

After Journey Reflection

- What thoughts or prayers rise up in you upon completing the journey?
- Which phase of evolution touched you the most?
- Which phase surprised you?
- What concerns do you have for our present era or eon?
- Describe God, the Creator

Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat



The Cosmic Walk

Walking the Universe Path



Walk the trails of The Prairie focusing on the path that Creation has taken since the beginning of time. Begin your journey near the statue of St Joseph, the Journeyer and spend time with the story of nature's evolution.

Through the creative energy of Matthew Townsley, his mentors and fellow scouts, the Universe Story takes shape along the nature trails at The Prairie. The twenty-two stone markers tell creation's story from the book of Genesis expanded with the insights of science. We now know that creation has taken 13.7 billion years to bring us to today.

Marvel at each site and note the approximate distance between markers. Revel in the intricacy and purposeful evolution that has taken place over eons and still continues today. Notice how human beings through science, technology, music, workmanship, prayer and community have continued the creative process begun by the Creator. Feel a part of the sacred community of all life. Imagine the next evolutionary process. Allow your image of God to expand as the story continues to unfold. Pray in gratitude for God's creative energy.

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Scout Matthew Townsley

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“Produced by Nature, Refined by Weber”
12791 Stone City Rd, County Road X28
Anamosa IA 52205

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100 years ago	Albert Einstein profoundly alters our understanding of space, time, motion, matter and energy
1929	Edwin Hubble concludes that the Universe is expanding
1945	The Atomic Bomb was Dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
1953	The double helix structure of DNA is discovered
1950	Tielhard de Chardin, SJ, presents evolution as spiritual, uplifting and congruent to Christian Faith
1930s-1960s	Scientific thinkers and writers discover and publish studies on the evolving Universe
1962	The environmental movement begins when Rachel Carson exposes the effects of pesticides, Silent Spring
1965	Humans walk on the Moon and see Earth whole for the first time
1990+	The Hubble Space Telescope stuns our world with the beauty of the Universe—seeing the birth of stars
	Geologist/prophet Thomas Berry, CP and scientist Brian Swimme publish The Universe Story—the human story and the cosmic story are inseparable
	Cosmic prophets (theologians, scientists, mystics) continue to move us into the Ecozoic Era as a single, sacred community
	All of creation is connected to the sacred and seamless web of Life—Each of us a part of the Great Work of Earth’s unfolding
Today	Creator God, we thank you for all you have given us!

7,500 years ago	Abraham left Ur in Chaldee
5,000 years ago	Megalithic stone structures appear in Europe; male images of the divine appear; chronic warfare begins
3,500 years ago	Great civilizations began—Classical religions, alphabets and writing develop
3,200 years ago	Exodus of Israel from Egypt
3000/2000 years ago	Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity—hold in common the Golden Rule
2500 years ago	The wisdom of Greek scholars—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—enlightens the human mind
2000 years ago	Jesus, Light of the World, is born; Christianity begins
1500 years ago	Monasticism flourishes... St. Benedict, nature mystic, brings a reverence for the natural world
800 years ago	St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi found religious orders of men and women
800/600 years ago	Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich and Meister Eckhart— influential Christian mystics and writers continue to challenge our contemporary worldview
600/400 years ago	Renaissance – humanism, individualism—declining sense of the Divine presence in nature
450 years ago	St. Ignatius and the beginning of the Jesuit Order
400/300 years ago	Scientific Enlightenment— Copernicus, Galileo, Newton challenge long-held beliefs of Earth and Universe
300/150 years ago	Scientists study Earth's age, landforms, the evolution and extinction of plants and animals

Beginning of the Journey Prayer

Great Sea of Being in which we live and move, in reverence we raise our minds to you, minds that are conscious and memory-rich with the long history of your indefinable goodness, your mysterious choice of us individually for human life, and all the immeasurable blessings you have heaped upon us, manufacturing long ago, somewhere among the stars, the carbon and nitrogen atoms that make up our very bodies. You and Earth are the universal womb that nurtures all that is, the unconditional love we depend on, our spirit-matrix, the comforting arms that embrace us always, and the steady hum of your mysterious care. We give You thanks.

[Adapted from *Prayers to an Evolutionary God*, William Cleary, 2004]



13.7 billion years ago	The Universe flares forth out of Ultimate Mystery and comes into being. God creates the Universe¹
13.3 billion years ago	First stars form
12.7 billion years ago	First galaxies form
5 billion years ago	Earth and its Solar System began
4.3 billion years ago	Our Moon lights up the night sky
4 billion years ago	Earth awakens into life-oceans
3.9 billion years ago	Photosynthesis captures light; microbes for nourishment-oxygen is released
3.5 billion years ago	Life emerges as ocean bacteria
2 billion years ago	Oxygen formed in Earth's atmosphere. Single-celled life breathes oxygen Ozone layer is formed
1 billion years ago	Simple cells join with each other for survival and development; Earth beings began to reproduce sexually
800 million years ago	Multicellular life begins to form —eco-systems emerge, creativity abounds
600 million years ago	Nervous systems and sight evolve; Earth sees herself for the first time
520 million years ago	Fish forms emerge with backbones and protective nervous systems
420 million years ago	First land plants emerge; Water life moves onto the land
360 million years ago	First insects appear, continue to evolve and gradually take flight
300 million years ago	Coal deposits form; extensive forests and amphibians evolve
235 million years ago	Reptiles evolve from amphibians; dinosaurs thrive

	on Earth for 160 million years
220 million years ago	The first mammals emerge; maternal nurturing begins
210 million years ago	Land mass breaks into continents; mountains and oceans are formed
180 million years ago	First birds take flight; Earth breaks into song
130 million years ago	Appearance of the first flowers which cover Earth with seeds; food, color and scents
65 million years ago	Cataclysmic crisis— extinction of the dinosaurs; Cenozoic era begins—a most creative garden of Eden
40 million years ago	The order of all mammals is complete –whales, rhinoceros, elephants...
3 million years ago	Last of Ice Ages began
2.6 million years ago	Earliest human species emerge. Earth awakens into consciousness, stone tools—hunting begins
1.5million years ago	Early humans control fire
200,000 years ago	Homo sapiens appear, first anatomically modern humans appear on Earth in Africa
100,000 years ago	Earliest language begins to form in Africa
40,000 years ago	Feminine images of the divine appear. Ancient ritual and religious ceremony develop
32,000 years ago	First musical instruments were made. Art, music and ritual become integrated with human life
10,000 years ago	Humans begin to shape the environment, develop agriculture and domesticate animals. Human settlements are present in Asia and the Americas

¹ **Bold entries are on the stone markers along the path.**