

Notes on the Cosmic Walk:

The Cosmic Walk is a ritual created by Sr. Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm, N.J. 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 series of readers.

In this liturgy, due to our location being quite windy, we used bowls with water instead of candles. The walker used a small bowl to take water from the central bowl out to the bowls at each station.

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. This Cosmic Walk, A California Story, also has descriptions to include the deep time story of the San Francisco Bay area, with gratitude to Bruce Bochte, Board of Directors, The Bay Institute, and Jim Lacefield, Ed.D., author of Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks.

Gathering

At the sound of the gongs, the people gather around the edges of the spiral.

Opening Acclamation

Bishop Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Bishop There is one Body and one Spirit;

People There is one hope in God's call to us;

Bishop One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

People One God and Father of all.

Bishop God be with you.

People And also with you.

Bishop Let us pray.

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature:
Make us always thankful for your loving providence;
and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give,
may be faithful stewards of your good gifts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing of Water

The Walker presents the water and places it in the center of the spiral.

The Bishop then blesses the water in the center of the spiral, first saying

Bishop The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Bishop Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Bishop We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water.

Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation.

Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage
in Egypt into the land of promise.

In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John
and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ,
to lead us, through his death and resurrection,
from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism.

In it we are buried with Christ in his death.

By it we share in his resurrection.

Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son,
we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith,
baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

At the following words, the Bishop touches the water

Now sanctify this water, we pray you,
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again
may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory,
now and for ever. Amen.

The Cosmic Walk

The Cosmic Walk is a meditation on the history of creation from its beginnings. The designated Walker moves to the center of the spiral, preparing to lead us through the Cosmic Walk. The confirmands stand at the outside of the spiral in a circle, their family, friends, and sponsors behind them. As each of the steps is read, the walker pours water into the bowl for that step.

Gong

Reader One:

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The Word was in the beginning with God.
All things came into being through the Word,
and without the Word not one thing came into being.
What has come into being in the Word was life,
and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Gong

Reader One:

Fourteen billion years ago,
from that place that was no-place,
from that time that was no-time,
God calls forth the cosmos in a silent blaze of inconceivable brilliance.
It contains all the light, energy, and potential for everything that will ever come to be.

Gong

Reader Two:

Eight and a half billion years later,
our Grandmother Star becomes a supernova.
She gives up her life in an explosion that gives rise to our Star,
what we call the Sun.
The sun and a great disk of matter emerge—
all the members of our solar system.

Gong

Reader Two:

Over the next six hundred million years,
as Earth's surface quiets and cools,
an atmosphere begins to form.
The first rains fall upon the Earth, and oceans emerge.

Reader Two:

Four billion years ago,
this intricate system brings forth the first living cells.

Gong

Reader Three:

Five hundred million years ago,
the first animals and plants move out of the waters onto the dry land,
separating themselves from the creatures that remained in the waters of the oceans.

Reader Three:

Four hundred twenty-five million years ago,
plants develop wood cells and learn to stand upright,
stretching towards the sun,
first living along the shores of oceans and rivers,
and then covering the earth.

Gong

Reader Four:

Three hundred million years ago,
continents converge and ancestral mountains are uplifted.
Landmasses are locked within a single land mass.

Reader Four:

Two hundred and ten million years ago,
the continents shift, crack, and drift apart.
Separate oceans are formed.
Creation on earth expands and moves apart.

Gong

Reader Five:

Two hundred million years ago,
the rocks of this peninsula begin their 150-million-year dance
which creates these Headlands and the beautiful cliffs below us.

Reader Five:

One hundred and forty thousand years ago,
modern Homo Sapiens emerge in the unfolding life process.
Through the human,
the universe realizes its capacity for conscious self-awareness.

Gong

Reader Six:

Twenty-six hundred years ago,
the stories that would later become the oldest part of the Bible
are first written down
by people seeking God.

