



ONCE UPON A UNIVERSE

A Story for Our Time

Sixteen years ago the first "Once Upon a Universe" calendar was born. It came from my passion to share with the whole world the wondrous story I was learning of the origin and nature of the Universe, a story which gave credence to things I had felt for years. This Universe Story is a Love Story and love, well, "love changes everything!" And that has been happening to me and to many others as well.

We all have an inborn affinity for the natural world. It lives in our intellects and imaginations, in our genes and emotions, in our connections with the sun and moon, stars and rains, forests and rivers, mountains and animals. We carry in our blood-streams and bones the memories and energies of the whole creation in which we are imbedded.

Over time, our cultural and religious stories have created the illusion that we humans are separate and superior beings. In recent centuries we have manufactured a noisy and fast-paced world devoid of this intimate sense of belonging. The farther we have wandered from our Earth home, the more we have lost our connection with our own souls and the Soul of the World. Our "inventions" have become ever more dangerous to ourselves and to the life of our Planet. This we have come to know.

We who are alive today are being given this Universe Story. We are the first humans able to learn and live within this sacred revelation which gifts us with radical new insight into who

we are, how we came to be, and why we are here. Our story enkindles new hope and wisdom within us.

You hold in your hands a version of this Great Story told in image, word and song. I wanted to tell the story again, with our planetary crisis being more critical and apparent. When Kathy Sherman heard this she said, "Great idea! I'd like to write some new music for it." And Barb Foreman and John Surette said they'd like to work on the research and writing. And so it has happened.

This Calendar (and a companion CD, "Songs of the Universe Story" by Kathy Sherman) is a work of love, the love that each of us and our collaborating artists has for Earth. It is the result of months of imagining, painting, composing, writing, reflection, and re-working. We are grateful for the production labor of the Ministry of the Arts team bringing it to publication, until it now comes to rest in your hands.

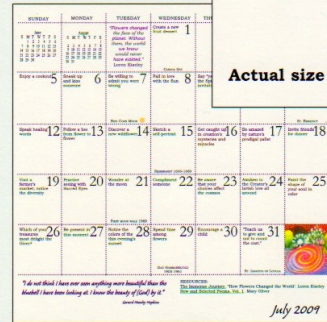
We offer this telling of the Story as a prayer that Earth will be for YOU an ever-more-sacred home, and that YOU will experience the amazing Love which holds you close in this caring Universe. Our hope is that you will "fall in love again" with our beautiful and generous Earth and will want to share this Great Story with those whom you love, with your children and grandchildren, with the whole world!

- Mary Southard

*"We are the first generations to know the Great Story of God's Universe,
a Sacred Story that contains all other stories including our own."* Thomas Berry



July: Mary Southard, CSJ



Get caught up
in creation's
mysteries and
miracles

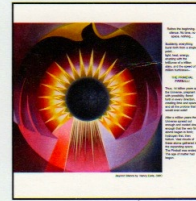
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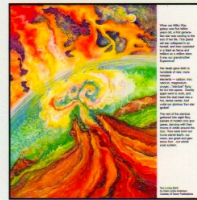
Jan: Mary Southard, CSJ
Universe Story - Our Story



Feb: Nancy Earle, SMIC
Beyond Silence



Mar: Mary Southard, CSJ
Once Upon A Universe



Apr: Dana Lynne Anderson
Sun Loving Earth



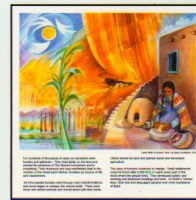
May: Anne Camozzi
Life Emerging



Jun: Mary Southard, CSJ
Cataclysm



Aug: Mary Southard, CSJ
Wonder Awakens



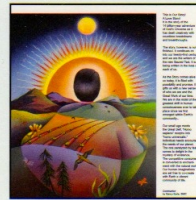
Sep: Mary Southard, CSJ
Earth With a Human Face



Oct: Dana Lynne Anderson
The Rise of Civilization



Nov: Mary Southard, CSJ
Passion of Earth II



Dec: Nancy Earle, SMIC
Communion

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"We are the first humans to look into the night sky and see the birth of stars, the birth of galaxies, the birth of the cosmos as a whole."
(Brian Swimme)

We are the first generations to know the Great Story of God's Universe, a Sacred Story that contains all other stories including our own, the story being told in this Calendar. "Sensitized to this story we can have confidence in the future that awaits our human adventure." (Thomas Berry)

It is no accident that the Story has been given to us at this time of Earth's withering, a time in which humanity is being called to undertake a Great Turning. This Turning requires of us a new consciousness. It requires that we move from being merely individual economic, political and religious people, to becoming a planetary people.

