



The Cosmic Walk

Welcome to our NC Interfaith Power & Light Earth Sabbath Celebration tonight. I'm Nancy Carnes, and I will be facilitating these celebrations the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Earth Sabbath Celebrations are one of North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light's (NCIPL) four programs. Our intention is for this to be an interfaith celebration that provides those of us who love the earth with a place for connection, sharing and replenishing our spirits.

We as a staff and team of volunteers try to create an interfaith space at each service. You are invited and encouraged to share your gifts and creativity in helping this Earth Sabbath Celebration to evolve. If you feel moved to contribute in any way, let me know!

I'm glad that each of you is here tonight.

We'll be doing the Cosmic Walk tonight.

The Cosmic Walk is a ritual created by Sr. Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm. It has subsequently been modified and presented by many people around the world. The Cosmic Walk is a way of bringing our knowledge of the 13.75 billion year Universe process from our heads to our hearts.

(Note: We can do this indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather.)

The spiral of rope in front of you represents the entire 13.75 billion years of the cosmic and evolutionary journey is laid out on the floor or ground.

(Note: We will use a rope 137 feet long with each instance of emergence in time marked at a proportionate distance along the length of the spiral (10 feet = 1 billion years for a 137 foot spiral).

Each gold pipecleaner in the rope represents significant emergences in time.

First we need to build our timeline. These cards each have an event in the universe on them that corresponds to one of the pipecleaners on the rope.

To do so, we will divide into teams of three. So please form teams of three now, and introduce yourself and then I will give you further instructions.

You are the yellow/blue/green/red teams.

Each team will draw a card and place it where they think it should go. You can place your card on a pipecleaner even if another team has already placed one there. Only one of you can be correct, but it may be you! Once your team has placed that card, then draw a second card, etc. until all the cards are placed. Once all cards are placed, we will check them, and teams will be able to place a candle on top for every correct card. The team placing the most candles wins.

Note: the very center of the spiral represents the Great Emergence of the Universe itself. This primordial act is represented by a lit candle by itself or sometimes within a large, faceted glass bowl.

The Cosmic Walk takes longer than our usual activities, so I want to make sure we have a little time to check in with each other. Does anyone have any significant that has happened to them since last month or know of something important happening that they want to share?

We will not be doing the Common Cause Response, Commissioning, or ending blessing tonight. Tonight, Jewelsong gives us the gift of a song for the opening invocation, and will end the celebration with a song of blessing to send us on our way.

Invocation - Jewelsong

I'll describe first what will happen. We will dim the lights and I will start by reading the beginning by flashlight, and light the center candle during by a brief song from the album, Song of the Universe by Kathy Sherman. And then I will read what is attached to the first candle. And whenever there is a lit tea light unaccompanied by a gold pipe cleaner, that is a brief song from Kathy's album. And then we will go around, and I will pass the flashlight and the lighter. If you choose, you can get up and walk the spiral to the next unlit candle and read the card for the event at that time in the universe's unfolding. After you finish reading, light the candle and come back and sit down and pass the flashlight on to the next person. If you don't want to read, just pass the flashlight to the next person.

This is a story, the story of the Cosmos, the story of Earth, the story of human, of gazelle, of mountain, the story of you and me. It is the narrative of one single integrated activity, Universe.

In the beginning was the Mystery. Through the Mystery all things came to be. Not one being had its emergence but out of the Mystery.

Sacred Fire – Sacred Fire, flaming bright, powerful creative light - 1:41

1. Great Emergence 13.7 billion years ago.

Out of the mysterious chaos some 13.7 billion years ago time, space, and energy stabilize into the gift of existence. Our Universe is born hot and tiny. As the Universe expands and cools energy condenses into matter, sub-atomic particles, radical new beings with new powers, and they in turn transform into atoms of hydrogen & helium, new beings with new powers. And the great Mystery is here in the sheer gift of life.

In the Moment When Time and Space Began – In the moment when time and space began.... 1:44

2. 380 thousand years later the Cosmic Web emerges.

