

THIS IS AN OLD DOC M FOUND ON HIS COMPUTER in 2010 TO ARCHIVE HERE:

July 2026 Connie recalls this would be the grant application to Templeton Foundation we wrote Fall 2001 soon after our sudden decision to hit the road as Evolutionary Evangelists several weeks after Sept 11, 2001 experience

Sharing the Great News of the Great Story and Fostering the Great Work

Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow To Become Turtles!

Our Vision

We are about to set off on a new phase of our married life, as turtles traversing Turtle Island. We will be shedding and storing possessions and saying goodbye to the Hudson River Bioregion, as we become at-large inhabitants of North America. A modest RV will be our home, as we hit the road to share the Great News of the Great Story of the unfolding cosmos, and to help others find their callings in the Great Work of ensuring a just, healthy, beautiful, and sustainably life-giving world for future generations of all species. Full-time turtling may begin as early as September 2002. In the meantime, we'll focus on opportunities in the northeastern states.

Our mission:

- to share the Great Story (also known as the Universe story or epic of evolution) with those who have never heard it before, or who have not yet fully experienced its magnificence.
- to continue work on long-term projects that we initiated in 2000, the fruits of which we will post on a website and publish in a series of softcover books: (1) recording and transcribing personal testimonials of how the Great Story has made a difference in people's lives, and (2) inviting scientists, religionists, and story enthusiasts to write "evolutionary parables" that celebrate major events or themes in the Great Story and that convey values crucial for these times.
- to personally meet and network with fellow activists in the Great Story movement.
- to initiate and support Global Action Plan's Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign EcoTeam and Livable Neighborhood programs in cities and counties all over America.
- to bond with our continent and its peoples, to teach the North American story wherever we go, and to identify and visit what could be called "Sacred Sites of the Great Story" – natural and cultural features that showcase particular moments in the evolutionary journey or that are home to elder species in the epic story of life. (A long-term goal is to publish a multi-author book that features actual pilgrimages to these sacred sites.)

We view ourselves as messengers of hope and possibility, advancing the insights of those at the growing edge of scientific, spiritual, social, and ecological wisdom: cultural historian and geologist Thomas Berry, cosmologist Brian Swimme, philosopher Ken Wilber, empowerment trainer and social architect David Gershon, deep ecologists Joanna Macy, John Seed, and David Abram, creation spirituality catalyst Matthew Fox, geographer Tim Flannery, paleoecologist Paul Martin, computer scientist and visionary Joel de Rosnay, physicist Peter Russell, conservation biologists Michael Soulé and Reed Noss, wildlands proponents Terry Tempest Williams and Dave Foreman, evolutionary scientists E. O. Wilson, Lynn Margulis, and Elisabet Sahtouris, bioregionalists Peter Berg, Scott Russell Sanders, Richard Nelson, and Gene Marshall, theologians John Cobb, Sallie McFague, Phil Hefner, and John Haught, religious naturalists Ursula Goodenough and Loyal Rue, historian Michael Schacker, architect of economies Paul Hawken, permaculture designer Bill Mollison, cultural therapists Brad Blanton and Susan Campbell, and many others. It is our calling to integrate and build upon the work of these mentors and to offer bold and fresh insights of our own.

We anticipate broad and enthusiastic interest in what we have to share, and will shape our presentations to match the needs and respect the values of each audience we address. Our seminars, sermons, workshops, and ritual celebrations will appeal to groups and institutions ranging from mainline Protestant and Catholic, to Evangelical and Pentecostal, to Unitarian and humanist, and to those grounded in deep ecology, bioregionalism, environmental activism, and creation spirituality. We are also committed to reaching young adults by way of campus ministries, science departments, and environmental studies programs in secular and religious colleges, universities, and seminaries. Storytelling to children and teachers in Montessori, Waldorf, and other schools is a possibility, too. We aim to cluster speaking engagements regionally to minimize travel time, cost, and energy consumption. Small audiences in rural communities are just as important to our mission as are large audiences in big cities.

We will communicate in ways that help people personally experience the Great Story as Great News. We find that when this happens, many in turn feel an urge to create and embark on their own paths for making a difference in the world - for joining in the Great Work. We are thus also committed to fostering study and support groups, and story-sharing circles, wherever we go and to sharing best practices that we encounter while on the road.

We are further committed to providing tools – print, audio, video – that can keep the message alive after we depart. Along the way we will be generating more tapes and videos, sharing new ideas as handouts and simple pamphlets, and continuing to post on a website and self-publish collections of evolutionary parables, testimonials, and experiential practices and rituals that we and others develop.