As planetary people, creative participants in our beautiful living EarthCommunity, we will experience the blessing of becoming more fully human.

We pray this calendar will help to bring about this blessing in your soul.

Universe Story - Our Story
by Mary Southard, CSJ



Before the beginning...
silence. No time, no
space, nothing...

Suddenly, everything
burst forth from a single
point...
light, heat, energy,
erupting with the
brilliance of a trillion
stars, and the speed of a
million hurricanes—

THE PRIMEVAL FIREBALL!

Thus, 14 billion years ago
the Universe, pregnant
with possibility, flared
forth in every direction,
creating time and space
and all the protons that
would ever exist!

After a million years the
Universe spread out
enough and cooled down
enough that the very first
atoms began to form;
hydrogen first, then
helium. Vast clouds of
these atoms gathered in
the expanding space.
The Fireball was ended.
The age of matter had
begun.

Beyond Silence by Nancy Earle, SMIC



Once Upon A Universe by Mary Southard, CSJ

Even while the young Universe was expanding, another energy was at work—gravity. It was this power that brought protons and electrons crashing into each other in the Fireball. In time it brought these particles together to form the first atoms. And it is gravity that keeps them dancing. This same energy of attraction formed giant invisible clouds in the blackness of space, clouds oozing with creativity that organized their elements and gave birth to stars—trillions of stars!

Once ignited stars danced with each other and around each

other, forming hundreds of billions of galaxies—circles, spirals, pinwheels, clusters—each astonishing, each beautiful...the Cosmic Dance!

This same energy of attraction exists on every level of being—alluring atoms, cells, ecosystems, and communities of people. It is the energy we call love; it is what shapes our lives, draws us toward what and whom we love, and allures us toward that for which we give our lives. All are invited to the Dance!



When our Milky Way galaxy was five billion years old, a first generation star was coming to the end of her life. This grand old star collapsed in on herself, and then exploded in a blast as fierce and brilliant as a million stars. It was our grandmother Supernova!

Her death gave birth to hundreds of new, more complex elements — carbon, iron, calcium, magnesium, oxygen... "stardust" flung far out into space. Gravity again went to work, and drew the dust back into a hot, dense center. And *voila!* our glorious Sun star ignited!

The rest of the stardust gathered into eight fiery planets of molten rock and gases, dancing with their moons in orbits around the Sun. Thus were born our home planet Earth, our moon, our great and generous Sun...our whole solar system.

Sun Loving Earth
by Dana Lynne Andersen
Courtesy of Dawn Publications



Life Emerging by Anne Camozzi

Each planet circling our Sun is rich in chemical possibilities, but one alone brought forth the miracle of Life, our Earth! Her size and distance from the sun just right, she grew a rocky crust and centuries of cooling rain covered her surface. Tiny life forms emerged and multiplied rapidly and filled the murky waters. Before long their food supplies were running out. Would life survive on planet Earth?

Now our Sun bathes Earth and her children with endless light and love. In the midst of this planetary crisis, some creative cells invented the chlorophyll molecule which enabled them to capture light from the Sun and transform it into energy! With *photosynthesis*, Earth formed a new intimate bond with the Sun and became a living, solar-powered planet whose source of food and free energy continues to be our generous Sun.

For hundreds of millions of years these tiny creatures who had solved the crisis now feasted on the Sun, thus cleaning the waters and adding oxygen to the atmosphere. They prepared Earth for the emergence of ever-more-complex, elegant, biologically diverse forms of life.



Cataclysm by Mary Southard, CSJ

Cataclysm is one of the "powers" of the Universe; that is, the Universe destroys some of its achievements as a necessary condition for new creativity.

The explosive death of our Supernova gave birth to our Solar System. The food crisis of the first life forms precipitated the invention of photosynthesis. The deadly build up of oxygen—the waste product of photosynthesis—brought a new collaboration between "breathers" and "non-breathers" to form nucleated cells. This breakthrough led to ever more complex and diverse life forms inventing shells, brains, backbones, fins, lungs...

