

THE COSMIC WALK

Genesis Farm

This ritual was designed to provide some sense of the awesomeness of the time/space of the universe. You can change and adapt it as you see fit. It conveys the sense of sequence in the unfolding process of the Universe and Earth. It also dramatically conveys the brief history of humanity, as well as the uniqueness of each person's life.

The events that have been chosen for this are arbitrary. We recommend that you look over the "time-line" included in *The Universe Story*, by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. There may be other events that you would wish to highlight. It is very important to "know the audience." Be inclusive of the events which shaped their continent and bio-region as well as their cultural, ethnic or religious story.

Materials:

1. A length of thick yarn or rope to represent the time-line of the universe. Total length is arbitrary. These are the measurements we use—150 feet. (We are using the more recent approximation of the origin of the Universe as 15 billion years ago.) The line is then divided into intervals to mark when certain events took place (see narrative). Tie a piece of colored yarn or tape a little tab at each interval so it is always visible. Most of the events happen at the very end of the rope and can't actually fit. They have to spill out but group them as tightly as possible.
2. A tall candle to be placed at the center of the spiral.
3. A "Sabbath" candle or taper to be carried by the walker if this is used as a presentation. If each participant is invited to walk the story, then provide a taper for each. Be sure to have a small circular protection at the base of each candle to catch wax drippings.
4. 35 small vigil candles to be placed at each interval marker. We suggest small glass vigils, or else have coasters or pieces of cardboard under each candle to catch drippings.
5. 35 index cards. Each one is marked with year and event, *i.e.*: 1 billion years later Primal Stars and Galaxies

Music: Use any appropriate solemn/contemplative piece. Our favorite music for this is "The Fairy Ring" by Mike Rowland.

People:

- A *narrator*
- A *walker*—this person is the first to walk the cosmos as the narration is read, lighting a vigil candle at each "cosmic event."

Space: You will need a large space with room for people to sit around the spiral. The larger the "feel" of the spiral, the more effective it is. If you want all the participants to do the walk afterwards, be sure they have their tapers before hand.

Procedure

Begin music. The narrator stands off to the side and reads from the prologue to John's gospel substituting "dream" for "word," as suggested in the Dream of the Earth. The walker waits in center of spiral until reading is finished. If this is not a Christian setting, then another appropriate "origins" prologue could be used. Be creative with this initial narration. It should set the tone for the universe evolution.

Narrator: "In the beginning was the dream, the dream was with God and the dream was God. The dream was with God in the Beginning. Through the dream all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through the dream; and out of this, Mystery created light or light came forth."

Walker: Strike match and light "universe" candle as narrator reads "... Mystery created light." Pause. Then light personal candle from universe candle and slowly begin to walk through spiral. The walker should stop at each event and wait for the narrator to describe it. Pause at each "event" while narrator reads "event." Light the vigil candle that represents it. Continue to the end.

Narrator:

1. *14 billion years ago* The Universe was dreamed into being. Its initial flaring forth contained all the light, energy and potential for everything that would ever come to be.
2. *1 billion years later* This expanding energy began to slow down, cool, differentiate, and all the primal stars and galaxies took shape. Stars are vessels of hydrogen and helium and consume themselves to create other heavier elements.
3. *4.6 billion years ago* Our grandmother star, within the Milky Way, having consumed herself, collapsed. In the intense energy of that collapse she was transformed into a supernova - exploding her stardust into space and birthing all the new chemical elements which would gradually take shape as our solar system.
4. *4.5 billion years ago* That exploded stardust condensed into a community of planets around our newborn mother star. Our solar system was born.
5. *4.1 billion years ago* Earth, a privileged planet, cooled and gradually formed an atmosphere, oceans and land mass.
6. *4 billion years ago* Slowly, within the oceans, complex materials began to form, leading to the development of amino acids and finally proteins. With proteins, the first simple cells formed and in, by and through them, Earth awakened into life.
7. *3.9 billion years ago* Earth learns to take nourishment from Sun. Through single cell microbes, she learned to eat sunlight, to "nurse from the Sun." This is photosynthesis. It has laid down a primary pattern for all future life forms: that each must receive nourishment from another and give itself in return to become nourishment.
8. *2 billion years ago* Through the intimate act of eating, Earth slowly absorbed her early carbon membrane, slowly releasing oxygen and forming a new oxygen atmosphere within which most future life would evolve.