We look forward to breaking bread and swapping stories with people in all regions, and to receiving the hospitality of those who open their homes to us. By inviting regional artists and activists to present along with us, and collectively telling the Great Story as Great News in such a way that it fosters Great Work, we shall, together, catalyze a Great Awakening and leave a Great Legacy.

Why Are We Proclaiming This Message?

We believe that each person's spiritual and religious commitments and overall view of life make a difference in the world. In our experience, when people are offered a more expansive and relevant way of seeing - a worldview that honors and embraces their deepest values and beliefs, yet also interweaves the new perspectives our times cry out for - they are grateful for the synthesis and experience it as "great news." Also, if given an opportunity to commit to a grand purpose, especially in the company of others, many will eagerly respond. In doing so, they often experience a freedom and an enlivening not unlike that of a mystical encounter or religious conversion. The message we bring, which builds upon the ideas of many of today's visionaries, is inclusive, empowering, and healing – for individuals, for communities, and for the human-Earth relationship. We believe this message has the potential to transform all levels of society toward ends that we ourselves can only begin to grasp, but that Earth itself - the entire life community - is calling forth.

Why Become Turtles?

History has shown that social and spiritual movements are often catalyzed or significantly furthered by itinerant preachers, teachers, and storytellers - those who have the vision, passion, and energy to travel from town to town, congregation to congregation, university to university, speaking straight to the hearts of people from all walks of life. There is power in the spoken word delivered passionately in person. This truth is especially pertinent in our time, when so many of us are shut down by the overwhelm of bad

news, the deluge of disconnected facts, and the outright trivia that assails us by way of television, the internet, and print. People are

hungering for empowering tools, dynamic and heartfelt presentations, and the opportunity to partake of both in the energizing company of peers. It is thus our intent to build on the deep American traditions of teaching, storytelling, and preaching, interpreting widely accepted scientific and social knowledge in inclusive ways that foster faith, hope, love, and a deep and abiding commitment to the future.

Why Us?

Both Connie and Michael are recognized leaders, regularly invited speakers, and valued networkers in the Great Story movement. Connie's 1997 book, *Green Space Green Time: The Way of Science*, surveys the movement's birth and shows how the evolutionary sciences can support a greening of religious faith and spirituality. She was a founding member and organizer of the Epic of Evolution Society, and was volunteer editor of its newsletter for the first three years. She is also a board member of the American Teilhard Association. Michael is a well-known and beloved Great Story teller. His 1991 book, *EarthSpirit: A Handbook for Nurturing an Ecological Christianity*, was the first major work to popularize the epic of evolution for Christians, and to look appreciatively at the core tenets of Christianity from the perspective of the new cosmology.

Connie and Michael not only teach and preach the marriage of science and religion; they embody it. Connie comes from a scientific worldview and has spent the last dozen years writing and editing popular science books and articles that explore the intersection of evolution and meaning. She embraces a nontheistic religious naturalism in the tradition of Julian Huxley, Loren Eiseley, and Aldo Leopold, and writes for and speaks to Unitarian Universalist groups. She has presented at major science museums and botanical gardens, university science and environmental studies departments, and special programs in creative writing and deep ecology. Michael grew up Roman Catholic and had a born-again experience as a young man. He then trained for and practiced Christian ministry, eagerly studying evolutionary science and cosmology on the side. His evangelical/pentecostal zeal now celebrates an expanded understanding of God and the Universe that is wholly compatible with a scientific outlook. And his work with David Gershon and Global Action Plan over the last four years has helped him become a world-class trainer in community empowerment. A charismatic teacher, preacher, and storyteller, as well as a consensus facilitator, Michael is at home in both liberal and conservative religious settings. He also enjoys delivering secular, science-based talks and facilitating group discussion among those of differing backgrounds and perspectives.

Why Now?

America is on the verge of a truly significant and widespread religious and cultural transformation. We believe that the connections we make, the message we bring and how we share it, and the hope, enthusiasm, and support structures we leave in our wake, will all serve this emergent evolutionary process.