Cataclysm uplifted tectonic plates and volcanic eruptions sent rock and lava bursting forth from Earth's fiery core and land began to push up from the ocean floor. Soon plants and animals, as they began to move ashore, evolved new forms and structures: woody cells, legs, wings, arms...

Just 65 million years ago the impact of a giant asteroid ended the long reign of the dinosaurs. In their absence new and radically amazing life forms were able to unfold the bountiful and gorgeous web of life that we enjoy today.



How Flowers Changed the World by Mary Southard, CSJ

Now if the whole life span of the fourteen-billion-year-old Universe were but one year, it was not until the 28th day of December that Earth brought forth flowers! They emerged secretly at first, during the great, green, slow-moving-earth period of the dinosaurs. Afterwards the presence of flowers rapidly changed the face of Earth. Color erupted everywhere in flowering plants and trees, which gave birth to fruits and seeds. These provided rich foods that sparked the

emergence of new species of animals, insects and birds, and the mammals too began their great unfolding. Seeds were carried forth everywhere, on winds, and wings and creatures' furry coats. Thus began the Cenozoic Era, the time of Earth's greatest, most colorful creativity, extravagant beauty, and biological diversity. It is the world we have known, our beautiful Sacred Earth Garden.



Out of this Sacred Garden, this moving, breathing, dancing fabric of life, on the last day of the Universe year, at about 10:30 in the evening, curious new creatures emerged—the first humans!

They looked about, astonished at all they saw and heard. They wondered and explored and listened and learned. They valued the secrets hidden in every plant and rock and tree. They learned the dances and songs of the other creatures.

They shaped their days and years within the rhythms of the land, the seasons, the sun and moon and stars. They moved with the animals lightly across the land and fashioned simple tools.

In music, art and dance, in ritual and celebration, they gave expression to their experience of intimacy with the world around them, and to their ever-growing consciousness.

Wonder Awakens
by Mary Southard, CSJ



Earth With A Human Face by Mary Southard, CSJ

For hundreds of thousands of years our ancestors were hunters and gatherers. They lived lightly on the land and sensed the presence of The Sacred everywhere and in everything. Their reverence and awe manifested itself in the worship of the Great Earth Mother Goddess as Source of life and nourishment.

As time passed humans went through many transformations, and some began to reshape the natural world. There were those who tamed animals and moved about with their herds.

Others tamed the land and planted seeds and developed agriculture.

The ways of humans continued to change. Small settlements could be found after 8,000 BCE in nearly every part of the world where the people lived. They developed pottery and weaving and fashioned dwellings and tools. As Earth's "human face," their arts and languages became ever more expressive of Spirit.



