

The Wonder of It All!
The Depth of Our Belonging to an Evolving World

Workshop I: Belonging in a Sacred Way

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*To see a world in a grain of sand,
And heaven in a wildflower,
To hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
and eternity in an hour.*

There is William Blake, a 19th century poet, artist, and mystic, who can express so much of what we experience. We can see the beauty and the mystery in the natural world all around us.

But....I will start with a different kind of experience of Spirit, my earliest.

It was when I was 7 years old - for a Catholic, this signifies the time of life when one is considered old enough to make one's First Communion. The nuns at my parochial school, and even more, my mother, profoundly influenced my feeling of being loved, and being a child of God.

I was a child, with a child's imagination and with unquestioning trust in the guidance of the nuns and my mother. Their guidance was expressive and rich. More than 70 years later, I can still recognize the beauty and power of that ritual. The memory of that feeling of being one with God never left me.

Since then I have had different experiences, though few and far between, of feeling a unity, a wholeness, with all Creation. The strongest came when I was caring for two members of my immediate family. Each had been facing a life crisis. In my taking care of these two, I felt a love like no other. It seems now that this kind of love is a gift, like no other, and reveals how unexpected and unpredictable such occasions may be. And how they seem to be linked to a boundless Spirit.

The world of science around me as I grew into adulthood was pretty much accepting of evolution and psychology. But the fantastic discoveries of the early 20th century were not part of the general discourse. Although we marveled at putting a man on the moon, cosmology and physics were barely known.

So when a group here at Friends Meeting at Cambridge started to study the connection of the life in the Spirit with the discoveries of science, from the writers on the subject in the early 20th century, to the latest books on the evolutionary development of the entire cosmos, I was eager to study with them. Amazement, awe, wonder rose strongly in me. The immensity into the farthest reaches of time/space, and the astounding discovery of the very small, has left me, above all, with a feeling of gratitude that is more visceral and emotional than rational. It is gratitude as grace.

We are all seeking to deepen and strengthen our innermost lives. We see that many of the works and writings of scientists could actually connect us with spiritual understandings of mystics and prophets from long ago and far away. The depth of our belonging is immeasurable.

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Anchored in a tradition that is Christian and coming from Judaism, we recognize the human-divine relation, and the human-human relation. Now see our human-Earth relation. We admit the pain and sickness of our planet, the exploitation and sadness of the physical world we inhabit. We are developing our response.

Science has given us unimaginable insights into the cosmos, and we seek to strengthen our own capacities for insight and for compassion for all life and the natural world that sustains life. We join with other traditions from around the globe, while remaining distinctive. We will go forth in wonder, and with commitment to one another and to the Spirit inhabiting all.