



## The History of the Universe

The Universe has embarked on three great endeavors during which it accomplished monumental great feats on its 14-billion-year journey into complexity-consciousness. During the First Great Endeavor, the Universe focused on **Turning Energy into Matter**. It spent about two billion years *Coalescing Clouds* of gaseous matter. The 2<sup>nd</sup> two-billion-years, saw the emergence of an abundance of *Exploding Stars*. For its Second Great Endeavor, the Universe focused on **Turning Matter into Systems**. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> two-billion-year period, the *Foundational Principles* emerged (differentiation, communion and autopoiesis) that ensured its long-term vitality. During the 4<sup>th</sup> two-billion-year period, *Complex Building Blocks* encompassed an Other World of mystery, care and compassion. Finally, in its Third Great Endeavor, the Universe has been working on **Turning Systems into Consciousness**. The first stage in this task, the 5<sup>th</sup> two-billion years, involved creating a *Life-Giving Platform* with eight planets and a host of other objects around a mid-sized star. In the 6<sup>th</sup> period, particularly on Planet Earth, the Universe *Harnessed Energy* giving it bodily form. Now, in the 7<sup>th</sup> two-billion-year epoch, all citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are helping birth *Embodied Consciousness* with self-reflective capacities...and the future awaits.

From: *Through Three Portals*,  
F. Nelson Stover

# A Global Calendar For the Ecozoic Era

-- *Letting the Sun Tell the Universe's Story*

The following pages outline a framework for a totally new, yet historically based, Universe-referent global celebration calendar. The first sections provide three parallel, introductory contexts. The proposed celebration rationale is described in the Description section. Some practical implications of adopting this schema are discussed in the final section.

## The Cluttered Blackboard

During my university studies, I took an advanced mathematics course from an instructor who did not believe in erasing the blackboard during his lecture presentations. He would begin each period with a clean board and then launch into long theoretical proofs. When he had covered the board with notations, he would go back to the upper left hand corner and begin writing OVER what he had written the first pass. Some hour-long presentations would require three or four layers of writing on the same board. To refer to earlier comments, the professor would often point to a space and indicate that we were to "look at what I wrote the first time over". While this method had some advantages, many of the average students experienced more than normal confusion in following the presentations.

***What if: In learning the phases of the year, one also knew the stages of the Universe's emergence?***

In some ways, the global calendar is becoming like that professor's blackboard. As the various cultures intermix and the different religious and social traditions overlap, celebration is juxtaposed on top of celebration. In countries like Egypt and India where two or three traditions occur in relatively equal strength, a plethora of holidays exists side by side.

## The Eritrean Weekend

The peoples of Eritrea, in eastern Africa, have spent considerable energies in recent decades establishing a national identity among the nine language groups and various religious perspectives of their homeland. One point of disunity arose as to what day each week was to be considered "holy", the day off. The Muslims wanted Friday and the Christian wanted Sunday. Not wanting to increase the friction between the two groups, nor being able to afford a three-day weekend, the nation has decided the Wednesday will be the official "day off". Shops and offices close on Wednesday and people relax and celebrate. No one is offended, anybody who wants to worship is free to do so when they wish and irrespective of cultural heritage, everybody is reminded of their unity on Wednesday.

## The Ecozoic Transition

Many people understand that the Universe is entering a new phase of its journey; on Earth, this change equals the magnitude of the changing of an era. The Planet Earth finds itself in the transition between the terminal years of the Cenozoic Era and the beginning of what Thomas Berry calls the “Ecozoic Era”. For the human species, the scope of the changes in understanding, behaviour patterns and interior resources required during this transition compare only to those last experienced during the transition from forest wanderers to settled agriculturalists. One manifestation of this change will lie in the human understanding of time; specifically, how it is marked. As consciousness dawned within the human species, the lunar cycles gave a sense of the cyclical rhythms of life. Most significant events could be marked by the waxing and waning of the moon and the rising and setting of the sun. Huge amounts of social energy were expended in changing the celebration calendar from a collection of moon festivals to a solar year commensurate with the agricultural cycles, adaptable to the non-tropic climates and indicative of significant historical occasions. The proposed Global Calendar for the Ecozoic Era provides a consistent division of the Earth’s 365-day journey around the Sun. The divisions of the year serve as reminders of the unending developmental process of the Universe itself. Residents of each bioregion might allow their area’s own particular flora and fauna to symbolize the individual stages of the year’s progress.

### Description of A New Way to Divide-up the Year

The 52-week, 12-month calendar generally in use today has its most recent origins in the Romanic world from which the "Western tradition" emerged. It represents a composite of recommendations for marking time ranging from Julius Caesar’s desire to have a month named after himself to Pope Gregory's encyclical detailing the handling of leap years. Other calendar schemes have been devised including ones having 72 5-day weeks or 28-day months that follow the lunar pattern.