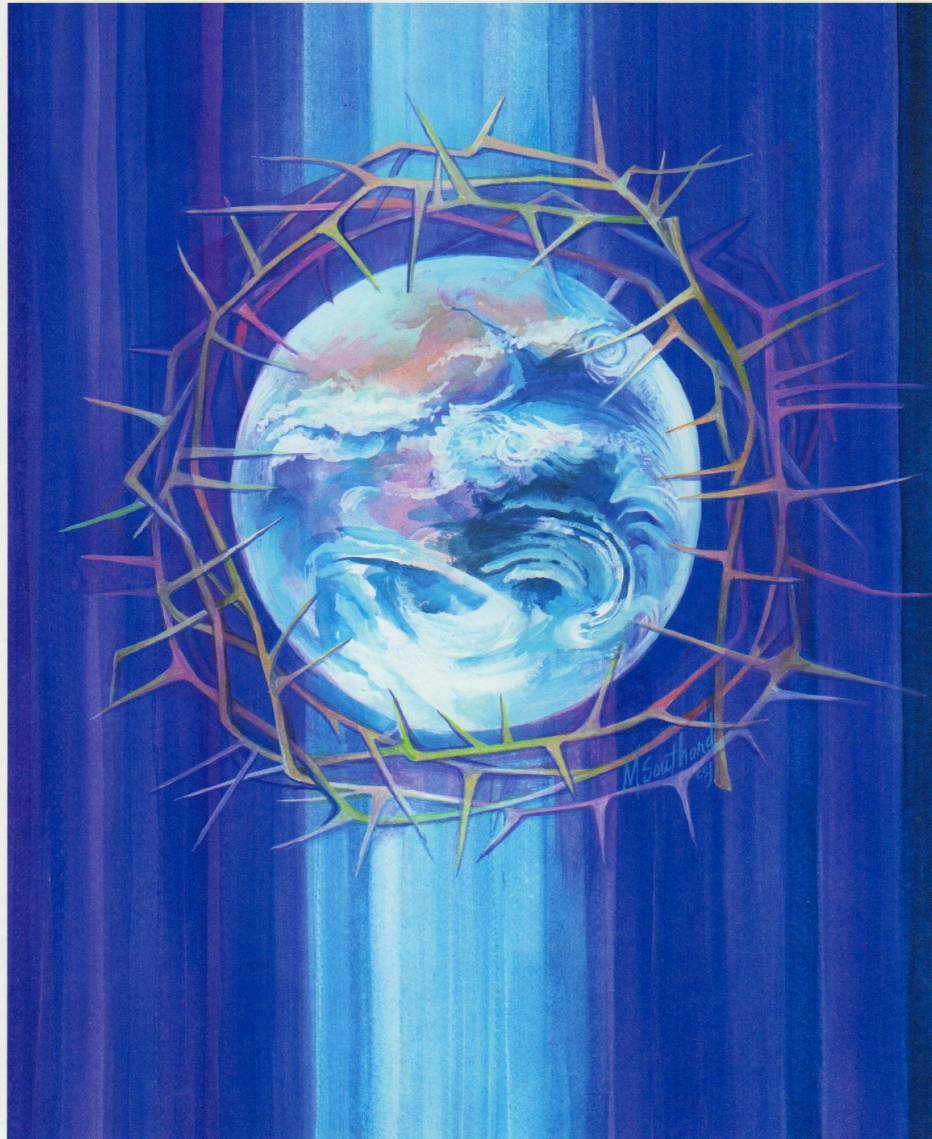
As populations grew, villages became cities, then kingdoms, then empires and dynasties—in the Mid East, the Far East, the Americas, and parts of Africa. At one minute to midnight on the last day of the Universe year (about 2500 BCE), the great religions and civilizations—all of “ancient history”—had only just begun.

Egalitarian societies were replaced by those based on dualism and hierarchy. The many thousands of years of goddess religions were replaced by patriarchy. These “civilizations” were characterized by war, the power of conquest and control, oppression, slavery and colonization.

Into this period, prophets and soul guides emerged, Zoroaster, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Confucius, the Buddha... Just a few seconds before midnight in the Universe year, Jesus the Christ was born.

At one second to midnight, experimental science began in Renaissance Europe. In a mere 300 years, the scientific /industrial /technological phase of human presence has spread ever more rapidly from Europe and North America to every corner of the world.

