

The Nine Principles of
SACRED GROUND
Church of the Wild & Sangha of All Beings

(1) We are grounded by Thich Nhat Hanh's Teachings and Mindfulness Trainings, while also drawing from other Worthy Spiritual, Religious, & Secular Teachings.

Sacred Ground is guided by the teachings of the late Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, who was affectionately known as Thay (meaning "Teacher"). Sacred Ground is specifically grounded by Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings of the Two Promises, the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, as adapted by Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha from the Tiep Hien Order of Interbeing. Sacred Ground recognizes Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings and Mindfulness Trainings, as adapted by Sacred Ground, as vehicles for transmitting and practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

When the teachings of other respected teachers conflict with the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, especially Thay's teachings of the Mindfulness Trainings as adapted by Sacred Ground, it is recognized that the Church/Sangha will continue to be guided by Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness teachings and Mindfulness Trainings as adapted by Sacred Ground. All Sacred Ground events and activities shall support Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings, especially Thay's teachings of the Two Promises, the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, as adapted by Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha. All Sacred Ground services, events, activities, workshops, and programming are grounded by Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings, and Thay's writings serve as an essential part of Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha's Sacred Texts.

Sacred Ground also draws from teachers and teachings besides Thich Nhat Hanh that offer different emphases and perspectives - especially worthy Christian teachings, beneficial ways of thinking based in Earth-centered spirituality, and helpful views offered by other Buddhist schools of thought (see Principle Two). These other teachings, as shared by Sacred Ground, need not align completely with Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings; at the same time, these other teachings should not be in direct conflict with Thay's teachings; all teachings of Sacred Ground should be consistent with the Nine Principles of Sacred Ground and the Five Mindfulness Trainings of Sacred Ground.

A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha is to build a spiritual/religious community grounded by the example and teachings of the late Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, while also drawing from other worthy teachers and teachings.

(2) We are boldly bringing together what is Beneficial in Buddhism, Christianity, Mother Earth Spirituality, and other Worthy Religious, Spiritual, & Secular Traditions.

Many people blend different religious traditions, often weaving Eastern and Western spirituality into their lives. (See Pew Research data from both the United States and Europe.) Typically, people do this independently, in isolation. A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha is to provide a space for Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth-centered Spirituality to come together in a community environment. Sacred Ground is a place where it is possible to simultaneously delve into the teachings of Jesus, the Buddha, and Mother Earth. Sacred Ground provides an environment where we unite the loving wisdom of Jesus, the sage compassion of the Buddha, and our deeply embodied sacred connection to Mother Earth and the natural world.

Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha is a confluence of Buddhism, Christianity, and Earth-centered Spirituality. While maintaining a focus on the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh (see Principle One), Sacred Ground is inspired by a variety of spiritual/religious teachers from various Buddhist, Christian, and Mother Earth Spirit traditions, as well as those from other worthy religious, spiritual, otherworldly, and secular traditions. While sustained and nurtured by the teachings of Jesus, the Buddha, and Mother Earth, Sacred Ground is also open to the deep truths, sustenance, and nurturance available through the worthy teachings in other religious, spiritual, other-worldly, and secular traditions; Sacred Ground draws inspiration from all restorative and edifying teachings. Sacred Ground also recognizes that not all teachings traditionally associated with Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth Spirituality are helpful, healing, and beneficial to humanity, the Greater Earthen Family, and our planet. Sacred Ground defies, resists, and opposes any teachings, regardless of their source, that promote violence, harm, anger, fear, hate, dualistic thinking, and injustice. Sacred Ground also recognizes that, ultimately, all beliefs are personal, and each individual Member of Sacred Ground must rely on both external teachings and internal promptings to establish, assess, and periodically re-evaluate personal values, ethics, epistemologies, and beliefs.

Sacred Ground accepts the inherent complexity of spiritual and religious teachings - recognizing that one particular denomination, school, tradition, or teacher may offer a mixture of unique, creative, worthy practices and teachings in combination with harmful, hurtful, oppressive practices and teachings. It is incumbent upon individual Members of Sacred Ground and the Collective Body of Sacred Ground to discern which teachings are helpful, healing, and beneficial and which are not. This ongoing discernment process, both individually and collectively, is encouraged within Sacred Ground. We also recognize the late Thich Nhat Hanh, through his words and teachings, as a helpful partner in this discernment process.

