

What and When Is Earth Day?

By John McConnell, Founder of Earth Day

When I first conceived of Earth Day, a global holiday to celebrate the wonder of life on our planet, I thought long and hard about the day on which it should fall. It must be meaningful. One that might be accepted universally for all of humankind.

When the Vernal Equinox dawned on me, I immediately knew it was right. The Earth tremor that shook our California dwelling at that moment seemed an omen of confirmation. What could be more appropriate than the first moment of Spring, when day and night are equal around the world and hearts and minds can join together with thoughts of harmony and Earth's rejuvenation. Just as a single prayer can be significant, how much more so when hundreds, thousands, millions of people throughout the world join in peaceful thoughts and prayers to nurture neighbor and nature.

And so it came to pass we initiated the celebration of Earth Day on **March 21, 1970**. The first Proclamation of Earth Day was by San Francisco, the City of Saint Francis, patron saint of ecology. Designating the First Day of Spring, **March 21, 1970** to be Earth Day, this day of nature's equipoise was later sanctioned in a Proclamation signed by Secretary General U Thant at the United Nations where it is observed each year. Earth Day was firmly established for all time on a sound basis as an annual event to deepen reverence and care for life on our planet.

While other dates have been called Earth Day it is obvious that a singular Earth Day is needed and that the original choice of nature's day is best. More attention for this fact will increase the influence of Earth Day and its benefits.

Every effort to encourage Earth care is to be commended. But just as more than one birthday each year for an individual would diminish the real birthday, calling other dates Earth Day detracts from the authentic day -- which can provide a more meaningful focus and obtain more unity in our diversity. The nature of the March equinox provides a reason for an event at the same time all over the world.

Other events leading up to or following could be called Earth Festivals, or given other names. Then events can complement each other and increase awareness and care for our planet and its people. In the midst of this will be Earth Day, where the United Nations Peace Bell rings at the moment Spring begins and hearts and minds join all over the world.

CEREMONY ON EARTH DAY

on Thursday, March 20, 2008 at 1:48 a.m. EDT (Equinox)



**The Ceremony will begin at 1:15 a.m. EDT in
the United Nations Peace Bell Garden**

The annual tradition of ringing the UN Peace Bell at the exact moment of the Equinox on Earth Day (March 19-20) was initiated by John McConnell with the support of UN Secretary-General U Thant on March 21, 1971. This tradition marking the moment of the Equinox has been observed for 38 consecutive years at UN Headquarters. This year, it will be simultaneously observed in the Southern Hemisphere with a ceremony in Christchurch, New Zealand, and many other locations around the world.

Please join us in acting globally *and* locally!