The Rise of Civilization
by Dana Lynne Andersen
Courtesy of Dawn Publications



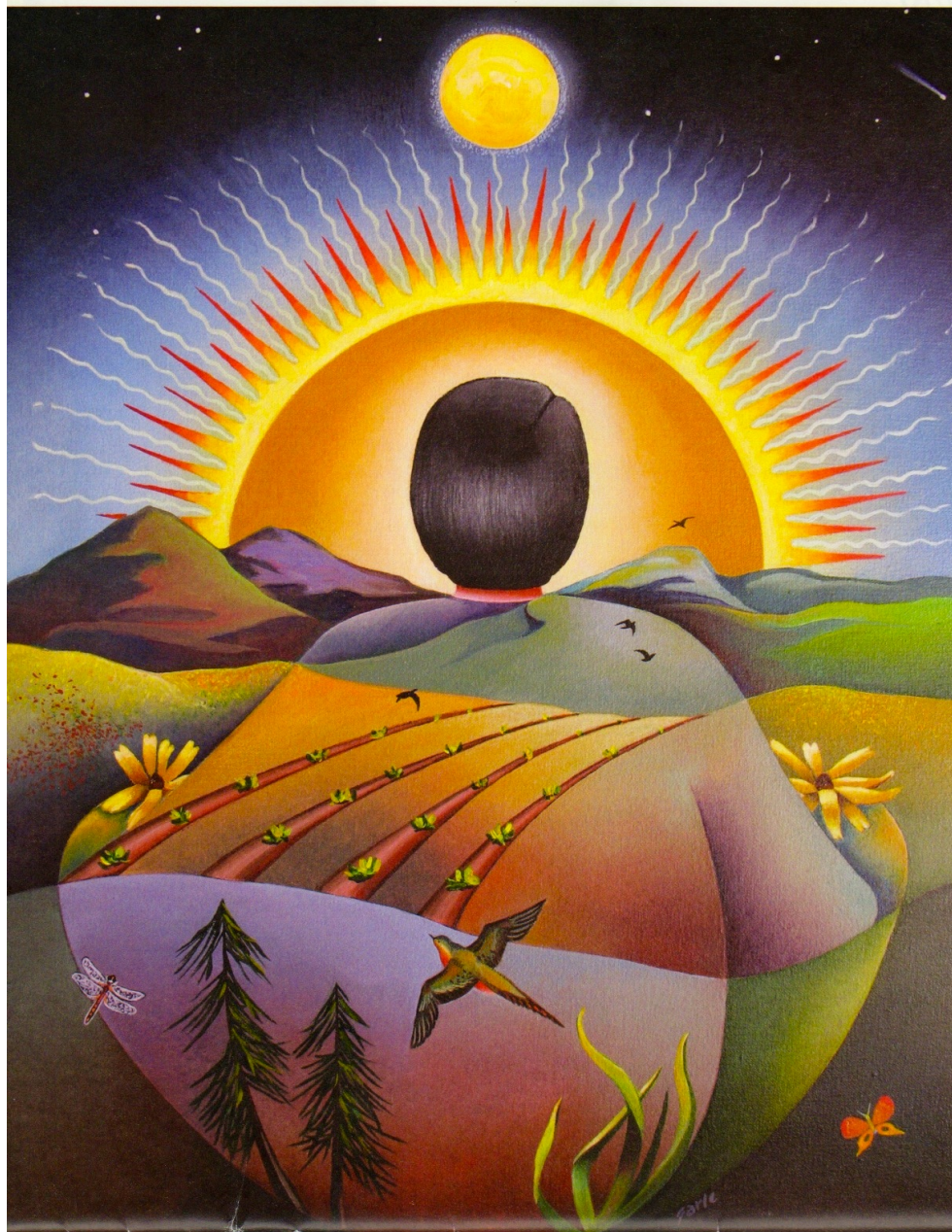
Passion of Earth II by Mary Southard, CSJ

We humans are now realizing the terrible cost of our run-away technologies, our nuclear proliferation, our human-made toxins and waste. Fear, greed and hunger for power have accelerated and magnified our violence toward one another and toward our beautiful, fragile planet. We have now seen Earth from space, a precious jewel, a miracle in the Universe. We behold her one sacred community of life, God's handiwork, the body of the Christ, in terrible agony today. We scarce can take it in!

With global warming, we awaken to an urgent, many-faceted planetary crisis of great magnitude. As we recall Earth's 4.5 billion year "success story," and our own human arrogance that has led us to this point of crisis, we are invited to a new humility. We are reminded of the simple cells who 3.8 billion years ago brought about a global food crisis, but were able to reinvent themselves and create photosynthesis! That was their moment of creative transformation. This is ours.

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future.

Preamble: [The Earth Charter](#)



This is Our Story!
A Love Story!
It is the story of the
14 billion-year adventure
of God's Universe as it
has dealt creatively with
countless breakdowns
and breakthroughs.

The story, however, is not
finished. It continues on
into our twenty-first century,
and we are the writers of
the new Sacred Text. It is
being written in the lives of
each of us.

As the Story comes alive in
us today, it is filled with
possibility and promise. It
gifts us with a new sense
of who we are and the
Great Work of our time.
We are in the midst of the
greatest shift in human
consciousness ever to take
place since we first
emerged within Earth's
community...

Our small ego meets
the Great Self. "Homo
sapiens" morphs into
"homo universalis."
Individual needs encounter
the needs of our planet.
The one paralyzed by fear
comes to delight in the
mystery of existence.
The competitive consumer
is converted to enchant-
ment with the natural world.
Our human imaginations
are set free to co-create
with Earth a vibrant
community of life.

Communion
by Nancy Earle, SMIC