

Description of The Cosmic Walk

An Ireland Story

The Cosmic Walk is a ritual created by Sr. Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm, USA. It has subsequently been modified and facilitated by many people around the world. The Cosmic Walk is a way of bringing our knowledge of the 14-billion-year Universe process from our heads to our hearts. It is a simple ritual that can be performed in a large room or outdoors. A spiral representing the entire 14 billion years of the cosmic evolutionary journey is laid out on the floor or ground.

At Genesis Farm this spiral is painted on the floor of the library, but one can also lay out a rope in the spiral form. The spiral should be at least 100 feet long, 140 feet is better, with each instance of emergence in time marked at a proportionate distance along the length of the spiral. Each station is marked by an unlit votive and, optionally, by a card describing the emergence.

The first station, located at the very center of the spiral, represents the Flaring Forth of the Universe itself. This primary emergence is represented by a lit candle by itself or sometimes within a large, faceted bowl. One person, the walker, lights a candle from the primary candle and walks the spiral, starting with the Flaring Forth and lighting each candle in turn. This walk is synchronized with the reading of the following text by a second person, the reader. The ritual is accompanied by music, traditionally "The Fairy Ring" by Mike Rowland.

This ritual works for any size group, the limitation being the audience's ability to see the candles well. For fewer than about 15 people, it is feasible to have each person walk the spiral, in turn, reading the cards to itself in silence.

Since The Cosmic Walk was born, many variations in text, process, and music have emerged. The accompanying Universe Story is based primarily on a modification by Larry Edwards, Ph.D.

The Cosmic Walk: An Ireland Story has added descriptions to include the story of present-day Ireland, with gratitude to Dr. Jim Lacefield, author of *Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks*..

14 Billion Years Ago - Primordial Flaring Forth

14 billion years ago, our Universe vibrates into being. Time, space and energy become the gifts of existence. The Universe expands and cools rapidly. It contains all the light, energy and potential for everything that will ever come to be. In 300,000 years, the energy cools and hydrogen emerges. Today, our body human is 60% hydrogen – the very hydrogen that flared forth eons ago – shaped and sculpted and evolved over billions of years.

13 Billion Years Ago - Hydrogen and Helium Gather Together

The Universe continues to expand and cool, cool enough for primordial matter, hydrogen, and helium to maintain existence. Guided on their path by enormous clouds of dark matter, the primordial atoms coalesce into proto-galaxies. Many of these young galaxies collapse into massive black holes.

12 Billion Years Ago - Stars, Galaxies and Supernovas

All the primal stars and galaxies take shape. Stars are made of hydrogen and helium and consume themselves to create other heavier elements: carbon, oxygen, aluminum. Many of these stars die and cool slowly to become dark tombs. The larger stars, in their death throes, explode and become supernovas, blasting out to the cosmos their precious gifts of selenium, boron, lithium, iron. 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 elements of life. Birth-death-resurrection is an ancient theme of the Universe.

4.6 Billion Years Ago - Our Grandmother Star Births the Solar System

The Milky Way is one of a hundred billion galaxies. Our grandmother star in the Milky Way, having consumed herself, collapses. In the intense energy of that collapse she is transformed into a supernova – exploding her stardust into space. She gives up her life in an explosion of possibilities. Sun, and all the planets and other members of our solar system family, will emerge from the dispersed body of grandmother star. Here begins the story of what will become our planet Earth.

4.3 Billion Years Ago - The Great Bombardment Creates the Earth-Moon Dance

Over hundreds of millions of years, Earth has been sweeping up solar system debris in its orbital path, swelling in size. Collisions great and small have kept Earth a churning, molten mass. During this time a large planetoid crashes into Earth, its molten metal core driving deep into Earth, joining Earth's core. Some of the outer layers of the molten Earth and planetoid splash out into Earth orbit, eventually solidifying into Moon. Eventually the cataclysms of birth are over, and Earth and Moon begin to cool.

4 Billion Years Ago - First Simple Cells Emerge

As the surface of the Earth quiets and cools, gradually an atmosphere and land mass begin to form. Then a miracle of transformation: the first rain! Oceans are born, and soon thereafter, the rich chemical brew brings forth the wonder of life – the first simple cells. Earth comes alive.

3.9 Billion Years Ago - Cells Invent Photosynthesis

Earth's growing bacterial population learns to take nourishment from the Sun. Molten rock, now in the form of 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 the growing bacterial population of Earth. Photosynthesis is invented and lays the pattern for all future life forms: each must receive nourishment from another and give itself in return

to become nourishment for another.

2 Billion Years Ago - Oxygen-loving Cells Emerge

The photosynthesis process releases oxygen. Eventually the atmosphere becomes threatening to all life. The first global environmental crisis is averted by the emergence of oxygen-loving cells. These tiny creatures invent respiration, 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, and the invention of chromosomes, the basis for the evolution of all complex life.

1.5 Billion Years Ago - Meiotic Sex Emerges

Life is mysteriously drawn toward union and the first simple-celled organisms begin to reproduce sexually. Different strands of genetic memory are combined in their new offspring, opening up infinite new possibilities. Cells learn to share their genetic endowments and bequeath to their progeny the extravagance of novelty.

800 Million Years Ago - Death is Invented

Single-celled beings relinquish their immortality and enter into a variety of transient relationships, creating multicelled sexual beings. Later, life invents purposeful cell death to allow developmental stages in the growth of multicelled beings, allowing the florescence of complex life.