In Sacred Ground, we explore, contemplate, and unpack the interconnections between Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth Spirituality. We recognize and honor both similarities and differences between these three traditions. As a spiritual community, we focus on more than dialogue across traditions; we bring together and blend the worthy teachings of Buddhism, Christianity, and Earth-centered Spirituality. The effect of uniting these three wisdom traditions is often super-additive, where one plus one plus one equals something greater than three. We explore how Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth Spirituality can creatively feed each other, resulting in rich practices, insights, and effects - sometimes unforeseen and often "exceeding the sum of the parts."

We employ these three traditions to engage with ourselves, others, and the world in ways that promote health, justice, peace, kindness, and agape love. Sacred Ground is an authentic and genuine melding of these three traditions as one spirituality. We celebrate the confluence of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth-centered Spirituality as a beautiful, beneficial, and healing religious/spiritual path.

(3) We are Offering a Deep Melding of our Congregants' and Communities' Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors so that "Your Blood, Spirit, & Land Ancestors may become Our Teachers & Spiritual Ancestors."

Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha is a deep melding of our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors. Sacred Ground realizes that each individual is "the thin waist of the hourglass through which the past and the future are passing." Sacred Ground recognizes our connection to, coexistence with, and non-separateness from our ancestors and our descendants, including all of our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors, and all of our Blood, Spirit, and Land Descendants. Sacred Ground celebrates and encourages all worthy practices, rituals, and traditions from our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors. We rejoice in all beneficial ancestral practices, rituals, and traditions relevant to Sacred Ground members' Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors, whether those worthwhile practices, rituals, and traditions fall within or go beyond the scope of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth Spirit traditions (see Principle Two). Sacred Ground celebrates and promotes the worthy and beneficial ancestral traditions of all Sacred Ground Members that serve ourselves, past generations, our current communities, future descendants, and all beings. At the same time, we encourage Sacred Ground Members to recognize, "let go of," and transform any and all harmful elements from their Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors. We aspire to honor and bring healing to both the Ancestors and the Descendants.

Sacred Ground is especially guided by the ancestral teachings of Jesus, the Buddha, and Mother Earth. In addition, Sacred Ground is inspired by spiritual/religious teachers and leaders from various Buddhist, Christian, and Mother Earth Spirit traditions, as well as teachers from other spiritual/religious traditions and countless worthy others: artists, poets, musicians, coaches, mentors, craftspeople, novelists, storytellers, neighbors, friends, family, acquaintances, animals, plants, places, spiritual allies, folk heroes, etc. As Thich Nhat Hanh notes, while our elders, ancestors, and teachers have had their own problems, difficulties, and limitations, we can still learn from them; we can draw from (and sometimes even improve upon) their beneficial examples and teachings while learning to let go of and transform (or "compost") the non-helpful or harmful elements that they may have manifested.

A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha is to provide a community environment where we may deeply touch our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors, as well as the future generations of our Blood, Spirit, and Land Descendants. We aspire to be a place of refuge where we may be in contact with all of our ancestors within us, a place where we may promote and enjoy what is beneficial in our ancestors and ancestral heritages, a place where we may gain awareness and insight into the non-beneficial elements that we have received from our ancestors and ancestral heritages, and a place where we may share worthwhile elements from our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors with others. Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha is designed to encourage the practice of worthy ritual, the manifestation of beneficial traditions, and the sharing of sacred lore from our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors. We create opportunities to nourish beautiful ancestral practices that benefit ourselves, our Sangha, our larger community, present and past generations of Ancestors, as well as Future Generations and our Descendants.

Acknowledging and highlighting our Ancestors and Future Generations encourages rootedness, freshness, peace, happiness, love, understanding, equanimity, insight, harmony, wonder, letting go, gratitude, environmental stewardship, social justice, soulfulness, artfulness, creativity, humility, playfulness, ease, empathy, awareness, and a recognition of our unity with all humans, animals, plants, and minerals. Through this ancestral focus, Sacred Ground challenges and inspires each of us to become worthy Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors for future generations.

(4) We are Building an Open and Inclusive Sangha/Church/Spiritual Community - Celebrating our Diversity and our Inter-being Natures - Where all are Welcome Regardless of Race, Class, Age, Gender, Sexual Orientation, or Political Party; We are Creating a Safe, Nourishing, Kind, & Caring Environment where “No part of your True Self needs to be left behind.”

