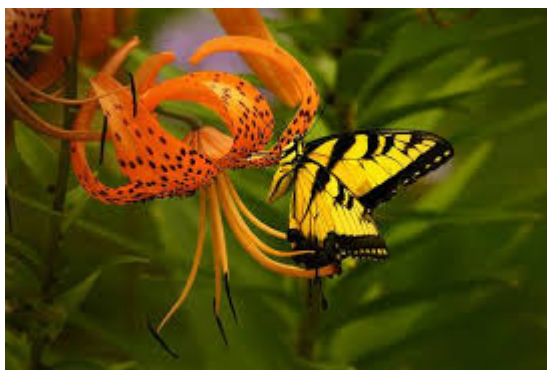
Spring 2021

Dear Friends,

I began writing EARTHLINES the [winter of 2000](#), after a wild fire in October of 1999 burned 13,000 acres of forest all around us. The loss of ponderosa pines, of sacred groves, of huge black oaks and wide-hipped madrones was devastating and life altering. It reawakened me to the preciousness of what remains, not only here at Skyline, but by extension, throughout our planet. Our fire shook me from a self-forgetting sleep to open my eyes to the enormity of the losses we are facing. As eco-theologian, Thomas Berry expresses, "We are losing splendid and intimate modes of divine presence. We are, perhaps, losing ourselves."*

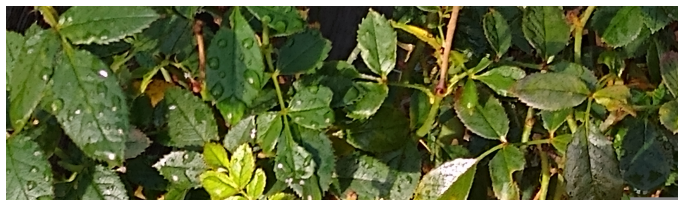
Now twenty years later the evidence of climate change is undeniable. Fires have raged out of control in coniferous forests throughout the western United States turning whole towns to ash. They have burned for months in Australia.

They have ravaged the Amazon rainforests of Brazil. They have destroyed ancient redwoods on the California coast. They have burned through permafrost in the arctic of Siberia threatening to turn this important carbon sink into a carbon source, driving further global



It is challenging not to fall into despair, or to go back to sleep into self-forgetting. But such self-forgetting is not only individual but deeply communal. When we forget ourselves, we forget all our relations. When we neglect our hearts we neglect the beating heart of our Mother. When we wash our hands of responsibility we set in motion crucifixions of a global scale.

I don't know what to do, except to *wake up* as Bob Dylan sings and "*strengthen the things that remain.*" Prayer, I would say, is essential. Prayer that is listening. Prayer that is humble, that is connected to the humus of the earth, that recognizes our intimate need for soil and worms, and the birds that eat the worms and help our own spirits feel the lift of wings. Prayer that recognizes we are more than individuals but beings connected to every other in an interdependent web. Prayer helps us re-member, re-connect the threads to the lost and severed parts of ourselves: those *splendid and intimate modes of divine presence* that constitute our body, breath and life.



Twenty years ago a group of us gathered, after days of planting seedling trees.

earth and breath to bless them, and us, in these new beginnings. We held hands and made this prayer:



We Pray

This land be made whole again

This forest grow strong again

These trees grow tall again.

We pray

That what we do today strengthens

the sacred web of life.

We pray

That the knot we tie today

in this place with these hands

will bind us to all generations to come.

We pray

That through our actions today

we make of this place a sanctuary

for all the creatures who have thrived here in the past.

We pray

That we secure a future for them in this present

and with them for ourselves

and our children's children.

We pray

That the trout will flourish again in the creek

and the frogs will always celebrate

in their evening song.

What we do today matters.

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***These trees we plant are our breath.
Today we express the unity of all life.
WE ARE ONE***

***Today we enter into a covenant with this place
And through the particularity of this place and time
with all places and all times:
TO BIND UP AND SERVE THE SACRED WEB OF LIFE***

[\(Tree Planting, Skyline, March 10, 2001\)](#)*



May we each, in our own way, bind up and serve the web of life.

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*Prayer by Diane

*Thomas Berry, [The Dream of The Earth](#), Sierra Club Books, 1988

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Our mailing address is:

PO Box 338, Camptonville, CA 95922

skyline@gotsky.com

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