

Genesis Farm Earth Literacy Program

The Genesis Farm Earth Literacy Program is our attempt to provide a model of educational context and subject matter appropriate to this time of transition into a mutually enhancing relationship with Earth. The program is based on new understandings of the history and nature of the Universe as these have emerged through the recent and fresh encounter between modern science and human spirituality.

The program is limited to a small number of participants who live, reflect, and work together in a highly independent and experiential learning process. In addition to the formal studies there is a strong emphasis on immersion in the natural world and developing practical living skills for a more ecological lifestyle. All the activities are designed to awaken the participants' creativity and to provide the support of a group of like-minded peers.

An important part of our program is developing a deep connection to the land and to its essential significance to providing our food. To this end we strongly encourage the participants to:

- participate in a simple ritual of greeting the new day as an integrative prayer experience;
- choose a sacred site on the land and visit it daily;
- spend time in the large Community Supported Garden at Genesis Farm;
- participate in a transitioning to a plant-based, regional, and seasonal diet; and
- keep a personal journal.

The foundational program is offered in two formats: a 16-day *Immersion in the New Cosmology* Program (in August) or a shorter version, two 5-day programs – *Exploring a New Cosmology* and *Deepening the Great Work* (in July) – which have less time for transformative experiences such as building relationship to the land, field trips, gardening, and reflection.

Nine week-long *Earth Literacy Seminars* are offered for those who have attended either the 16-day program or the two 5-day programs:

1. Rare Earth in a Sacred Universe
2. Re-inventing Work, Design, and Technology for an Ecozoic Era
3. Fostering the Web of Life: Biodiversity and Human Population....

A New Cosmology

Over the last century and a half we have discovered a new origin story, an epic narrative of how the world came to be as it is today. Recent advances in biology, psychology, astronomy, physics, paleontology, indeed, all the sciences, have led us to new understandings of the fundamental creativity and elegance of the Universe and especially the community of Earth life. Thus to the ancient questions, “Where did I come from? Who am I?” we now have new answers, answers so startling that they require a fundamental rethinking of our entire culture, and, at the same time so familiar as to reenergize our most ancient wisdom traditions.

Cosmologies and cultures are invented out of origin stories. Our western culture is in crisis because our current origin story is no longer adequate to provide meaning for our lives. We require a larger context, large enough to understand not only the human adventure but also the entire Universe and Earth process. This the new story can provide. Indeed, this is what the new story is. It synthesizes and explicates, for the first time, the development of the physical and spiritual complexity and beauty of the entire Universe, Earth, life, and human consciousness. Inherent within this story is that the spiritual dimension of the Universe has been present since the beginning and has deepened its inner capacities within and through its evolving physical manifestation.

Given this new origin story we can now reinvent our cosmology, worldview, ethics, morality – we can reinvent ourselves to live within a culture that is congruent with Earth. This is the Great Work of our time and requires all of us to work together.

Thus the first part of the program focuses on the story itself – the immensity of the galactic processes, the intimacy of four billion years of Earth life, and the new sense of our identity that emerges from these understandings. The second part focuses on the implications, the cosmology, the world view, the ethics, morality – all the activities and systems that we create to provide spiritual and material support for our lives. Radical changes in our human activities and attitudes will be required as we reinvent ourselves out of these new understandings. The New Cosmology will supply the creative energy needed to accomplish this Great Work.

During this intensive the staff meet with the participants daily. In addition to presentations by and activities with the Genesis Farm staff, there are several presentations and field trips by guest facilitators. Such activities typically include:

- several art presentations/activities;
- an all day geology/hydrology field trip of the area guided by a local geologist;
- introduction to natural foods cooking;
- exploration of concrete alternative technologies, e.g. solar heaters and cookers, straw-bale structures, composting toilets, and vermiculture;
- a guided gardening activity in the Genesis Farm Community Supported Garden.