The rapid expansion of the Universe stretches out the small fluctuations in the primal distribution of matter into gigantic filaments drawing matter into the Cosmic Web, the primordial creator of all subsequent forms. And the great mystery is here in the possibility of relationship.

3. 13.4 billion years ago primal stars emerge.

Concentrated by the gravitational force of dark matter these gaseous filaments collapse into enormous stars. Many of these short-lived beings become black holes, gathering together other stars and black holes to eventually become the stupendous black holes that live at the center of today's galaxies. And the great Mystery is here in dark matter and black holes, without which we would not be here.

Awakening to Radiance – “Energy trembling, 1:30

4. 13.1 bya galaxies emerge.

Flowing dark matter draws together stars, black holes, and gaseous clouds into small galaxies wherein stars are born, live, and die. Over time these clusters merge into the giant galaxies we see today. As they live, stars transform their hydrogen and helium into heavier elements: carbon, oxygen, aluminum. Some stars in their death throes become supernovas, giving out to the cosmos their precious gifts of selenium, tungsten, uranium. Many of these treasures will be gathered into the bodies of future

generations of stars and planets. Supernovas are the mothers of the Universe, creating in their wombs the seeds of life. Birth, death, and resurrection are an ancient theme of the Universe. And the great Mystery is here in the creation and destruction and in the sacrifice of form.

5. 12 bya interstellar dust produces molecules.

Within the interstellar dust these chemical gifts of the supernovas are nurtured into simple organic molecules, vital components for the later emergence of life. And the great Mystery is here in life's emergent process.

6. 7 bya gravitational repulsion of dark energy cancels gravitational attraction of matter.

The Universe starts to accelerate its expansion drawing apart galaxies and galactic clusters. Thus galactic evolution decreases significantly and the life-producing spiral galaxies are spared further collisions and destruction thereby permitting their resident stars to create planetary systems. And the great Mystery is here in the great arc of space-time, which continues to hold us.

7. 4.6 bya our grandmother star births the solar system.

Our ancestral star gives herself into the transforming mystery of a supernova. Our Sun and a great disk of matter, all the planets and other members of our solar system family, emerge from the dispersed body of our grandmother star. Here begins the story of our blue-and-white pearl of a planet. And the great Mystery is here in the universe as Earth.

Planet Earth – One star was dying while Grace was giving birth to Planet Earth 1:54

8. 4.3 bya the Great Bombardment creates the Earth-Moon dance.

For tens of millions of years, Earth sweeps around the Sun gathering unto herself some of the disbursed body of our grandmother supernova, swelling as she does. Collisions great and small have kept Earth a churning, molten mass. During this time a large planetoid crashes into Earth, causing the Earth to tilt, giving rise to the seasons. Some of the outer layers of the molten Earth and planetoid splash out into Earth orbit solidifying into Moon. Eventually the cataclysms of birth are over, and Earth and Moon begin to cool. Their relationship with each other and Sun will choreograph the exquisite dance of life. And the great Mystery is here in the cycles and seasons of life.

9. 3.9 bya life emerges, first cells.

As the young molten Earth quiets and cools, an atmosphere begins to form. Then come the first rains drenching the young planet and forming the vast covering of her oceans. Within the newly formed oceans a rich variety of chemicals gather together to birth the wonder of life. Earth comes alive. And the great Mystery is here in a planetary body coming alive.

10. 3.8 bya Cells invent photosynthesis.

Earth soon learns to eat the Sun. Molten rock, now in the form of small bacteria, learns to capture Sun's photons and store the energy in chemical bonds. In doing so, they claim a new source of food, water, for their rapidly growing population. However, however, their feasting liberates oxygen. Eventually the atmosphere becomes oxidizing, threatening all life. And the great Mystery is here in the first living cells and the consequences of their actions.

Simple Little Life Forms – Simple Little Life Forms see what you have done....2:20

11. 3.4 bya Earth's magnetic field deflects Sun's cosmic rays.

