

"My Tradition Teaches. . ." at Cathedral of St. John the Divine

Vows for closing service for Climate Weekend, Sept. 21, 2014

by Rabbi Ellen Bernstein

I am Rabbi Ellen Bernstein and I live by the Connecticut River in Holyoke, Massachusetts. 26 years ago, I founded Shomrei Adamah, Keepers of the Earth, because my tradition, Judaism, teaches that the whole world is God's house and the wind is *ruach elohim*, God's breath.

It teaches that the meaning of goodness derives from the water and earth and all the creatures. It teaches that the earth is the ground of our being and that how we live reverberates within it.

My tradition provides us with a Sabbath day to stop—to refrain from working and using the land, to remember that God—not us—is master of the universe. And it provides the land with a Sabbath year—a year of release when no hand works the land and the land enjoys complete rest.

My tradition teaches that we are indelibly connected to the land and that when we behave in accord with God's law, the rain falls in its season and a fecund, verdant earth bears fruit in abundance. And if we neglect the law, the rains stop, the land dries up and

all creatures suffer famine, drought and every disaster.

My tradition teaches that the land is a gift from God and the gift is conditional. If we do not care for the gift, we lose the gift.

And my teaches that we are all responsible for each other.

I vow to listen for the voice of the land and the wind, and to pray and plant, and write and teach that the preservation of our beautiful world is our greatest religious imperative.