The accompanying diagram depicts a solar-year calendar having 50 7-day weeks. These are grouped into 10 equal segments called Decuples – thus producing a decimal calendar in line with the growing trend for "going metric". Each Decuple is represented by a pentagon. A Great Day of Celebration occurs at the end of each 5-week period. At the end of the entire annual cycle, located in the center of the diagram, are five additional celebration days to mark the completion of the year. The concluding five-days of celebration are represented by a star, constructed from the extensions of a pentagon. On leap-years the extra day will appear inside the star – a day of high celebration. The Decuples are named after the billion-year phases of the Universe so that in learning the phases of the year, one also knows the phases of the Universe. The celebrative days at the end of each Decuple are designed to commemorate the various aspects of both manifested and transparent reality so that during each year the significance of each dimension of life is rehearsed. These celebration days are represented by diamonds on the calendar.

The names of the month, each a single word, represents a 1-billion-year phase of the Universe's growth, together they tell the story of the 14-billion-year history of the Universe. While many authors, including Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme in *Universe Story*, have gone to great lengths to relate the story of the journey that brought about the present, the words provide a simple framework to remember the complicated process.

*Flaring* – All the energy that would ever exist in the entire course of time erupted in a Primal Flaring Forth.

*Hydrogen* – During the first billion years, hydrogen atoms formed bonded relationships that allowed light to pass through them without destroying them.

*Clouds* – Great clouds of hydrogen and helium gases formed swept together by ripples of energy flowing through the expanding spaces.

*Stars* – Drawn together by their mutual attraction, hydrogen and helium atoms coalesced until the friction of their interactions ignited into diamonds of light in a sea of darkness.

*Supernova* – After nearly 4 billion years, some stars grew so massive they imploded in a violent collapse that scattered new elements throughout the surrounding space.

*Principles* – In the process of turning energy into matter, the Universe had developed basic principles of growth that included: Resistance, Energy and Dreams.

*Metals* – Stars born from the remnants of previous supernova achieved even higher temperatures and forged metals and molecules of increasing complexity.

*Galaxies* – Galaxies collided with other galaxies; spiral galaxies continued to birth new stars while elliptical galaxies lost their creative capacities.

*Carbon* – Among the elements, carbon has special powers of dynamically relating to other atoms; it might be called the “thinking element”.

*Tiamat* – named after the mythical creature whose body was divided into Heaven and Earth, this star became a supernova 6 billion years ago.

*Sun* – in the swirling disk of debris from Tiamat the Sun was born, some of the residue eventually became the planets, moons, comets and asteroids we call our Solar System.

*Life* – Earth took complexity to the extreme limit of inanimate forms; then in a searing lightening flash the Universe witnessed the emergence of a novel event – a living cell.

*Photosynthesis* – Some cells mutated to create a molecular net with the power to capture photons in flight and convert their energy into food.

*Breathing* – after a billion years of oxygen being released from photosynthesis, some bacterium invented respiration to acquire their power from combustion.

*Multi-celled* – only in the last billion years of the Universe's march to magnificence have multi-celled creatures emerged; birds, flowers, hawks and humans express the wonders of the Universe on Planet Earth.

The geometric structure of this calendar draws on centuries of design wisdom. Using pentagons and circles, the form unites the countable and the uncountable, the rational and the irrational in ways known to express the deepest structural elements of the Universe itself. Creating the calendar gives visible manifestation to one,  $\square$  and  $\Phi$  and their multiples.

## Preliminary Suggestions for What to Celebrate When

The ten celebrations which mark the end of the individual Decuples focus on the three aspects of each of the Exterior Manifestations, the Social Processes and the Interior Disciplines that characterize every element of the Universe. The tenth celebration acknowledges the oneness in the midst of the diversity. The five celebration days at the conclusion of the year, focus on the transparent reality that perpetually lies in the midst of the manifested reality. The year ends during the period of the shortest days and the mid-point of the year lies on the longest day.

Practically, the celebrations might have the following foci:

*Celebrating Sustainable Living:* During the period of the year while much of the natural world rests, the celebrations focus on the social dimension that sustains the human species. Celebrations of Sustainable Living emphasize the simple pleasures and appreciation for handiwork and the built environment. The Ecozoic Era begins with an understanding that a sustainable and revitalizing economy is replacing an extractive economy of previous generations. [Jan. 28]

*Celebrating Significant Journeys:* Art and drama give public form to the intangible dynamics that accompany conscious growth and development. Celebrations of Significant Journeys focus both on the individual transformations and the social decisions that have been influential in shaping the present. [March 5]

*Celebrating Mutual Enhancement:* The celebration following the Spring Equinox will be dedicated to Celebrating Mutual Enhancement. As the rains nurture the plants and vitality returns to trees and grasses, the celebrations of this period focus on the structures that nourish humanity and all other species. National, local and regional institutions play vital roles in insuring long-term, mutually enhancing relationships among the human species and Planet Earth. [April 10]