The strengthening magnetic shield protects Earth's early atmosphere and oceans from being stripped away by Sun's energetic radiation. Life is guaranteed a home. And the great Mystery is here in protection.

12. 2.5 bya oxygen-loving bacteria and the nucleated cell emerge.

These tiny creatures invent respiration, breathing, a new source of energy for Gaia. In the process they also enter into communion with larger cells thereby protecting them from oxygen. This communion leads to the nucleated cell, the basis for the evolution of all complex life. And the great Mystery is here in cooperation.

13. 1 bya sexual procreation emerges.

Single-celled organisms learn to share their genetic heritage and bequeath to their progeny an extravagance of possibilities. And the great Mystery is here in change.

14. 800 million years ago death is invented.

Single-celled beings relinquish their immortality and enter into a great variety of novel relationships creating multicelled sexual beings. Later, life invents purposeful cell death to facilitate the growth of these multicelled organisms and the florescence of complex life. Death becomes a condition for creative life. And the great Mystery is here in creativity.

15. 600 mya ecosystems emerge; multicellular organisms begin to form colonies, communicate with each other, and even eat one another.

Predator organisms arise, ones who have learned to use the complex biomolecules of neighboring organisms, thereby saving their own genetic resources for the development of greater physical capabilities. Here begins the predator-prey dance that promotes the vast diversity of life: the power of the lion and the speed of the gazelle. And the great Mystery is here in communication and community.

Dance of the Universe – Dancing, spinning, leaping, twirling, dance of the universe.... 1:55

16. 540 mya sight is invented; eyes emerge.

Earth sees herself for the first time and is dazzled. And the great Mystery is here in beholding.

17. 460 mya plants and animals move on land.

Leaving the water, they seek the adventure of weather and gravity. And the great Mystery is here in adaptation.

18. 400 mya insects invent flight.

Earth teaches herself to fly. And the great Mystery is here in flight.

19. 250 mya dinosaurs emerge.

For 185 million years, these creatures explore the extremes of size, speed, and strength. And the great Mystery is here in exploration.

20. 215 mya mammals emerge.

Lactation and time spent in pre- and post-natal care begins. And the great Mystery is here in that molten rock has reshaped itself to be able to express a mother's love for her child.

The Universe is a Celebration – The universe is a celebration, a story ancient yet ever new 1:30

21. 150 mya birds and flowers emerge.

Birds follow the insects into the vast vault of the sky while Earth adorns herself magnificently in color and fragrances, and invites the sky creatures into a new dance. And the great Mystery is here in overwhelming beauty.

And Then the Flowers Came....and then the flowers came, covering the land, Beauty everywhere....2:28

22. 65 mya the Cenozoic Era begins.

With the disappearance of the dinosaurs, mammals are given unlimited opportunities to explore new habitats, new food and new varieties of size, shape, defenses, and creative expressions. This new community of animals, plants, birds and insects produces the great florescence of Earth life which will last 65 million years. And the great Mystery is here in profuse diversity.

23. 6 Mya juvenile African apes stand up, walk on two legs, and leave their forest home.

The savannah offers the challenges and opportunities for these courageous young creatures to evolve into humans with brains and nervous systems complex enough that Earth would eventually bring forth a conscious self-awareness of herself. And the great Mystery is here in the possibility of self-awareness.

Child of the Universe – Child of the Universe behold and see, the wonders of Earth...1:14

24. 200 thousand years ago modern humans & language emerge.

Pondering Earth and cosmos in their range of beauty and harshness, humans shape language, art, music, and ritual to respond to the mysteries of existence. And the great Mystery is here in the birth of spirituality.

25. 13 kya human farming and herding emerge.

With the knowledge and ingenuity to selectively cultivate their foods and domesticate their animals, humans begin to shape the environment, deciding which species shall live and which species shall die. And the great Mystery is here in the consciousness of power and consequence.

26. 3,000 years ago classical civilizations & religions emerge.