Sacred Ground is an open and affirming community that deeply values diversity. A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground is to provide an accepting, safe, nourishing, kind, and caring community environment where everyone is welcome, regardless of race, class, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. We create spaces and opportunities that encourage the building of friendships and caring, supportive relationships across all divides. Sacred Ground is a spiritual community that practices tolerance, openness, and acceptance of all beneficial views, beliefs, and practices, including those beyond the scope of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth-centered Spirituality. Sacred Ground is a Sangha/Church engaged in the world “to water beneficial seeds” in all beings, with aspirations of peace, nonviolence, wholesomeness, wholeness, loving-kindness, compassion, community, joy, agape love, along with an active recognition of our deep connection to and our deep responsibility for our Mother Earth, including the Greater Earthen Family of living beings (see Principle Five). Shaped by interdependence, non-dualistic thinking, selflessness, compassion, kindness, and mindful presence, attitudes of openness and acceptance are at the heart of Sacred Ground. Through dialogue, ongoing reflection, healthy practices, heartfelt listening, and ceaseless commitment, we work to create an accepting, safe, uplifting, nurturing, joyful community environment where everyone is welcome and feels at home. We recognize that this work is ongoing - as we grow, both individually and collectively.

Sacred Ground provides a supportive sangha of mindfulness, kindness, and compassion for anyone who wishes to attend Sacred Ground events or be a part of this spiritual community. Anyone who chooses to play an active role in Sacred Ground (including all Pastoral staff, Trustees, Members of the Sacred Ground Practice Council, Members of the Education Council, Voting Members/Representatives of Sacred Ground, etc.) shall agree to support the Guiding Principles and Purposes of Sacred Ground, including Sacred Ground’s commitment to creating a safe, kind, open, and nurturing environment for all people regardless of race, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, or political party.

(5) We are Committed to “Care for the Commons” – Healing our Mother Earth, Healing our Earthen Family, & Healing Ourselves – as our Primary Spiritual & Ethical Imperative; We are Re-Emerging & Re-Identifying Ourselves & Each Other as Earth’s Stewards, as Earth’s Children, & as Bits & Pieces of the Living, Breathing, Walking, Feeling, Thinking, Singing, Dancing, Caring, Healing Earth Itself.

At Sacred Ground, we are committed to healing our world. There are countless ways this can manifest, such as: dismantling economic and societal systems of oppression; working toward peace and the alleviation of injustice; moving towards environmental sustainability; caring for animals, plants, and ecosystems; addressing and confronting racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, as well as the “other-ing” of those who don’t share our political or cultural views; growing our own food and working toward food security for all; creating art that uplifts, encourages, challenges, motivates, and inspires; rebuilding and rejuvenating healthy human communities; re-sacralizing our relationships to the Earth, the Great Sacred, and each other.

Our primary spiritual and ethical imperative is “Care for the Commons” - healing our Mother Earth, healing our Greater Earthen Family, and healing ourselves. The Greater Earthen Family includes all of our planets’ people, animals, plants, minerals, ecosystems, and elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space). When we speak of the Greater Earthen Family, we also recognize, honor, and celebrate both the Spirituality of the Earth itself and the Spirits of the Earth, including, but not limited to, our Blood, Spirit, and Land Ancestors, and our Blood, Spirit, and Land Descendants (see Principle Three).

As we face the challenges of global climate change and the various ways that we have failed as caretakers and stewards of our planet, we, at Sacred Ground, commit to our fundamental purpose of “Caring for the Commons.” By reconnecting to our ancient identities as Earth stewards, children of the Earth, and bodily pieces of the Earth, we can, as Thich Nhat Hanh says, “fall in love with Mother Earth” once again. At Sacred Ground, we try not to fragmentize ourselves and our world, creating discord and divisions between Earth and Spirit, plant and animal, us and them; instead, we recognize the unity of Earth, Spirit, and all Earthly beings. We celebrate our planet and our place on this Earth as essential to our spirituality; we honor the foundational oneness of the Earth, her creatures, and all of Creation. We seek and find resources in our Buddhist and Christian traditions that recognize and celebrate our connection to and relationship with our sacred Mother Earth. At Sacred Ground, we commit ourselves to Earth stewardship, eco-spirituality, eco-theology, eco-justice, the re-sacralization of our Earth, and addressing issues of global climate change for the health and well-being of Mother Earth and her inhabitants.