700 Million Years Ago - Multicellular Organisms Emerge

The first multi-cellular life forms emerge and creativity expands rapidly.

600 Million Years Ago - Ecosystems Emerge

Ecosystems emerge and organisms begin to eat one another. Here begins the predator-prey dance that promotes the vast diversity of life. 500 million years later this will manifest in the power of the lion and the speed of the gazelle.

540 Million Years Ago - Eyes Emerge

Sight is invented. Eyes emerge. Earth, in multicellular organisms, sees herself for the first time.

510 Million Years Ago - Backbone Emerges

The first fishforms with backbone emerge, protecting Earth's earliest nervous system and the development of her sensory organs.

470 Million Years Ago - Appalachian-Caledonian Orogen

Western Ireland and Eastern North America uplift as contiguous parts of the Appalachian-Caledonian mountain range, in a series of continental collisions.

460 Million Years Ago - Plants and Animals on Land

The first life forms leave the ocean, having developed a membrane within which to carry their own water. They become the first plants and animals to move on land – an adventure in weather and gravity.

438 Million Years Ago - Red Mountain Iron Ore

Red Mountain iron ores form. Alabama's Red Mountain today has the largest exposure of Paleozoic rock in the United States.

350-280 Million Years Ago - Carboniferous Rock

Carboniferous rock, mostly limestone, is formed. Today, this surface rock covers more than 50% of Ireland.

330 Million Years Ago - Insects Emerge

Insects form an interdependent community with land plants. Insects invent flight, and Earth learns to fly.

320-250 Million Years Ago - Pangaea

Continents converge again and the Appalachian-Caledonian and other mountain ranges are uplifted. Alabama and Ireland are locked within Pangaea, and for a period of time have no new geologic formation. At the end of this era, Earth faces its greatest mass extinction of life, with almost 95% of species becoming extinct.

225 Million Years Ago - Dinosaurs Emerge

For 160 million years, these creatures explore the extremes of size, speed, and strength. The Gulf of Mexico begins to open.

215 Million Years Ago - Placental Mammals Emerge

The first placental mammals emerge, warm-blooded creatures who carry their young within their own bodies and nourish them from their own substance. Molten rock has reorganized itself to be able to express a mother's love for her child.

210 Million Years Ago - Continents Emerge

The continents shift, crack and drift apart. Separate oceans are formed. The North Atlantic Ocean begins to open and Ireland and Nova Scotia begin to separate.

150 Million Years Ago - Birds and Flowers Emerge

Birds take flight and Earth breaks into song. Flowering plants emerge, concentrating their life energy into seed, making protein available for mammals and bringing color and fragrance to Earth.

80 Million Years Ago - Chalk Formation

Chalk layer is formed in Ireland and in Alabama.

65 Million Years Ago - The Cenozoic Era Begins

Dinosaurs disappear, giving mammals 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.

40 Million Years Ago - Giant's Causeway

Giant's Causeway emerges as basalt columns of volcanic origin.

25 Million Years Ago - Grass Spreads Across Land

Growing from its root up, grass grows back after being eaten, thereby offering to life a renewable food source. In great numbers and variety, grazing animals follow the emergence of grasslands.

14 Million Years Ago - Deciduous Trees

Deciduous trees begin to dominate Alabama forests. Today only 5% of old growth forest remains. Today, Alabama is the most species-rich state east of the Mississippi. This includes all higher forms, plants, fish, birds, mammals, shellfish, and turtles.

5 Million Years Ago - Human Ancestors Walk on Two Legs

In Africa, our ancestors leave the forest, stand up, and walk on two legs. The savannah offers the challenges and opportunities for these courageous young creatures to evolve into humans.

2.2 Million Years Ago - Current Ice Age

The most recent of 17 ice ages over the last 600 million years begins. As glaciers advance southward, they push nutrient-rich topsoil ahead of them. Glaciation in North America does not reach as far south as Alabama. These factors contribute to Alabama's rich biodiversity. Glaciers strip Ireland clear of topsoil.

100,000 Years Ago - Modern Human and Language Emerge

Language, shamanic and goddess religions, music, and art become integral with human life. The modern human occupies Earth from Africa to Asia to Europe.

13,000 Years Ago - Farming and Herding Emerge

Humans, now also occupying Australia and the Americas, learn to cultivate plants and domesticate animals. Humans begin to shape the environment.

12,000 Years Ago - Humans Arrive in Ireland

Humans arrive in Ireland by way of still-extant land bridges, and settle along coasts and waterways. Irish Elk and Reindeer have already disappeared. Juniper spreads, and pine, elm and birch appear.

3,000-2000 Years Ago - Classical Religions Emerge

Hinduism, Confucianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam emerge as world religions.

140 Years Ago - Humans Learn of our Descent from a Common Ancestor

Charles Darwin confirms the indigenous wisdom that Earth life is "all our relations."

80 Years Ago - Universe Expansion Observed

Astronomers observe the expansion of the Universe. After 2^{1/2} million years, humans learn we live in a developing Universe.

50 Years Ago - Humans Discover DNA

Humans discover life's common language. This fundamental mode of memory and communication has been shared by all life for four billion years, ever since the first simple cells emerged.

36 Years Ago - Earth Seen From Space

Earth is seen as whole from space. Earth has become complex enough to witness her own integral beauty.

Today

The Story of the Universe is being told as our Sacred Story. The Flaring Forth continues as this moment, as us, as one. Today, all humans can know our common origin story, our story in common with the entire Earth community in a single sacred Universe.