

# **Emerging Earth Community**

Curricular Materials Prepared by  
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## **Scientific Summary:**

This portion of the *Journey of the Universe* book and film series is dedicated rethinking the role and place of the human within the context of the *Journey of the Universe*. Since the focus is on the great work that lies ahead of us, this segment of the curriculum will focus on discussion questions and resources rather than on scientific summary.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does Brian Thomas Swimme mean when he says that “Wonder will guide us” during the *Journey of the Universe* film? How has a sense of wonder already guided you and how will it help you to shape your future habits and actions?
2. The *Journey of the Universe* book and film series can be described as a recovery project that is aimed at rediscovering a sense of belonging that we have lost in our modern, industrialized society. For example, Swimme states that “We belong here. We have always belonged here” and Nancy Maryboy and David Begay both describe Navajo ceremonies and ways of knowing as being cosmologically orienting. Do you feel as if you have lost your own sense of belonging and participation? How has your own culture, tradition, or history both contributed to this sense of loss and also helped you to better understand your own place and role within the story of the universe? How can you use this knowledge to empower yourself and others?
3. In the *Journey of the Universe* book, Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme write that “we are actually the universe reflecting on itself” and that “this changes everything” (2). What does it mean to be the universe reflecting on itself? And,

what is the significance of this realization? Why would that they say that it “changes everything?”

4. After watching the *Conversations*, which of the clips associated with the concept of Emerging Earth Community resonated most strongly with you? What lessons did you take from it and how might you share those lessons with others?
5. It can be easy to become overwhelmed by the immensity of the task before us or to find ourselves lost in grief over the destruction that we as a species have caused. What practical steps can we, as planetary citizens gifted with the power of symbolic consciousness, take to transform ourselves into a species that contributes to the flourishing of the entire universe? In the *Conversations*, the interviewees spoke of a variety of efforts already taking place: Richard Register spoke of the development of eco-cities, Richard Norgaard described his vision for ecological economics, and Penny Livingston elaborated on the importance and power of permaculture as a way to grow food and to enhance biodiversity. What other examples can you think of that demonstrate how people are already attempting to find a role within the cosmos that contributes to the flourishing of all? How can you teach others about these efforts?
6. The book describes the ongoing story of the universe as a story that we tell; but it also describes it as a story that is telling us (114). What do the authors mean by this? Imagine that you had to explain this concept to a child or teenager: How could you convey this idea effectively to them?
7. Understanding the place of the human in the larger story of the universe is something that many have incorporated into their religious lives. In the *Conversations*, Paula Gonzalez talks about her own involvement with solar power and what she calls her “earth ministry” and Marya Grathwohl describes how prayer and ritual helped her to change her understanding of separation. How might you be able to incorporate the *Journey of the Universe* into your own faith or religious practice? What would incorporating the story of the universe into your religion look like for you and how would it change your understanding of your own self?
8. Several of the interviewees in the *Conversations* speak about the relationship between race and the story of the universe. Carl Anthony, for example, talks about the uprooting of African peoples through the institution of slavery and how some have found new meaning and a new set of ethics by thinking about sustainable urban communities. Belvie Rooks, in her interview, tells of her own attempts to help her students put racism and slavery into the framework of the universe story and she asks them to imagine what healing would look like within this context. Why is it important to consider race when thinking about the *Journey of the Universe*? How can you incorporate it into your own story and your understanding of your own place in the universe?

### **Online Resources:**

- Many of the individuals interviewed in the *Conversations* spoke of communities, concepts, and movements that are working towards the flourishing of all.

Although not a comprehensive list, the following websites might help you as you teach or research the *Journey of the Universe*: Bindu Mohanty talks about a community called [Auroville](#), Drew Dellinger recites one of his [poems](#), Richard Register speaks about [Eco-cities](#), Carl Anthony talks about [Breakthrough Communities](#), Paula Gonzalez is one of the founders of [Ohio Interfaith Power and Light](#), Marya Grathwohl is the founder of [Earth Hope](#), Brian Thomas Swimme has a [website](#), Mary Evelyn Tucker has a website called [Emerging Earth Community](#), and don't forget the [Journey of the Universe](#) website.

- The [Earth Charter](#) is a global, multi-cultural set of ethical principles for a just and sustainable world. Read the [Earth Charter](#) here before visiting their [education page](#).
- The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) is the leading international body for monitoring and assessing climate change. Their annual climate [report](#) is one of the most comprehensive and reliable reports of its kind for accurately assessing and reporting climate change.
- The [Worldwatch Institute](#) gathers data and insights from all over the world on matters ranging from climate change, to population growth, to the anthropogenic extinction of species. Their [reports](#) are expansive and useful resources for educators and students at all levels.
- The [Union of Concerned Scientists](#) is a multi-disciplinary group of top scientists and Nobel Prize laureates who disseminate information on climate change and strategies for sustainability. Their [1992 World Scientists' Warning to Humanity](#) was signed by over 17,000 scientists including the majority of Nobel Prize laureates in the sciences.
- Go to the [Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology's website](#) for a comprehensive set of bibliographies, syllabi, news items, events, and resources for educators all related to the academic study of religion and ecology.

### **Print Resources:**

- [Journey of the Universe Bibliography](#).
- [Science Bibliography from the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#).

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