

# *God Speaks and Transformation Happens*

## **Cycle # 1 – Session #2**

### **God Speaks and Transformation Happens**

**Text:** Genesis 1

## **Gathering**

### **Opening Worship**

**Light a candle** – God’s light is always present among us. The candle which we light at the beginning of each session is a reminder of the light in our midst.

**Song:** *This Is The Day* - #286 Chalice Hymnal or  
Many and Great, O God - #54 Chalice Hymnal

### **Litany**

In the beginning there was only God and complete emptiness  
God saw what might be and began to create.

**In the beginning there was the chaos of nothingness  
Without form and void of life and energy or order.**

In the beginning out of the nothingness God called  
all that is into being and proclaimed it to be “delightful”.

**Even when there were stars and night  
daylight and sunshine, water and dry land  
there was still great emptiness.**

God created all that is and at the end of the creating  
God made human beings out of the soil of the earth,  
out of the stardust of the universe and gave them  
the earth as their home.

**Then on the seventh day God rested, and on Monday  
invited the humans to join in creating and the creation  
still goes on.**

**Let us give thanks and bless God with our lives and our words.**

**Amen.**

**Welcome One Another.** What was best about your week? What was the most challenging? Where is one place you’ve seen the creative power of God at work in the world?

## Cycle # 1 – Session #2

### Scripture

Genesis 1-2:4 (From the *Revised Standard Version*)

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

<sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

<sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' <sup>29</sup>God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you

shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup> These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

2nd version - Scripture – Genesis 1-2:4 (*The Message*, tr Eugene H. Peterson)

### **Heaven and Earth**

<sup>1-2</sup>First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

<sup>3-5</sup> God spoke: "Light!"  
And light appeared.  
God saw that light was good  
and separated light from dark.  
God named the light Day,  
he named the dark Night.  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day One.

<sup>6-8</sup> God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters;  
separate water from water!"  
God made sky.  
He separated the water under sky  
from the water above sky.  
And there it was:  
he named sky the Heavens;  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Two.

<sup>9-10</sup> God spoke: "Separate!  
Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;  
Land, appear!"  
And there it was.  
God named the land Earth.  
He named the pooled water Ocean.  
God saw that it was good.

<sup>11-13</sup> God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties  
of seed-bearing plants,  
Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."

And there it was.  
Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,  
all varieties,  
And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.  
God saw that it was good.  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Three.

<sup>14-15</sup> God spoke: "Lights! Come out!  
Shine in Heaven's sky!  
Separate Day from Night.  
Mark seasons and days and years,  
Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth."  
And there it was.

<sup>16-19</sup> God made two big lights, the larger  
to take charge of Day,  
The smaller to be in charge of Night;  
and he made the stars.  
God placed them in the heavenly sky  
to light up Earth  
And oversee Day and Night,  
to separate light and dark.  
God saw that it was good.  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Four.

<sup>20-23</sup> God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!  
Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"  
God created the huge whales,  
all the swarm of life in the waters,  
And every kind and species of flying birds.  
God saw that it was good.  
God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!  
Birds, reproduce on Earth!"  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Five.

<sup>24-25</sup> God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:  
cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds."  
And there it was:  
wild animals of every kind,  
Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.  
God saw that it was good.

<sup>26-28</sup> God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them  
reflecting our nature  
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,

the birds in the air, the cattle,  
And, yes, Earth itself,  
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."  
God created human beings;  
he created them godlike,  
Reflecting God's nature.  
He created them male and female.  
God blessed them:  
"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!  
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,  
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

<sup>29-30</sup> Then God said, "I've given you  
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth  
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,  
given them to you for food.  
To all animals and all birds,  
everything that moves and breathes,  
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."  
And there it was.

<sup>31</sup> God looked over everything he had made;  
it was so good, so very good!  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Six.

**2**<sup>1</sup> Heaven and Earth were finished, down to the last detail.

<sup>2-4</sup> By the seventh day  
God had finished his work.  
On the seventh day  
he rested from all his work.  
God blessed the seventh day.  
He made it a Holy Day  
Because on that day he rested from his work,  
all the creating God had done.

This is the story of how it all started,  
of Heaven and Earth when they were created.

<sup>3rd</sup> Version – Scripture – Genesis 1-2:4 (*The Tanakh, 1917*)

In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of G-d hovered over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup> And G-d said: 'Let there be light' And there was light.

<sup>4</sup> And G-d saw the light, that it was good; and G-d divided the light from the darkness.

<sup>5</sup> And G-d called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

<sup>6</sup> And G-d said: 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters'.

<sup>7</sup> And G-d made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

<sup>8</sup> And G-d called the firmament Heaven And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

<sup>9</sup> And G-d said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear' And it was so.

