Call to Worship: What Song?
by Rev. Victoria Stafford

What if there were a universe that began in shining blackness, out of nothing, out of fire, out of a single, silent breath, and into it came billions and billions of stars, stars beyond imagining, and near one of them a world, a blue-green world so beautiful that learned clergymen could not even speak about it cogently, and brilliant scientists in trying to describe it began to sound like poets. What if there were a universe in which a world was born out of a smallish star, and into that world (at some point) flew red-winged blackbirds, and into it swam sperm whales, and into it came crocuses, and wind to lift the tiniest hairs on naked arms in spring. Into that world came animals and elements and plants, and imagination, the mind and the mind's eye.

If such a world existed and you noticed it, what would you do? What song would come out of your mouth, what prayer, what praises, what sacred offering, what whirling dance, what religion, and what reverential gesture would you make to greet that world, every single day that you were in it?

"In the end the universe can only be explained in terms of celebration. It is all an exuberant expression of existence itself."

-Thomas Berry

“The Hindu religion is the only one of the world's great faiths dedicated to the idea that the Cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite, number of deaths and rebirths. It is the only religion in which time scales correspond, no doubt by accident, to those of modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of Brahma, 8.64 billion years long, longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun and about half the time since the Big Bang."

-Carl Sagan

“This idea of a periodically expanding and contracting universe, which involves a scale of time and space of vast proportions, has arisen not only in modern cosmology, but also in ancient Indian mythology. Experiencing the universe as an organic and rhythmically moving cosmos, the Hindus were able to develop evolutionary cosmologies which come very close to our modern scientific models. One of these cosmologies is based on the Hindu myth of lila—the divine play—in which Brahma transforms himself into the world."

-Fritjof Capra," Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticis,”

“We are all at once both a composition and a composer. We have the ability not only to compose the future of our own lives, but to help compose the future of everyone around us and the communities in which we live."

-Maya Angelou
Morning Poem
by Mary Oliver

Every morning
the world is created.
Under the orange
sticks of the sun
the heaped
ashes of the night
turn into leaves again

and fasten themselves to the high branches—
and the ponds appear
like black cloth
on which are painted islands

of summer lilies.
If it is your nature
to be happy
you will swim away along the soft trails

for hours, your imagination
alighting everywhere.
And if your spirit carries
within it
the thorn
that is heavier than lead—
if it's all you can do
to keep on trudging—

there is still
somewhere deep within you
a beast shouting that the earth
is exactly what is wanted—

each pond with its blazing lilies
is a prayer heard and answered
lavishly,
every morning,

whether or not
you have ever dared to be happy,
whether or not
you have ever dared to pray.

“God is really another artist. He invented the
giraffe, the elephant and the cat. He has no
real style. He just goes on trying other
things.”
-Pablo Picasso

“And among his Signs is the creation of the
heavens and the earth, and the variations in
your languages and your colors; verily in that
are Signs for those who know.”
-The Quran

“There seems in most countries to be either
one extreme or the other. Truly a paradise
could exist wherever material progress and
spiritual values could be properly balanced.”
-Malcolm X (1925-1965),
Autobiography, 1964

“A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the
moment a single man contemplates it,
bearing within him the image of a cathedral.”
-Antoine de Saint Exupery

“Such prosperity as we have known up to the
present is the consequence of rapidly
spending the planet's irreplaceable capital.”
-Aldous Huxley

“Things are only impossible until they're
not.”
-Jean-Luc Picard, Star Trek: The Next
Generation

To make a prairie
by Emily Dickinson

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one
bee—
One clover and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.
The Creation
by James Weldon Johnson

And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said,
"I'm lonely -- I'll make me a world."

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God reached out and took the light in His hands,
And God rolled the light around in His hands
Until He made the sun;
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world; And God said, "That's good!"

Then God himself stepped down—
And the sun was on His right hand,
And the moon was on His left; The stars were clustered about His head,
And the earth was under His feet.
And God walked, and where He trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And He spat out the seven seas;
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed;
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled;
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

(continued on the next page)
Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And He said, "Bring forth! Bring forth!"
And quicker than God could drop His hand.
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that He had made.
He looked at His sun,
And He looked at His moon,
And He looked at His little stars;
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,
(continued on the next page)
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 His own image;

Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.