12-14-01

CONNIE BARLOW

Connie Barlow is one of the organizational leaders in the epic of evolution movement, a contributing editor for evolutionary parables to *EarthLight* magazine, and a correspondent for *Wild Earth* journal. A popular science writer, her books explore the intersection of evolutionary and ecological sciences with philosophy and religion. Her major works are *The Ghosts of Evolution* (Basic Books, 2001); *Green Space, Green Time: The Way of Science* (Copernicus Books, 1997); *Evolution Extended: Biological Debates on the Meaning of Life* (MIT Press, 1994); and *From Gaia to Selfish Genes: Selected Writings in the Life Sciences* (MIT Press, 1991). Her writings have also appeared in *Wild Earth*, *Natural History*, *UU World*, *The Humanist*, *EarthLight*, *Teilhard Perspective*, and several technical journals. For three years she was senior manuscript editor (copy, line, and developmental) of technical and general biology books for Columbia University Press. Connie has given interviews on nationally syndicated radio programs, including a classic deep ecology series. A warm and unpretentious speaker, Connie enjoys crafting presentations that include color slides, botanical props, and a lot of spontaneity and audience involvement. She also enjoys creating and leading rituals and chants that playfully draw upon the deep meaning of the evolutionary and ecological sciences for adults and for children. Connie's great joy is exploring and sharing ways in which an understanding of science can enhance our communion with the natural world and with one another.

MICHAEL DOWD

Rev. Michael Dowd is a community organizer, sacred storyteller, and charismatic, modern-day prophet of the heart. Currently campaign manager of Global Action Plan's Livable Neighborhood Program and Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign in Rockland County, New York, Michael has pastored churches in Massachusetts, Ohio, and Michigan, and has worked with Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical leaders across the country on religious and environmental issues. He graduated summa cum laude both from Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri, and from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he earned his Master of Divinity degree. A well-known preacher and teacher on the sacred and psychological implications of a science-based cosmology, and a regular faculty member at the New York Open Center, Michael has addressed over a hundred secular and religious groups throughout the past two decades. He has served on the board of directors of the Hudson Valley Sustainable Communities Network (HVSCN), the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (NACCE), and the Ohio Conference United Church of Christ Integrity of Creation, Justice, and Peace task force. He has also served on the steering committee of the International Network of Biblical Storytellers (NOBS). He is the author of *EarthSpirit: A Handbook for Nurturing an Ecological Christianity* and the forthcoming, with his wife Connie, *Dancing in the Dragon's Jaws: The Transforming Power of The Great Story*. Michael's great joy is inspiring faith and trust in Reality and empowering people to follow the path where *their* great joy and the world's great need intersect.

12-14-01

The Great Story, The Great News, The Great Work

Presentations, Workshops, and Retreats On the Marriage of Science and Religion for Planetary Wellbeing

The Great Story

The Great Story is the story that honors and includes all other stories. Drawing upon the discoveries of the full range of sciences, it is the grand story of the cosmos, Earth, life, and humanity. Told in meaningful and dramatic ways, it becomes our collective sacred story - a shared story that cherishes and uplifts sacred stories throughout the world and offers each of us the opportunity to find meaning and purpose in our lives and our time in history.

- 1. THE GREAT STORY (Michael)

The 13 billion year story of the Universe reveals a cosmos of nested creativity, a body of stories within stories within stories. The Great Story, also known as the epic of evolution, includes the cosmic story, Earth's story, the story of the North American continent, bioregional stories, cultural and religious stories, and our own personal stories. As renowned Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson has written, "The evolutionary epic is probably the best religious myth we will ever have." Dramatic, incomprehensibly grand, inspiring, brimming with emergent and breathtaking novelty, this time-developmental story can be told in ways that evoke deep gratitude and trust in the creative forces that envelop and work within us all. The spiritual and psychological benefits that flow naturally from living within an awareness of this story are experienced as Great News by a growing number of people the world over and draw each of us to participate in, what celebrated cultural historian and geologist Thomas Berry calls, "The Great Work" - the work of ensuring a just, healthy, beautiful, and sustainably life-giving world for future generations of all species.

- 2. OUR COSMIC CREATION STORY: A Meaningful Celebration of Time (Michael and Connie)

Throughout the world, the "Cosmic Walk" (originated by Sr. Miriam MacGillis) has become the experiential foundation of a science-based perspective that honors nature and celebrates the human role in the Universe story. This is a participatory program and sacred ritual grounded in mainstream evolutionary science. It has been enthusiastically received by religious and secular groups alike, is appropriate for all ages, and can be done either as a half-hour worship service or as part of a longer workshop or retreat that includes:

- The Scientific and Historical Roots of the Epic of Evolution
- Psychological and Spiritual Ramifications of The Great Story
- The Meaning of a Common Creation Story for World Religions

- 3. THE GREAT JOURNEY: A Co-Created Ritual (Connie and Michael)

This 2-hour variation of the Cosmic Walk offers participants the opportunity to co-create, in word and action, a tribute to the major moments of transformation in the journey of the cosmos, life, and humanity.

