



SAVE OUR FUTURE

Beloved Earth Community of Riverside Church

In This Issue

In Honor of Earth Day: The Cosmos Story

The writer and theologian Thomas Berry shows how God shines through the entire universe and connects it all together. Did you know the universe began 13.8 billion years ago?

*"Existence itself is derived from and sustained by [the] intimacy of each being with every other being of the universe." --Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, **The Universe Story**, 243).*

Our Need for a New Sacred Story: Thomas Berry, Spiritual Autism, and Saving the Planet

Excerpts from an Introduction by Rev. Alan Bentz-Letts

As climate change has reached new urgency, many voices are raised responding to the environmental crisis. One important voice that needs to be heard is that of Thomas Berry. For Berry, the survival of our planet is fundamentally a spiritual crisis. A new consciousness is needed as well as radical changes in behavior. Berry had hope that such change was possible despite the formidable obstacles. The foundation of his hope lay in what he at one point called the "new story," meaning the story of how the universe came into being. The "greatest single need" of our time, he claimed, was to acknowledge this history as "our sacred story." He believed that only the universe story could inspire and evoke the energies needed for planetary survival.

By the term "universe story," Berry means the scientific account of the approximately fourteen billion year history of the universe. But in Berry's view this story also possesses a psychological and spiritual power, similar to the holy writings of religious traditions in the past. "It is scientific in its data, mythic in its form." As a sacred story, it "tells us who we are and how we came to be here and what our lives are all about."

Three characteristics seem to define what Berry means by sacred story. First of all, and as might be expected, a sacred story gives an account of the creation of the world. Second, there is an element of wildness to the sacred in Berry's view, a certain mysterious, uncontrollable and creative quality in existence. This wildness is key to the healing of the human spirit. Lastly, with the discovery of evolution, sacred now must be understood in developmental terms. It is cosmogenesis rather than cosmology.

{Finally, Berry ask us to} consider the potential of the universe story to create the spiritual transformation—the new consciousness and altered behavior—that is necessary to avert the destruction of the planet.



JOIN BELOVED EARTH TO WATCH

"The Journey of the Universe"

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20
7:00 P.M., E.T. via ZOOM,**
Discussion follows.

Connect at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87276731092?>

[pwd=N0loVEtxdXp3VE14TjBnTCtNYU95UT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87276731092?pwd=N0loVEtxdXp3VE14TjBnTCtNYU95UT09)

Meeting ID: 872 7673 1092
Passcode: 227177

Then, WALK THE COSMIC MAZE ON SUNDAY, APRIL 21. 1:00-3:00 P.M. in ASSEMBY HALL.

Each offers a good summary of Barry's thoughts and an opportunity to better understand this prophetic figure.

GREEN FAITH OPENS ANOTHER REGIONAL OFFICE IN AFRICA

On January 30 2024, GreenFaith opened a Regional Office in Nairobi Kenya. GreenFaith, which began work in Africa in 2018 with team members based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, brings together Christians, Muslims, people with African beliefs, Hindus and others for climate justice. GreenFaith now has offices in 12 African countries. The mission is for people of faith to collaborate to halt new fossil fuel projects, promote universal access to clean energy and to advocate for green jobs that can move communities toward a better future. GreenFaith campaigns against the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline in East Africa (EACOP) and opposes oil and gas expansion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Ghana. They also work to build relationships with grassroots people of various faiths across the continent.

At the opening of the Regional Office in Nairobi representatives spoke about the impact of oil drilling on their communities. Tanzania and Uganda, regarding EACOP's poor compensation for land taken, for lack of respect for their kins grave during displacement, and more. In Nigeria, oil spills and flaring in Port Harcourt, and in the Niger Delta, polluted rivers and soil, killing the livelihoods of the fishing and farming communities and introducing cases of respiratory and other diseases.

GreenFaith's Executive Director Rev. Fletcher Harper emphasized that "Africa is on the frontline of the climate crisis. Global North corporations want to exploit the continents' resources and addict Africa to fossil fuels. This is patently immoral. Our GreenFaith Africa team is campaigning for clean, safe, affordable, and reliable energy for every African. We're calling for millions of green jobs to lift people from poverty. We demand an immediate stop to new fossil fuel projects and loss and damage funds for those who have suffered permanent losses from climate change. Our faiths require nothing less."



Earth Day 2024 Focus is "Plastic vs Planet." Do Your Small Part and Try Earth Day Recipes and Go Plastic-Free

Here are some easy Earth Day, climate-friendly recipes:

<https://www.earthday.org/eatmoreplants/>

Highly recommended is the cauliflower wings that can be cooked by popping into the air fryer.

And for that special take-out option, consider the new vegan, plastic free restaurant at 69th and 3rd.

<https://ilovegoodsugar.com/pages/about>



TO SAVE OUR PLANET, AIM TO (1) AVOID PLASTICS AND RECYCLE (2) RALLY with GREENFAITH ON MAY 3-12, 2024, to OPPOSE FURTHER INVESTMENTS IN FOSSIL FUEL and (3) CONSIDER JOINING GREENFAITH at <https://greenfaith.org/>

Likewise, GreenFaith's Global Director for Advocacy, Meryne Warah, called on faith communities to emphasize that "We have enough renewable natural capital that can be harnessed to provide energy in Africa while at the same time living harmoniously with biodiversity." https://greenfaith.org/greenfaith_launches_africa_office_press-statement/

Beloved Earth Community

We call Riversiders to protest the climate crisis and care for the Earth through educational programs, greening the church, changing our lifestyles, and courageous political actions. For more information, or to join, contact David King <davidking1089@gmail.com> or Claudia Canasto <canastoclachi@gmail.com>

- The next Beloved Earth Meetings: May 4, at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.
 - To view this [S.O.F.](https://www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter) online, visit www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter
- April Newsletter Contents by Alan Benz-Letts, Milli Akinsulure, Frances Connell, Luvon Roberson, Mary Pasquini. Graphic by Jeremiah Drake