Before the beginning of this intensive each participant should read the book, **The Dream of the Earth** by Thomas Berry and listen to the audiotape, **Fate of the Earth** by Miriam MacGillis. While most of the activities of the intensive are experientially oriented, there are some short articles to provide background for those activities. We are constantly sharing new resources to better facilitate the participants' process.

The Seminars

The seminars offer the opportunity to explore more deeply the ideas covered in the 16-day *Immersion New Cosmology* program (and also in the two 5-day programs, *Exploring a New Cosmology* and *Deepening the Great Work*). The pace is slower than in *Immersion* with more time to contemplate the deep implications of the material.

Each seminar begins Sunday evening with supper and ends Saturday with lunch. The following schedule is generally followed with specific changes depending on the availability of outside events.

Monday morning: formal presentation of the seminar subject matter.

Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday mornings: book discussion.

Tuesday & Thursday afternoon: cooking classes and CSG?

Wednesday: field trip.

Friday morning: group review & discussion.

Friday afternoon? assisting in the community supported garden.

1. A Rare and Privileged Planet (Really The Universe Story)

[The single greatest achievement of the entire scientific venture might be the recognition that the Universe is best understood in terms of a narrative telling of its sequence of transformations in its self-shaping emergence throughout space and time. This epic presents, for the first time, a single account of the development of the physical and spiritual complexity and beauty of the Universe, Earth, life, and consciousness.]

Required:

The Universe Story by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry

Canticle to the Cosmos (video series) by Brian Swimme

Rare Earth

Questions, Issues:

- Purpose, goal of seminar: (Joanna Macy)

Understand structural inadequacies of present institutions. How? Why?

Identify alternatives

Personal struggle opportunities

Relevant experiences

Develop resource base for activism

- Description of seminar.

- Identify possible texts.

- Identify possible articles.

- How much study vs time outside.

2. Reinventing Work – Design and Technology for an Ecozoic Era (Ecological Design)

[Need Description]

[Possible texts]

3. Fostering the Web of Life – Biodiversity and Human Population (The Web of Life)

[Need Description]

[Possible texts]

E.O. Wilson's new book.????

4. Promoting a Healthy Bounty for All Life – Reinventing Human Agriculture (Ecological Agriculture)

[Need Description]

[Possible texts]

Kimbrell, Andrew. Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture. Foundation for Deep Ecology, Sausalito, CA, 2002.

5. Small, Local, Renewable – Economies of Scale (Sustainable Economics)

[Need Description]

Possible texts = Korten, David. When Corporations Rule the World.

6. Securing the Commons, Securing our Regions: Envisioning New Forms of Governance (Ecozoic Governance)

[Description: Earth Jurisprudence.]

[Possible texts]

Wild Law.

7. Healthy Earth / Healthy Humans: Reclaiming Our Well-being (True Health)

[Need Description]

[Possible texts]

Colborn, Theo; Dumanoski, Dianne and Myers; John Peterson. Our Stolen Future. Dutton Books, NY, 1996.

Steingraber, Sandra Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment. Addison-Wesley, N.Y. 1997.

8. Earth as Teacher – The Foundation for a New Era in Education (Earth Centered Education)

[Need Description]

[Possible texts]

Orr, David W., Earth in Mind, Island Press, Covelo, CA, 1994. .

9. Recovering our Traditional Wisdoms – Spirituality for an Ecozoic era (Recovering Wisdom)

[To meet the great challenges that lie ahead for our human societies we must develop a new and more comprehensive insight into the Universe and our human role within it. There are wisdom traditions from which we can develop this insight: the wisdom of science, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of indigenous peoples, and the classical religious wisdoms. Each of these is essential and provides, in its own unique way, guidance for our journey into a new mutually enhancing Earth-human relationship. Only now, at this time, do we finally have the context and capacity to understand these traditions in a way that can provide guidance for our journey into the future. Each participant is encouraged to explore the wisdom of its own cultural, religious, ethnic history.]