Over several thousand years, humans invent writing and more complex technologies and with them arise a variety of religious perspectives that gradually become institutionalized as Hinduism, Confucianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. And the great Mystery is here in the exploration of the possibilities of self-reflection and self-transcendence of the human person.

27. 150 years ago humans learn of their descent from a common ancestor.

Charles Darwin confirms the wisdom of indigenous traditions that life is "all our relations". And the great Mystery is here in learning empirically that we are all kin.

28. 80 years ago astronomers observe the expansion of the Universe.

After 2.5 million years we learn that we live in a developing Universe, one with itself from the beginning. And the great Mystery is here in empirically learning that we are all one.

29. 55 years ago humans discover DNA, life's common language.

This fundamental mode of memory has been shared by all life for nearly four billion years. It carries the record of our embeddedness in the great web of life, revealing the primacy of Earth in our evolutionary development. And the great Mystery is here in the grounding of ourselves as Earth.

*Remember Who You Are - Earth are you with a human face, Earth are you with a human heart.
Remember who you are, remember who you are.*

30. 45 years ago scientists observe the origin of the Universe.

The cosmic background radiation, still streaming from the Great Emergence, is observed by humans for the first time. And the great Mystery is here in the grounding of ourselves as Universe.

In This ONE Story – In this ONE story is all our stories...2:37.

31. 40 years ago Earth is seen as whole from space.

Earth becomes complex enough to witness her own fragile beauty. Her choices for the future are now entwined with human judgment and activities. This understanding is deeply felt with a poignancy and anxiety never before experienced. And the great Mystery is here in the Universe becoming conscious of itself.

32. Today the Story of the Universe is being told as our sacred Story.

The creativity implicit in the Great Emergence and expressed in the remarkable longing of Earth for life continues as this moment, in us, as one.

Even in the Darkest Night – Even in the darkest night....2:01

Blessing by Jewelsong

Larry Edwards, April, 2011; with additions by Nancy Carnes

NOTE: Songs are from Song of the Universe by Kathy Sherman. Tracks correspond to order in the above script.

- 1 Track 5. Sacred Fire 1:41 (time)
- 2 Track 4. In the Moment 1:44 (time)
- 3 Track 6. Awakening to the Radiance 1:30(time)
- 4 Track 9. Planet Earth 1:54 (time)
- 5 Track 10. Simple Little Life Forms 2:20(time)
- 6 Track 8. Dance of the Universe 1:55(time)
- 7 Track 7. The Universe is a Celebration 1:30 (time)
- 8 Track 12. And Then the Flowers Came 2:28 (time)
- 9 Track 13. Child of the Universe 1:14(time)
- 10 Track 21. Remember Who You Are 2:08(time)
- 11 Track 1. In This ONE Story - beginning only (up to "So listen well") 50 sec(time)
- 12 Track 11. Even in the Darkest Night 2:01(time)

This was used as a promotion for the Cosmic Walk

North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light Earth Sabbath Celebration –Chapel Hill*

Cosmic Walk

*Take part in a ritual created by Sr. Miriam McGillis of Genesis Farm
as a way of bringing our knowledge
of the 13.75 billion year universe process
from our heads to our hearts.*

Tuesday, June 12, 2012, 7 – 8:30 pm

United Church of Chapel Hill

1321 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

(919) 828-6501

<http://www.facebook.com/events/232202266865842/>

*Earth Sabbath Celebrations are experiential services to give us an opportunity to gather and express our grief and love for our Earth and replenish our spirits so we can continue to work on behalf of all life

Community Building Exercise before the walk:

Care must be taken not to allow this activity to go on too long. Watch the clock



Cards are in a separate PDF because they cannot be taken out of order. They should be printed two sided on card stock, cut in half and then folded in half. Contact Nancy if you have questions!

Materials needed are included in the Kit available from Nancy. This is a huge help since it is somewhat intricate and having the spiral already measured and marked is extremely helpful!