



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Our Time on Earth

By George F. Thompson

Note: This essay is a shortened version of George's introduction, "Behavior Is Belief," that appeared in Tom Young's new book, *Our Time on Earth*, which is available through the service auction.

As we contemplate our time on Earth amid increasing concern about human-induced climate change, it is good to remember that Earth is the human equivalent of a 33-year-old in a universe created around 13.8 billion years ago. And, like a human being, Earth has been ever alive, ever changing, ever evolving since its formation.

Human life has been evolving as well, continuing its march back in time and complexity whenever a team of researchers discovers another artifact, relic, or vestige, another skeleton, skull, or bone from the human past, filling in and slowly piecing together the story of *Homo sapiens* ("wise man" in Latin) on Earth. But even with our rich evolutionary path from our common roots in Africa, it is still humbling to remember that we humans are truly newcomers to Earth, emerging around 23:59:50 on Earth's clock—the last ten seconds of Earth's known history.

Our ancestors, from every land and culture, had no way of knowing the "Big Bang" cosmology as they envisioned their particular creation story and *raison d'être*. And whether their story proclaimed that human beings originated as creatures from the sea or emerged as animals, birds, insects, and reptiles from an underworld or were created by a sky god who

made order out of chaos by creating Heaven and Earth, all creation stories embrace a sense of wonder and awe of Nature, reminding us that we humans are benefactors of the great gift of Life and blessed to be part of an inherently beautiful and interconnected world.

To follow in the footsteps of any creation story is to be mindful and respectful of Nature and our home planet. However one may view the origins of the universe, we humans, simply by our birth, are given the responsibility of caring for and being good stewards of all that has been given to us. Even today, the stories and parables from sacred texts and spiritual traditions remind us to avoid temptation and greed, to heal and improve that part of Earth we call home, to keep our communities healthy and safe for ourselves and for the generations to come.



To desecrate Earth, then, is to disrespect the sacredness of our respective home ground and to defy the unending gift of Nature, of Creation. With such a world view, Earth can resemble a human sanctuary: a "green" ashram,

church, gurdwara, monastery, mosque, pagoda, shrine, stupa, sweat lodge, synagogue, tabernacle, and temple. But Nature, no matter

how one defines or embraces it, is ultimately disinterested in the human story, for Nature is unforgivingly neutral. It cares not what humans do to themselves or to each other or to Earth’s atmosphere, soils, waters, plants, and creatures. Nature does just fine with or without human life or life of any kind. Nature adapts, adjusts, and becomes whatever it becomes based on the physical and chemical properties and conditions that exist.

As we know, the human impact on the planet has become so widespread – and continues at such an alarming rate – that our earthly systems are changing in significant ways, impacting not only human welfare, but ecologies and all forms of life everywhere on land and in the sea. The science is frightening in its clarity.

Given this context of Earth in 2020, as temperatures boil and droughts persist and fires rage and glaciers recede and ice fields melt and hurricanes and cyclones roar and rivers flood and human poverty and inequality surpass the imagination, we need to ask ourselves: How are we doing in this grand bargain with Creation? Have we been good stewards of Earth, the great gift given to us all? Or are we humans running out of time, even as Earth has a long way to go? What would a visitor from another world see upon visiting the shores and hinterlands, homelands and hamlets, towns and cities of Earth?

We Americans – the greatest consumers of Earth’s resources – should take a hard look at the everyday places where we live and work. They will tell us how we are doing. We may see Nature occasionally rub up against the world of human artifice, offering a sense of relief or amazement, but all too commonly the artifacts of human life reveal a messy and chaotic landscape full of contradictions about our place in the

world. So to heal and improve our part of Earth, we need to connect our behavior with our inner beliefs that reflect our inherent duty to care for Earth and each other. Bottom line: Our world view is displayed in what we create and leave behind.

Pumpkin Carving Returns to Chalice House!

By Sarah Skaar

Last week we were able to hold our first in-person RE event since March. Almost 20 people joined in at different socially distant times to carve pumpkins in the Chalice House yard. The tables were spaced six feet apart and all carving tools were individually packaged.

I can remember back to previous pumpkin carvings with all the kids carving on giant tarps spread on the lawn and lots of sharing. Although this was certainly different, it was a nod towards normalcy. We also had many pumpkins leftover that we were able to share with Fellowship members and families who did not feel comfortable carving on the lawn.

Families also participated in inscribing a giant pumpkin with different things they are grateful for. Examples such as friends, family and health

covered the pumpkin.