9. *1 billion years ago* Life was mysteriously drawn toward union and the complex organisms began to reproduce sexually. Different strands of genetic memory were combined in their new offspring, opening up infinite new possibilities. With the creativity implicit in sexual reproduction, came the necessity of aging and dying.
10. *700 million years ago* The first multi-cellular life forms emerge and creativity expands rapidly.
11. *510 million years ago* The first fishforms with backbones develop, protecting within these hardened skeletons, Earth's earliest nervous system and the development of her sensory organs.
12. *410 million years ago* Plants left the oceans, having learned to create a cell wall within which they could carry their own water.
13. *395 million years ago* The first insects emerged, forming an interdependent community with the land plants, a pattern which continues to the present.
14. *235 million years ago* The mysterious coming of the dinosaurs.
15. *215 million years ago* The first mammals emerged, warm-blooded creatures, who like supernovas, carry their unborn young within their own bodies and nourish their young from their own substance.
16. *210 million years ago* The continents shifted, cracked and drifted apart. The Atlantic Ocean was formed.
17. *150 million years ago* The first birds took flight and Earth broke into song.
18. *120 million years ago* The emergence of flowering plants which concentrated their life energy into seed, making protein available for mammals and bringing color and fragrance to Earth.
19. *40 million years ago* The various orders of mammals were complete.
20. *3.3 million years ago* Current ice ages of Earth began, shaping the mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes and streams which formed our present bio-regions.
21. *2.6 million years ago* The earliest humans develop, with brains and nervous systems, complex enough for Earth to awaken into self-conscious awareness.
22. *60,000 years ago* Modern *Homo sapiens* emerged, developing earliest language patterns and occupying Australia and Africa.
23. *20,000 years ago* Reflecting on the fertility and abundance of Earth, matrilineal societies evolved female deities to represent that fertility and abundance.
24. *10,000 years ago* Humans learned to selectively cultivate plants, domestic animals and create more permanent settlements. They now occupied Asia and the Americas.
25. *5,200 years ago* Unable to comprehend the differences among themselves, humans began an age of chronic war making, a pattern which continues to the present.
26. *5,000 years ago* Megalithic stone structures appear in Europe, Asia and the Americas, marking a transition to warring, male images of the divine.
27. *3,200 years ago* The Exodus of Israel from Egypt.
28. *2,500 years ago* A highly evolved ethical and spiritual consciousness flowered throughout China and India through the work and teachings of Confucius and the

Buddha.

29. *2,300 years ago* Classic Mayan civilization flourished in the Americas.
30. *2,000 years ago* Jesus, a Dream of God, revealed his teachings of unity and spread the message throughout Judea and Galilee.
31. *1,400 years ago* The teachings of Mohammed and the Koran spread throughout Africa, Asia and southern Europe.
32. *400 years ago* The people of Europe invaded and colonized other continents, uprooting indigenous people and confiscating their lands and cultures. A period of slave trade and migration was initiated.
33. *200 years ago* A period of intense revolutions: intellectual, social, scientific and industrial, all of which have shaped our present age.
34. *65 years ago* Humans discovered an expanding Universe and the interior depths within atomic structures for the first time.
35. *30 years ago* Humans, on a journey to the Moon, turned around and saw Earth as a whole for the first time.

Today, all humans can know their common origin story, including all cultural stories within the entire Earth community in a single sacred Universe. Perhaps it is the beginning of the world.

Walker: Leave spiral and be seated.

If the entire group is to participate in the walk, there should be a pause with just the music continuing.

When moved to begin, each participant should begin at the center, lighting a personal candle and walking the entire time-line. Each should leave a space so there are no “traffic jams” or waits in the walk. It is meant to be a meditative experience and should not be rushed. It is helpful to instruct everyone before time to walk with the rope always to the left of their left foot.

After everyone is finished and seated, it is helpful to allow a time of silence and then invite each to speak a one-word response to their experience, *i.e.*, “inspiring,” “awe-filled,” “gratitude,” etc.

Be creative! Enjoy!

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