As our problems are multi-causal, we realize our solutions and responses to these problems must also be multi-dimensional. We recognize and address systemic and structural elements related to climate change and environmental degradation, while also identifying and addressing our personal, individual responsibilities towards our planet. We understand the need for basic shifts in mindsets, consciousness, lifestyles, and behavior as we address the needs of Mother Earth. With the insight of interbeing, and through the energy of compassion, we identify key skillful means for addressing “Care for the Commons.” By re-sacralizing our relationships to the planet and its creatures, and through the practices of mindfulness and loving-kindness, we are re-emerging in our roles and identities as Earth stewards, as Mother Earth’s children, and as living, breathing, loving elements of the Earth caring for itself.

(6) We celebrate the Relative Truth of Individual Uniqueness and the Absolute Truth of Intrinsic Oneness; we recognize that each Ocean Wave is Distinct and that All Ocean Waves are Water of the One Sea. Beyond all Comparative and Competitive Logic, we view Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha as not “superior to,” “inferior to,” or “the same as” any other Christian church, Buddhist sangha, or other spiritual, religious, or secular community. Beyond all Dualistic, Dichotomous, and Discriminative Thinking, we celebrate the Creative Distinctiveness of Sacred Ground as a community, as well as the one-of-a-kind uniqueness (the Fiery Independence) of each Sacred Ground Member. We simultaneously recognize, appreciate, and proclaim the sacred beauty of our Inter-being Natures, our Non-Separateness, our Foundational Unity (our Fierce Interdependence) with Each Other and with All Others.

Sacred Ground celebrates and focuses on the melding of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth-centered Spirituality (see Principle Two); at the same time, Sacred Ground does NOT proclaim that Buddhism, Christianity, Mother Earth Spirituality, or any combination of these three traditions is superior to any other religious, spiritual, other-worldly, or secular worldview; or to any other combination of traditions. We aspire to remain humble, mindfully aware, and nonattached to all concepts, including concepts regarding Sacred Ground, recognizing that all of our words and conceptualizations are only guiding means. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, "We cannot make any statement about the true nature of reality. Words and ideas can never convey reality...We must go beyond all concepts if we want to be in touch with the true nature of things" (*The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion*, p. 109). We recognize that these Nine Principles and Five Mindfulness Trainings are also simply “guiding means.”

A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground is to approach our beliefs, our work, and our mission with sincerity, diligence, and enthusiasm tempered by a strong sense of humility and non-duality; we recognize that our understandings and ideas are always limited and less than ideal; we celebrate both the relative truth of our individual uniqueness (our fiery independence) and the absolute truth of our foundational oneness (our fierce interdependence). With this understanding, any person is welcome to visit Sacred Ground, attend Sacred Ground services, and participate in Sacred Ground public events, including workshops, seminars, and educational programs that are open to the general public.

While guided by teachings from Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth spirituality, and while grounded by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh (especially Thay's teachings of The Two Promises, the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, as adapted by Sacred Ground - see Principle One), we, at Sacred Ground, also recognize that Sacred Ground Congregants, Visitors, and Participants in Sacred Ground programming hold a wide variety of beliefs and opinions, and that people's opinions and beliefs change over time. With this understanding, becoming a Member of Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha does not require subscribing to or professing any set creed or beliefs. Any person who respects the general principles and overall purpose and mission of Sacred Ground is welcome to petition for Membership in Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha.

At Sacred Ground, we recognize *both* our fiery independence *and* our fierce interdependence (our inter-being natures). While we often focus on our individual efforts, our individual challenges, and our individual growth and development, we simultaneously acknowledge our non-separateness and foundational oneness with all others. Similarly, when our intention is on the absolute truth of our inter-being natures, our essential unity, our fierce interdependence, we are not denying the relative truth of each individual's distinctiveness and creative uniqueness.

This combination of fierce interdependence and fiery independence is true of each individual person who

associates with Sacred Ground, and it is also true of Sacred Ground as a group or spiritual community. Sacred Ground is distinctive from all other groups, organizations, and communities; at the same time, Sacred Ground is not separate or distinct from any other group, organization, or community.