<sup>10</sup> And G-d called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas; and G-d saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> And G-d said: 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth' And it was so.

<sup>12</sup> And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind; and G-d saw that it was good.

<sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

<sup>14</sup> And G-d said: 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years;

<sup>15</sup> and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth' And it was so.

<sup>16</sup> And G-d made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and the stars.

<sup>17</sup> And G-d set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

<sup>18</sup> and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and G-d saw that it was good.

<sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And G-d said: 'Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven'.

<sup>21</sup> And G-d created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that creepeth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after its kind, and every winged fowl after its kind; and G-d saw that it was good.

<sup>22</sup> And G-d blessed them, saying: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth'.

<sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And G-d said: 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind' And it was so.

<sup>25</sup> And G-d made the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the ground after its kind; and G-d saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> And G-d said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth'.

<sup>27</sup> And G-d created man in His own image, in the image of G-d created He him; male and female created He them.

<sup>28</sup> And G-d blessed them; and G-d said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth'.

<sup>29</sup> And G-d said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed--to you it shall be for food;

<sup>30</sup> and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is a living soul, I have given every green herb for food' And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> And G-d saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>1</sup> And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

<sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day G-d finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

<sup>3</sup> And G-d blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which G-d in creating had made.

<sup>4</sup> These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created, in the day that HaShem G-d made earth and heaven.

## Dwelling in Scripture

Genesis 1:1-2:4

1<sup>st</sup> reading – Allow people time to reflect on what they have heard.  
Note the word or phrase which drew your attention this time.

2<sup>nd</sup> reading – Invite people to talk about what they have heard and  
where it might intersect with their lives.

## Behind the Text

In addition to the usual text reading from the NRSV, I have included two other sources, the *Message Bible*, and the *Tanakh* (Jewish Scriptures, tr 1917). Reading from texts other than the ones with which people are the most familiar may help you hear familiar texts with fresh ears. There are of course other translations you may use as well. None of the translations is perfect and all present some difficulties. Not only is the text being moved from a different time and place, it is being moved from an ancient language and a particular world view into English and a very different world than the one in which it began. In this version of the *Tanakh*, you will notice that G-d replaces God, a reminder that God is so holy the name should not be spoken. It also uses HaShem God where we would use The Lord God.

You may want to read from all three or choose only one. Whichever you chose, read it aloud at least once. Since the scriptures were intended to be read aloud, hearing the words provides a tiny taste of how people through the centuries may have heard the words. Even though many people will argue there is only one way to read these scriptures, the reality is there are many valid ways of approaching the text. In the history of the church numerous difficulties have arisen when people maintained the only way to read scripture is *their way*. To begin with, those of you who have come together to study the scripture represent different experiences, knowledge, traditions, perhaps world views, and or even cultures. Each person brings something different to the text and then add to that that the great distance and differences between us and those for whom these texts were first read more than 2000 years ago.

One of the characteristics we encounter numerous times through the scriptures is a spirit of hospitality. You can probably think of many stories where strangers were welcomed and fed. The stories of Jesus abound with gatherings of friends and followers coming together. If you approach the scripture and one another with this same hospitality the scriptures will become a rich feast which can help deepen our understanding of who God is, who we are and how we are connected to one another and the world. Bon Appetit!

In all probability the first people to hear this story weren't reading it at all. It may have been a wonderfully starry night and the community had gathered around the fire to listen and to tell stories. I imagine a child may have turned to the storyteller and asked, "How did we begin? Where did we come from?" And so the story began to unfold.

These stories grew out of a community of faith and both shaped that community and were shaped by the community. Sometimes people say they are not theologians, because to be a

theologian you must have studied for years and years, be very articulate about the faith, and willing to help others understand. If you ever wonder what God is like, if you ever seek to understand the creation or nature of God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit, you are a theologian, one who seeks to know, to understand, to express truths about God. This makes us each a part of a great company of people, a company which began when men and women first looked at the heavens and wondered how we got here or why we are here or what is the meaning of our lives.

In the past hundred years many ancient texts have been discovered which point to similar stories in other parts of the Near East. They attempt to answer some of the questions. *How did all this begin? How old is the earth?* They are also different. In the Hebrew stories, God who is the creator of all that is becomes the central figure of this story of beginnings.

For us these creation stories are universal. For the first hearers this was *their particular history*, a history which set them apart. The stories have proven to have a much larger context and in many ways they are still contemporary. We've all heard the story of the child who is drawing a picture and when asked what of? She says, "God." Her teacher replies, "But no one knows what God looks like." To which the child answers, "They will, when I'm finished." In a way that is what takes place in this story – When we get to the end of it, we may know a little of what God is like.

## **Observation**

It may be these stories have important implications for us as we journey along the road of transformation. Some of the questions may be difficult to consider because they require that we look deeply into our own lives and into the lives of the organizations of which we are a part.