*Celebrating Creative Activity:* The three celebrations during the warm and vital months focus on appreciating the exterior manifestations of the diverse Planet. Living creatures stand in awe of the ability of life to propagate life. In the world of nature, new life emerges in a multitude of fashions but most overwhelmingly with the coming of the spring or monsoon rains. Within self-conscious creatures, the journey through time brings new phases of existence that are experienced like the birthing of a new creature. When the new comes, the old forms must pass away; thus, birth and death become united in the Celebration of Creative Activity. [May 16]

*Celebrating Spacious Beauty:* On Planet Earth, and throughout the cosmos, entities take on forms each portraying their own kind of beauty. From molecules to molluscs from spiders to supernova, stuff takes shape. On the longest day of the year – when the light illumines the landscape for more time than on any other day – the beauty of each moment, movement and manifestation can be self-consciously appreciated. [On the Summer Solstice – June 21]

*Celebrating Unbridled Wildness:* The long summer days foster growth and development in a plethora of forms. Hot nights and warm days allow round-the-clock vitality. Celebrations of Unbridled Wildness acknowledge that the existing structures may always require breaking down and revitalizing. [July 27]

*Celebrating Understanding Interrelatedness:* The next three celebrations of the annual cycle focus on the Interior Disciplines that invigorate and enliven manifested reality. Celebrations of understanding interrelatedness bring to consciousness the inter-connections among seemingly diverse elements. [Sept. 1]

*Celebrating Illusive Presence:* The celebration preceding the Autumnal solstice will be dedicated to Celebrating Illusive Presence. No life is complete without the experience of death. Each individual and community knows the feeling of the loss of a loved one or a relative and in so doing realizes the coming of their own death. Societies have, each in their own ways, sought ways to commemorate the living and dying of all of those who have gone before and in so doing give significance to the final act of each individual's life. The powers of late summer storms symbolize the fear and fascination of the movement of the profound presence in time. [Oct. 7]

*Celebrating Transformative Action:* The changing of the seasons express the continual changing of the Universe itself. In any era, some remnants carry on, some pass away and others take on transformed states. In Celebrating Transformative Action both the completed past and the anticipated future are celebrated simultaneously. [Nov. 12]

*Celebrating Primal Oneness:* The 10<sup>th</sup> Decuple ends with events acknowledging the Primal Oneness of reality itself. In the darkness, light hides; in the coldness, warmth awaits. Each of the previous celebrations holds within it a part of all the others, and the Celebration of Primal Oneness holds within it elements of all the previous celebrations. [Dec. 24]

The five celebrations that span the interlude between the last and the first decuples, that occur in the darkest of days, provide a time to bring to self-consciousness the four transparent aspects of profound living – awareness of mystery in life, the journey of consciousness, the experience of care and the sense of tranquillity – as well as the awe that comes from living fully in the world and consciously aware of living in the world. These may represent more recent developments

within the global family and long historical precedence for these celebrations do not immediately arise. Thus, considerable creativity might emerge as these celebrations evolve.

### Practical Implications

As an excuse to start a new calendar, suppose we globally acknowledged the Harmonic Convergence that occurred in August of 1988. Many groups used this event to call attention to the one-ness of our global civilization. We could start the new calendar on the solstice which followed the most recent harmonic convergence, thus making the beginning of the UNESCO decade of culture virtually simultaneous with the beginning of the new calendar system. We could now say that we were living in the years Post Harmonic Convergence (p.h.c.).

Groups and individuals could begin living in the new calendar simply by deciding to try out the new celebrations and to set aside the old ones. The Celebration of Spacious Beauty will be held on the actual Summer Solstice (June 21); therefore, the Celebration of Primal Oneness will be held 180 days earlier (December 18), and the Winter Solstice will occur in the middle of the five days celebrating the transparent aspects.

People living in the Southern Hemisphere may want to consider adjusting what is celebrated when to allow for the reversal of the solar solstices. The dates of the celebration periods could remain the same but the subject could be modified; for example, the Celebration of Primal Oneness might occur on day 181, etc.

Considerable further action-research must be conducted to implement this calendar system. A first helpful step could involve people in various cultures and bio-regions describing the celebrations which people in their area currently acknowledge and the natural patterns of weather that determine the rhythms of life. Then a series of reflections could occur through which the deeper understandings conveyed by the celebrations would be discerned and related to the schema proposed above. Finally, the new celebrative practices might begin to emerge on a global scale.

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Brussels, Belgium – May 1988 (a.d.)

Revised: Greensboro, NC – January 2003 (a.d.)

Updated: Greensboro, NC – December 2013 and March 2017 (a.d.)

[These themes were originally published in Edges Magazine in 1989;  
they have been revised for implementation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.]