The paradox of our fiery independence and fierce interdependence encourages us to avoid comparative and competitive logic; we recognize that two distinct waves are simultaneously part of the one sea. We resist viewing Sacred Ground as “superior to,” “inferior to,” or “the same as” any other spiritual, religious, or secular organization. Similarly, we resist perceiving individual people as “superior to,” “inferior to,” or “the same as” any others. Our aspiration is to recognize the limitations of words, categories, and concepts, as we move beyond all dualistic and dichotomous thinking for the benefit of all beings.

(7) We are based in Mindfulness and the Five Mindfulness Trainings; Aspiring toward “the Pure Awareness of Nowness” and a Sense of “Enough-ness,” we recognize that a “Thorough Grounded Contentment” in this Present Moment is the *Path Towards* and the *Ground Of Personal Health & Well-Being* and *Positive Social & Societal Transformation*.

A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground is to provide guidance, support, and nurturance in the practice of mindfulness (“the pure awareness of nowness”) through exercises such as walking meditation, sitting meditation, mindful breathing, mindful eating, mindful speech, mindful thinking, mindful consumption, mindful action, and through the study and practice of Thich Nhat Hanh’s Two Promises, Five Mindfulness Trainings, and Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, as adapted by Sacred Ground.

In Sacred Ground, we aspire to practice Right Mindfulness in prayer, in song, in Dharma talks and discussions, in the sharing of ancestral lore, in the practice of ritual and traditions, in fellowship, in friendship, in family relations, and in all our interactions with the people, animals, plants, and minerals of Mother Earth. Our aspiration is to apply Right Mindfulness in all attempts to grow and learn as a Church/Sangha - in the Listening and Hearing, Contemplation and Reflection, and Meditation and Application of all teachings from the Buddhist, Christian, and Mother Earth Spirit traditions. We apply Right Mindfulness practices in meetings, administrative actions and planning, programming and services, communion with nature, as well as relationships and interactions with each other and the greater community. Our ongoing goal is to practice Right Mindfulness in every aspect of manifesting and nurturing Sacred Ground Community Church & Sangha. We invite and encourage the practice of Right Mindfulness every minute of every day, for ourselves, for others, and for our world.

The teachings and practices of Thich Nhat Hanh serve as a foundational guide in Sacred Ground’s establishment, maintenance, nurturance, and support for the study and practice of mindfulness (see Principle One). Mindfulness is the practice of being fully aware and fully alive in the present moment. Thich Nhat Hanh says, “Nothing is more precious than being in the present moment, fully alive and fully aware” (Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, p. 65). Right Mindfulness is at the heart of Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings; Thich Nhat Hanh says, “When Right Mindfulness is present, the Four Noble Truths and the other seven elements of the Eightfold Path are also present” (Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, p. 59). Right Mindfulness is at the heart of Sacred Ground.

Aspiring toward “the pure awareness of nowness,” a deep sense of “enoughness,” and “a thorough grounded contentment in this present moment,” we recognize the essential roles of both outer and inner quietude as building blocks in the practice of mindfulness. At Sacred Ground, we create spaces that allow for silence. We promote inner quietude, lessening the chatter in our own minds, and outer quietude, reducing the bombardment of noise and stimuli on our senses, in order to help us access our inner teachers, listen compassionately to others, appreciate our natural world, and experience calmness, peacefulness, and presence.

Right Mindfulness is the practice of compassion, understanding, and the transformation of suffering; it is the practice of peace, joy, healing, and love. Right Mindfulness is the practice of freedom - freedom from craving, anger, jealousy, fear, despair, pride, anxiety, and wrong perceptions. Right Mindfulness is the practice of the Two Promises, The Five Mindfulness Trainings, and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. Every aspect of the mission of Sacred Ground is grounded in Right Mindfulness; the grounding mission of Sacred Ground is Right Mindfulness.

Thich Nhat Hanh invites us to practice Right Mindfulness every hour of every day, 24/7. At the same time,

a crucial part of Right Mindfulness is being kind, gentle, light, and playful, both with ourselves and others. We will inevitably fail in our practice; at such times, our aspiration is to bring kindness, gentleness, lightness, and playfulness to ourselves; there is always the next moment to kindly, gently, lightly, playfully return to the present once again. At Sacred Ground, we aspire to this ideal.

