

Essential Elements of Earth Sabbath Celebrations



By North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light



Growing out of the Earth Contemplations held in Asheville in 2009-2010, the Earth Sabbath Celebrations are contemplative and experiential services which utilize community building exercises, readings from many faith traditions, music, video, ritual, movement, chant, guided meditation and other modalities to reach deep into the grief and love we feel for our Earth and help both salve and energize our spirits so we can continue the work of restoration and repair of and with all Life.

Earth Sabbath Celebrations are inherently community based, so most of the program will reflect your own local community's needs, interests, and culture. We believe, however, that there are some essential elements that should be included in any NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations.

- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should be interfaith and truly welcoming to people from any faith tradition including those who are not active members of established faith communities. We try to accomplish this by using language, readings, prayers, symbols and rituals from a wide variety of faith traditions at each service. We also spread the invitations broadly to both faith and environmental organizations and communities. You as a member of an Earth Sabbath Celebration are invited and encouraged to help determine how your local Celebration achieves this objective.
- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should be balanced, focusing on the Earth and people equally. They should acknowledge and celebrate the interdependence of the human species and all Life, not just the human community.
- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should contain both contemplative and active elements. We encourage this diversity of activity, as it reflects the diversity of the planet, the problems we face, and the solutions we must find.
- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should be designed to celebrate and support environmental activists, and provide a safe and welcoming space for sharing sadness, fears, and frustrations as well as joys, encouragement and successes.
- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should begin with a community building activity, move into a formal planned service, and end with a commissioning for all participants to return to the world to continue the work of restoration and repair of our relationship with all Life. You are welcome to use or adapt the NCIPL commissioning or write your own as a community.
- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should nurture leaders, by encouraging sharing in the development of and leadership during the service among the congregants.
- In 2011, the monthly NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations in Raleigh focused on the four elements, Earth, Air, Water and Fire in rotation. This approach is not required, but we do recommend that each Earth Sabbath Celebration be built around a specific environmental focus (e.g. soils, oceans, clouds, plants, biodiversity, etc.).
- NC IPL Earth Sabbath Celebrations should be fun!