[Possible texts]

The Sacred Depths of Nature by Ursula Goodenough

Genesis Farm Earth Literacy Certificate

Upon completion of the twelve week Earth Literacy program Genesis Farm will send to the participant a Genesis Farm Earth Literacy Certificate.

Taking the Program for Credit in Affiliation with St. Thomas University

After taking the intensive and the nine seminars of the Genesis Farm Earth Literacy residency program, the student may then complete the requirements for the Saint Thomas University Certificate in *Ecology and the Human Spirit* by conducting a detailed study of its own bioregion. The purpose of the exercise is for the student to discover, usually for the first time, just where it lives.

The Bioregional Study

The assignment is to describe the history and current status of the participant's bioregion including the following aspects:

Geology (starting several hundred million years ago)
Geography
Hydrology (including the source and fate of human-controlled water)
Soil
Climate/weather patterns
Vegetation (native and foreign)
Animal life (native and foreign)
Indigenous people (past and present)
Agriculture
Changes wrought by humans (major environmental issues)

The format for the 20-30 page (single spaced) report is flexible. We encourage photographs, maps and any other creative modes of presentation.

This report should ideally be completed within four months of completing the other modules.

Final Administrative Procedures

Upon receiving the above bioregional report Genesis Farm will submit the participant's grades to Saint Thomas University. We will also send to each student a Genesis Farm Earth Literacy Certificate (non-accredited) and a Saint Thomas University Certificate application form. The applicant fills out this form and sends it to Saint Thomas University, along with a check for \$30, and Saint Thomas University will send back the official Saint Thomas University Certificate in *Ecology and the Human Spirit*.

Not used:

During the second week the primary focus is reinventing our sense of identity and our human institutions out of the primacy of Earth and a bioregional context.

Other Activities

There are also many opportunities for learning through participation in the activities of the region. Whenever possible we schedule such activities during the reflection weeks of the last three modules. Sometimes there are relevant and fun activities scheduled by other organizations. Typically these will be on weekends. In any case the staff and participants will discuss the possibilities together and decide which would be worthwhile.

an entirely new culture which will honor the entire community of life by honoring our intimate relationships with it. ?????? Inventing a new cosmology then involves understanding our evolutionary past and then deriving functional principles from it that are congruent with how Earth actually functions.

Even with advanced science and technology, with superb techniques in manufacturing and commerce, in communications and computers, our secular society remains without satisfactory meaning or the social discipline needed for a life leading to emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual fulfillment.

During the first week of this module participants have the opportunity to read and think about the Earth and bioregion as self-nourishing (agriculture and economics), self-healing (complementary healing, foods), and self-fulfilling (the arts, celebrations and religious expressions), self-governing (earth ethics, animals rights, environmental policies, and land use policies), self-educating (alternatives for public & individual learning: home schooling, Waldorf curriculum), and self-emerging (appropriate technologies: alternative house construction, solar technologies, composting, and others). During the second week each participant will select some subset of the above categories to study in more depth.

This module is primarily designed to present the participants with a broad synthesis of the critical issues facing us today and provide a knowledge base for effective action. There is considerable flexibility in this module so that participants with special interests can choose to focus on particular issues. In this module the participants can explore materials and resources for the next steps in their involvement in these important issues.

For next year.

1.5. Coming Home to the Great Work

The Earth functions as a comprehensive unity but is expressed in highly differentiated bioregions. Each bioregion functions according to its own internal dynamics and capacities. Over the eons humans have evolved within these bioregions developing a vital sense of “place,” a deep relationship that was both the foundation and the subject of their spiritual and physical activities. Through their understanding of the primacy of the bioregion, humans maintained their activities congruent with the larger bioregional activity. In more recent times humans have considered bioregional dynamics as secondary to human activities thereby disturbing and even overwhelming ancient bioregional functioning such as forests, fisheries, and water patterns. Today we are called to rethink our culture within this foundational relationship to our bioregions. All our institutions, our health, legal, agricultural, educational, technological, and economic activities need to be re-invented within a renewed sense of place.