

Description of The Cosmic Walk

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. It is a simple ritual that can be performed in a large room or outdoors. A spiral representing the entire 13.75 billion years of the cosmic and 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 use a rope. The spiral should be at least 100 feet long (137 feet is easier to deal with) 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 such station is marked by an unlit votive candle and by a card describing the emergence.

The first station, located at 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. One person, the walker, lights a candle from the primary candle and walks the spiral, starting with the Great Emergence and lighting each candle in turn. The walk is synchronized with the reading of the text below 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 of 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. Copies of some of these are available at:
www.ThreeEyesOfUniverse.org/public/cosmicwalks/TheCosmicWalk.html

The Narrative for the Cosmic Walk

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.

(Start music, Fairy Ring.) 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.

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.

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.

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.

4. 13 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.

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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

9. 3.8 bya life emerges; cells invent photosynthesis.

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 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.

10. 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.

11. 2 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.

12. 1 bya sexual procreation emerges.

Single-celled organisms learn to share their genetic heritage and bequeath to their progeny an extravagance of possibilities.

13. 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.

14. 600 mya ecosystems emerge; multicellular organisms begin to 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.

15. 540 mya sight is invented; eyes emerge.

Earth sees herself for the first time and is dazzled.

16. 460 mya plants and animals move on land.

Leaving the water, they seek the adventure of weather and gravity.

17. 400 mya insects invent flight.

Earth teaches herself to fly.

18. 235 mya dinosaurs emerge.

For 170 million years, these creatures explore the extremes of size, speed, and strength.

19. 215 mya mammals emerge.

Molten rock has reshaped itself to be able to express a mother's love for her child.

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. A few Mya hominids extend childhood development

In animals adult intelligence and flexibility are correlated with the immaturity of their babies. Primate babies have relatively long infant maturation periods. Hominids extend that greatly but at great cost to the vulnerability of their children and the demands of parenthood.

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.

25. 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.

26. 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".

27. 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.

28. 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.

29. 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.

30. 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.

31. 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.

Larry Edwards, July, 2010