Reader Six:

Two thousand years ago,
a woman named Mary gives birth to a child,
Jesus, called Emmanuel, "God with us."
His struggle to embody, teach, and share God's love inspires followers
who later became known as Christians.

Gong

Reader Seven:

Four hundred and thirty-eight years ago,
Sir Francis Drake and the crew of the Golden Hinde
celebrate their arrival to this new world
with the first Anglican worship service
on the north American continent on this coast.

Reader Seven:

One hundred and sixty-nine years ago,
Gold is discovered in California.
Human greed and selfishness begin to damage
the creation we were given.
The poisons from the mining process continue to pollute the San Francisco Bay.

Gong

Reader Eight:

One hundred and twenty-one years ago,
Battery Godfrey is built.
Into the sacred land we carve platforms,
We pave God's creation with concrete and steel,
On the battery we place guns that we never use.

Reader Eight:

Eighty-five Years Ago,
Astronomers observe the expansion of the Universe.
Humans learn we live on the outskirts of a continually developing Universe.

Gong

Reader Nine:

Forty-eight years ago,
human beings looked from outer space and saw the entirety of Earth,
a pale blue dot in the darkness of space.
And on that pale blue dot every human being who ever was,
lived out their lives.
every creator and destroyer of civilization,
every king and peasant,
every young couple in love,
every inventor and explorer,
every teacher of morals,
every corrupt politician and public servant,
every saint and sinner in the history of our species live there—
on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

Gong

Reader Ten:

TODAY, the Story of the Universe is being told as our Sacred Story.
The Flaring Forth continues at this moment.
Today, all humans can know the story of our origin,
Our shared story with all creation living in this sacred Universe.

Gong

Bishop God be with you.
People And also with you.
Bishop Let us pray.
 We pray for our world.
 We are grateful for the interconnectedness of creation.
 May we and all who hold authority in the world
 have courage to act,
 and may our lives honor the gift of Creation. Amen.

Gong

Presentation and Examination of the Candidates

The Bishop says

The Candidates will now be presented.

Presenters I present these persons for Confirmation.

The Bishop asks the candidates

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?

Candidates I do.

Bishop Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

Candidates I do and with God's grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.

After all have been presented, the Bishop addresses the congregation, saying

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

People We will.

The Bishop then says these or similar words

Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

Bishop Do you believe in God the Father?

People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Bishop Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Bishop Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Bishop Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons,
loving your neighbor as yourself?
People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of the Earth and of every human being?
People I will, with God's help.

The Bishop then says these or similar words

Let us now pray for these persons who have renewed their commitment to Christ.

A period of silence follows.

A Person appointed leads the following petitions

Leader Deliver them, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Open their hearts to your grace and truth.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Keep them in the faith and communion of your holy Church.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Send them into the world in witness to your love.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory.
People Lord, hear our prayer.

Then the Bishop says

Almighty God, we thank you that by the death
and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself,
and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit
you have bound us to your service.

Renew in these your servants the covenant you have made with them at their Baptism.
Send them forth in the power of that Spirit
to perform the service you set before them;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

For Confirmation

The Bishop lays hands upon each one and says

Strengthen, O Lord, your servant N. with your Holy Spirit;
empower them for your service;
and sustain them all the days of their life. Amen.

or this

Defend, O Lord, your servant N. with your heavenly grace,
that they may continue yours for ever,
and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more,
until they come to your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

For Reception

N., we recognize you as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church,
and we receive you into the fellowship of this Communion.
God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you. Amen.

For Reaffirmation

N., may the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you,
direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom. Amen.

The Bishop concludes with this prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
let your fatherly hand ever be over these your servants;
let your Holy Spirit ever be with them;
and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of your Word,
that they may serve you in this life, and dwell with you in the life to come;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bishop The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.

We regather the people by ringing the gongs.

Bishop And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us,
 we say together in the language of our hearts

People:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your Name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,
 and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours,
 now and for ever. Amen

Bishop Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.
 Alleluia. Alleluia.

People Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.