Notice how the story of creation goes

In the beginning ...

- 1) The story begins with God
- 2) And nothingness or emptiness or a "formless void" – also described as chaos

That may be worth a thought or two. *God's creativity takes place where there is an empty space. If there is no space, there is no room for something new to come into being.*

## **Consider**

How much space is there in your life for the creative activity of God? This might be a good place to spend some time looking at your calendar if you keep one. How full is it? Is everything on it of equal importance? When do you have space for doing something different or do you follow the same path week after week?

How about in your church? Take a look at the church's calendar. Is there room for anything new? Is there room for reflection on what is? Do you do the same things Sunday after Sunday, year after year?

## Observation

....a wind from God swept over the face of the waters....

Wind is amazing. It can blow things away. It can change the landscape. It can destroy anything in its path. It may be as gentle as a breeze or as destructive as a hurricane. Wind can make a dust storm or snow storm blinding and dangerous. Harnessed it can provide electricity. At the very least, it is powerful.

Water is just as amazing. We can't live without it. In an ocean or a large body of water it's impossible to see what is in its depths. It can destroy as in a tsunami. It also can clean and restore. It determines where and how we live. We begin life in water and the water in our bodies is reminiscent of the water in the ocean.

## Consider

If a wind from God blew over your life what might change?

The Celtic people did not separate life as we do into sacred and secular, but saw God's extraordinary presence in the ordinary experiences of life. Esther De Waal in an article of *Weavings* (May/June, 1987, p. 6) describes how a 19th woman living in the Outer Hebrides just off the west coast of Scotland began her day by splashing her face with 3 *palmfuls* of water as a prayer and a reminder of God

The palmful of the God of Life  
The palmful of the Christ of Life  
The palmful of the Spirit of peace  
Triune  
Of grace

What ordinary acts do you do which might remind you of God, of your baptism, of the creative spirit of God in your life? A morning shower isn't a bad place to begin.

## Observation

God speaks and creation happens –  
This is a powerful God,  
a God who is a living force  
a God who can transform and create the universe

All of the first creative acts occur when God speaks  
...Let there be light  
And then darkness is added so there is Day and night  
....Dry land and bodies of water are brought into being  
Vegetation of all kinds is brought forth from fertile land  
The sun and the moon are called forth and the night is filled with stars  
The oceans and water are filled with creatures and the sky with winged birds  
This creating fills the 1<sup>st</sup> five days.  
The story teller says of each act of the creation.

.... *And there was evening and there was morning*

With the exception of *Day 2* God says of each day's creating... *it was good or as it is sometime translated, it was very good* or my favorite from Rick Lowery ..."*And God said, delightful!*"

### **Consider**

Consider this idea. The creative activity of God is going while we sleep. We don't have to do everything, solve everything or take care of everything. God is ultimately in charge. And when we arise in the morning God's work is already well underway.

### **Observation**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> day there are two major pieces of creation; 1) all of the creatures which are needed to sustain life for humans as well as other animals 2) Human Beings. Up until this point the creation has happened because God has spoken. When it comes to human beings God makes them. In Genesis 2 the storyteller says God formed *man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*. The storyteller of the first account says that God created humans beings, male and female in his own image.

### **Consider**

If we are in God's image what does that mean? An image is a reflection. It also contains some spark, some part of the original. If we are in God's image then God must be a God of infinite variety and creativity. And when God looked at all the creation, God sees it as being very good.

### **Observation**

Neither of the two creation accounts tells us why God made us. The second account seems to indicate that God wanted humans to tend the creation. Brian Swimme in his book, ***The Universe Is a Green Dragon***, lifts up the idea that humans are essential to the universe and our destiny is to make the love which is built into the universe visible. Creativity was built into universe at its birth and the creativity continues.

### **Consider**

Why did God make us? Is it possible God is lonely? Is it possible God needs us?

### **Observation**

The early manuscripts didn't come with verse and chapter numbers and sometimes the divides seem to fall in strange places. In this particular instance the choice seems very appropriate. In chapter 1 the general story of creation is told and at the beginning of chapter 2 the storyteller says when the heavens and earth and all their multitude is finished, God rested. The seventh day is declared to be a day of rest and made sacred. It is a day which God gave to us. Surely if God rested from all creative activity, then it is good for us to do the same.

## **Consider**

Wayne Mueller in a book entitled ***Sabbath***, explores what it means to rest on the Sabbath. If we were to be serious about Sabbath, it would mean that in fact we would take time every week for a day of rest and relaxation, not running the errands or cleaning the house, or doing things that need doing, but don't much interest us. Sabbath is intended to restore the soul and the spirit. Donna Schaper in a small book entitled ***Sabbath Keeping*** recognizes most of us, if we are to be serious about Sabbath keeping, will have to be creative and suggests we explore the idea of "altaring time" and Sabbath moments. What renews your spirit? What is restful? What gives you pleasure? Even de-cluttering may be a Sabbath activity.