(8) We are Dedicated to Nurturing a Wholesome Environment of Peace, Joy, Lightness, Compassion, Integrity, and Wholeness for Children, Teens, Young Adults, Elders, Individuals, Couples, Families, and Community by “Watering Beneficial Seeds” and refraining from watering harmful seeds in Ourselves, Each Other, & the World as we Foster the Awakening of the Beloved Community.

Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of our Store Consciousness, where we each have “every kind of seed” ranging from anger, fear, and hate to joy, loving-kindness, and compassion. Within each of us, there are negative seeds of craving, anger, jealousy, fear, and violence, and there are positive seeds of kindness, compassion, empathy, generosity, playfulness, joy, equanimity, love, and selflessness.

Depending on various conditions, different seeds bloom and manifest in our Mind Consciousness. Mindful awareness helps us water what is beneficial and refrain from watering the negative within ourselves, others, and the greater world. At Sacred Ground, we honor and encourage the creativity, curiosity, and compassion of children, teens, and young adults. Through these Nine Principles and the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we develop age-appropriate educational programs that support and strengthen youth's ongoing development. We create spaces and educational opportunities to embolden young people to express themselves; explore their gifts and creativity; nurture their relationship with the natural world; recognize their thoughts, ideas, and feelings; and cultivate their unique voices and inner teachers.

We create spaces to help support families - cultivating and cherishing each family's unique gifts while offering supportive resources in the face of familial stressors encountered in childrearing, marriage, and family relationships. We support individuals by “giving voice” to each member within the spiritual community; through our social, educational, and spiritual programs and workshops; and by creating an atmosphere that informally facilitates the development of community friendships and supportive relationships. We also encourage members to take leadership roles in developing, promoting, and facilitating healthy programming geared to specific subgroups within Sacred Ground as the needs arise.

We must both listen and be heard in order to heal and grow more understanding. In Sacred Ground, we practice communicating through loving speech and compassionate listening - enabling us to expand beyond our current conceptions, allowing for conflicting, respectful perspectives, avoiding “group-think/herd mentalities,” and helping us to build positive friendships and caring relationships.

A fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground is to be a space where all people, young and old, feel safe and challenged, supported and invited to grow - a space that honors and bolsters the unique gifts, talents, skills, and experiences that each person brings to the community. We create, maintain, and foster a supportive community environment for fellowship and ongoing growth for all through readings, song, music, mindfulness practices, prayer, dharma talks, art, yoga, meditation, connections with the natural world, formal and informal discussions, workshops, seminars, classes, service projects, silent reflection, and friendship.

We proclaim, nurture, study, strengthen, inspire, and manifest a confluence of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mother Earth Spirituality. We recognize this confluence of traditions as a sacred vehicle for nourishing and promoting wholeness, wholesomeness, kindness, compassion, love, joy, wonder, awe, presence, lightness, selflessness, nonviolence, sustainability, the insights of impermanence and interbeing, openness, non-dualistic thinking, gratitude, respect, non-dogmatism, tolerance, integrity, integration, appreciation, mindfulness, and the resacralization of our world.

At Sacred Ground, we work to create an environment where the beneficial seeds can arise in each of us. Our aspiration is for worthy seeds to manifest frequently, and when they appear in our Mind Consciousness, we try to maintain them. We do this by drawing on our inner teachers, our relationships with each other, the Sacred, the natural world around us, and through the nourishing teachings and practices of our traditions, especially the practice of mindfulness (see Principle Seven).

Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Sangha building is the most important practice." We are dedicated to creating a diverse and inclusive spiritual community. We recognize diversity as a strength and encourage "cross-pollination" as people of different ages, genders, races, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, perspectives, experiences, political views, personalities, temperaments, and interests grow in respect, in caring relationship, and in friendship within an all-inclusive, mutually-supportive community environment (see Principle Four). We also recognize that the sangha, the beloved community, is inclusive of all beings in our Greater Earthen Family; our work includes healing and restoring relationships with our non-human brothers and sisters - the plants, animals, minerals, and ecosystems of Mother Earth (see Principle Five).

Sacred Ground values agape love, kindness, compassion, nonviolence, and the watering of beneficial seeds. We develop services, programs, workshops, and opportunities for self-growth and mutual development so that the talents, skills, and gifts of our congregants may be honored, nurtured, reinforced, and enhanced, helping each of us to further develop individually as we simultaneously grow in understanding as a community, and in service to each other and the greater world.

(9) We are Re-Sacralizing our Lives, our Relationships, and our Earth through the Vastness of the GREAT SACREDNESS - called by many names & limited to no name; *Related to All and Inherent in All* - for the Benefit of All Beings.

Sacred Ground is committed to study, meditation, prayer, and reflection on G-d, also known as the Great Mystery, the Great Spirit, the Sacred, the Great Sacred, YHWH, the Divine, our Higher Power, the Great Beloved, and many other names. Our focus, however, is no excuse for arrogance. While being passionate about the role, value, and importance of the Great Sacred within us, across space and time, in our lives and relationships, and for our Earth and all Earthly beings, we provide no “pat or final answers” to questions regarding the Great Beloved within us, among us, and beyond us.

We recognize that our understanding of G-d is forever evolving and changing, both individually and collectively; this is seen as healthy and life-affirming, reflecting our personal and collective spiritual growth, development, and learning. Our open-ended, process-oriented, ongoing-discovery model of engaging the Holy is not a repudiation of G-d or G-d concepts; instead, it reflects our dynamic perseverance and perpetual longing in our relationship to and identification with G-d.

Jewish tradition resists naming the Divine. The Tibetan Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche said, “It is not that Buddhists don’t believe in G-d; we just can’t talk about it.” In this document and throughout the writings of Sacred Ground, a dash is typically used instead of the letter “o” when speaking of “G-d.” The intention here is to be mindful of our limited understanding of the Great Mystery. The aspiration is to proceed humbly, saying, “We dare not take this word too lightly nor assume that we understand this G-d too well.” The use of the hyphenated term “G-d” is a recognition that our human understanding is limited and conditional - not by lack of faith, but by a recognition of G-d’s vastness and an acknowledgment of our smallness. We write and use this dashed-term spelling of “G-d” not from disrespect, but out of humility and an abundance of respect.

At Sacred Ground, we celebrate both our relation to the Divine and our identification with the Divine. We also recognize G-d as Love; therefore, G-d may be understood as a verb; YHWH is encountered through our actions, our relationships, the natural world, and through interconnections with places, memories, visions, and more. We recognize and appreciate that we are each a precious and integral part of the Holy Mystery, even though we are each infinitesimally small in relation to the vast Cosmos.

We are not limited to any simple either/or logic: We see ourselves relating to the Divine and as one with the Divine; we picture the Great Sacred in human form and also recognize the Great Sacred as an indescribable being of light; we reference the Great Spirit as noun and verb; we imagine G-d nurturing us as individuals and concurrently caring for the world; we envision the Great Beloved as solid and stable and, at the same time, fluid and ever-changing; we engage a personal G-d who is simultaneously an energy, a force, and a ground of being for the Universe. Our G-d is beyond all concepts - “beyond the beyond.”

Therefore, our view of our Higher Power is always “becoming”; we are not trapped in static images. Our pictures and theories about the Sacred are never carved so deep in wood or rock or mental formations that our conceptualizations of the Divine become stagnant, petrified, and arrogantly presumptuous; our aspiration is for our ideas of G-d to not become engraved in our minds as graven images. And, if or when we do slip into “engraving” G-d with our limiting concepts, we strive to regain mindfulness and return to vastness, with an understanding of G-d that is always “becoming.”

While our comprehension of G-d will always be inadequate and unsatisfactory, a fundamental purpose of Sacred Ground is to ceaselessly work toward being in communication with the Great Spirit, attempting to understand the Great Mystery, and trying to recognize and experience the Holy of Holies, as we re-sacralize our world, our lives, our relationships, and ourselves. We find our Higher Power “showing up” in actions and moments of great import, as well as in endeavors and occasions that are seemingly mundane. We aspire to be mindfully aware of the Holy Spirit. Through liturgy, prayer, meditation, workshops, yoga, dialogue, service, the study of sacred texts, quiet reflection, fellowship, friendship, time in nature, silence, and other practices, we nurture wonder, foster agape love, expose injustice, and awaken to the Pure Land, the Kingdom of G-d, and the Great Sacred, available to us all in this present moment and in every moment - among us, around us, and within us.