## **Activity (Optional)**

One of the gifts God has given you in the creation is permission to take a day of rest. Plan a Sabbath day celebration. What offers rest for your body? What nourishes your soul? If you have from sundown one day to sun down the next, what will you need to prepare ahead of time? What resources will you want on hand? Where will you go? Who will you invite to spend the time with you?

If you wish, have paper, pens or magazines, scissors, and glue available and invite people to cut out symbols of the way they'd spend their Sabbath.

## **Practicing the Presence**

During this week, turn your focus to the scripture, Exodus 2:1-23, which will be the focus for session three.

## **Suggested Reading Pattern**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Read and listen to the text. Notice phrases that seem familiar or stand out for you. You may want to read it out loud or you may want to read it with someone else.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Choose a word or phrase to carry with you and reflect on it as it comes to your mind through the day. (If you read at night – let the word or phrase rest overnight and pick it up in the morning. Remember the pattern of creation – "evening and morning." You may receive fresh insights when you waken.)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> During the week read "Behind the Text" and the "Observations/Consider" on the text. Even a few minutes spent each day or several times a week, will enrich your experience of the study and the experience of your small group.

## **In addition you may wish to add these practices:**

- 1) Each day consider some aspect of the creation. Begin to make a list of the gifts you have been given through the creation. As a prayer, use Psalm 8.

- 2) Continue the practice of scripture reading, perhaps concentrating on a small portion of the scripture each day. This week focus on Exodus 2:1-23.

Additional supplies you may wish to use

- ▶ Candle and other materials for a worship center.
- ▶ Pictures of the universe, people, nature, etc.
- ▶ Inexpensive faceted kaleidoscopes (available as party favors, allow people to see familiar things differently) or
- ▶ 3D glasses which transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

## Closing Worship

### Reading

*Excerpt James Weldon Johnson's poem, **The Creation**, catches this awesome act with these words*

He looked on his world  
With all its living things,  
And God said: I'm lonely still.  
Then God sat down--  
On the side of a hill where he could think;  
By a deep, wide river he sat down;  
With his head in his hands,  
God thought and thought,  
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!  
Up from the bed of the river  
God scooped the clay;  
And by the bank of the river  
He kneeled him down;  
And there the great God Almighty  
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;  
This great God,  
Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
Kneeled down in the dust  
Toiling over a lump of clay  
Till he shaped it in is his own image;  
Then into it he blew the breath of life,  
And man became a living soul.  
Amen.    Amen.

From *God's Trombones* by James Weldon Johnson. Copyright © 1927 The Viking Press, Inc., renewed 1955 by Grace Nail Johnson. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.

And/or an excerpt from Brian Swimme's *The Universe Is a Green Dragon*, A cosmic Creation story. The book is written as a conversation between Thomas (in honor of Thomas Berry and the cosmological tradition he celebrates stretching back to Plato)

Youth           Where should we start?

Thomas:        At the beginning. We need to start with the story of the universe as a whole. .... To speak of the universe's origin is to bring to mind the great silent fire at the beginning of time. Imagine that furnace out of which everything came forth. This was a fire that filled the universe – that was the universe. There was no place in the universe free from it. Every point of the cosmos was a point of this explosion of light and all the particles of the universe churned in extremes of heat and pressure, all that we see about us, all that now exists was there at the beginning, in that great burning explosion of light.

Youth:         How do we know about it?

Thomas         We can see it! We can see the light from the primeval fireball. Or at least the light from its edge, for it burned for nearly a million years. We can see the dawn of the universe because the light from its edge reaches us only now, after traveling 20 billion years to get here.

Youth:         You can see the actual light from the fireball?

Thomas:        When you see a candle's flame, you see the light from the candle. In that sense we see the fireball. (page 27)

Youth:         What is our fullest destiny?

Thomas:        To become love in human form.

Youth:         Love? I thought we were talking about science and religion. And emptiness.

Thomas:        Yes, that's right. The journey out of emptiness is the creation of love. (page 40)

Invite people to share one thought from this study they will carry with them into the coming one. Encourage people to continue the prayer covenant and pray for the person on their right and on their left from now until the next time.

**Prayer:**        Creating God who is creating, may your creation come to life in each of us in new and wondrous ways. May we enter into whatever gifts you have built into each of us and work to create with you a world in which children are fed and cared for, where each person has the opportunity to become all he or she might be and where the farthest reaches of your universe are seen as a part of the oneness of your creation. Amen

**Song:** Lo, I Am With You -- #430 Chalice Hymnal