- 4. OUR NORTH AMERICAN STORY: From T. Rex to Today (Connie)

Thomas Berry has urged us not only to learn the Universe story, the Earth story, and our bioregional stories, but also to learn our continental story. In this way, we can at last become informed and integral inhabitants of North America. In a richly illustrated slide talk, based on Tim Flannery's acclaimed 2001 book, *The Eternal Frontier*, Connie presents the marvelous story that begins 65 million years ago, when a giant meteor put an end to the Age of Dinosaurs. Thenceforth, awesome phases of climatic and

geological change supported waves of immigration, emigrations, and stunning diversifications of mammals and other animals on this continent. Especially because many Americans lead lives of periodic uprooting from any single bioregion, the continental story is crucial for helping us feel at home throughout our lives. It also offers up surprising themes for us to ponder in these pivotal and challenging times.

- 5. GHOST STORIES: Interactive Storytelling (Connie)

Based on her highly praised book of popular science, *The Ghosts of Evolution*, Connie conjures the magnificent beasts of the Ice Ages - the mammoths, giant ground sloths, and native horses and camels - while she tells our new creation stories of the Americas: how Avocado got its huge seed, how Honey Locust got her honey, how Hawthorn got its thorns. This is a playful program with props; color slides as an option. Connie has presented technical versions of this talk to paleontologists at the American Museum of Natural History and to botanists at the New York Botanical Garden. (This book was the "Number One Editor's Choice" among science books on Amazon.com when it was published in the spring of 2001, and it has been excerpted in *Wild Earth*, *Natural History*, and *Arnoldia* magazines.)

- 6. EVOLUTIONARY PARABLES: A Participatory Workshop (Connie and Michael)

The Great Story, the epic of evolution, can be told in ways that nurture spiritual, Earth-honoring, and community values by means of the traditional and beloved genre of parables. Join in this exciting new effort to craft moving or playful parables that combine science and values education with literary delights. Audience volunteers will play the roles of the characters in existing parables (for example, enacting the dialog between an alga and a fungus who teamed up to produce the first land plant, a parable written by paleontologist Prof. Mark McMenamin). Participants will offer their own ideas of how to build into the storylines the key values and virtues for fostering, what visionary Thomas Berry calls, "a mutually enhancing human-Earth relationship." A flier of guidelines for creating parables will be handed out, as some participants may want to continue working on parables for possible incorporation in this community-wide endeavor, which is featured in the Winter 2002 issue of *EarthLight* magazine.

- 7. A PLEISTOCENE EVOCATION (Connie and Michael)

Prepared by Connie in 1999 for a "Mammoth Memorial Service" in South Dakota, which she organized and led at the most magnificent aggregation of mammoth bones on this continent, this 1- or 2-hour group ritual is at once playful and eerily moving, as the magnificent mammals that went extinct in North America at the close of the Pleistocene (just 13,000 years ago) are beckoned to join us around the campfire (or candle). Enhanced versions include a component inspired by the deep ecology ritual "A Council of all Beings" (see number 27, below), group drumming and other music-making, and dancing.

The Great News

The stories within stories that make up The Great Story can be told in empowering ways that offer up Great News for our times. The inner dimensions of these stories can enhance our spirituality or religious faith and provide psychological tools for handling the challenges of life and readying us to embark on and thrive in endeavors where our callings and destinies urge us to go.

- 8. GREAT NEWS FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM (Michael)

Subtitle or alternative title: "The Gospel of Evolution and the Revival of the Human Spirit"

Why is the emergence of a globally created, scientifically sound, and deeply meaningful creation story “Great News” for humanity and the full community of life? In what ways is this Great Story a metareligious, rather than a religious story? How does it exemplify what Ken Wilber calls “an integral vision,” honoring all the developmental stages that came before? How can this story empower us as individuals and communities to further the Great Work of ensuring a just, healthy, beautiful, and sustainably life-giving world for future generations of all species? And how can it foster faith, hope, and love, and a compelling urge to celebrate, even in challenging times? Michael has presented variations of this talk at the New York Open Center, Christian and UU churches, and for campus ministries.

• 9. CHRISTIANITY IN AN EVOLVING UNIVERSE (Michael)

Science presents a very different understanding of reality than that available to the biblical writers and early theologians, who believed that the world was flat, that the sun and stars revolved around us, and that God resided just on the other side of the dome of the heavens. How might important Christian concepts and doctrines such as sin and salvation, the kingdom of God, heaven and hell, and Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life, be understood in light of a 13 billion year evolutionary cosmos? How can a thoroughly modern, scientific understanding of the Universe enhance and deepen one’s faith in God, one’s relationship to Christ, and one’s experience of the Holy Spirit? And how, in turn, does the Good News of Christianity become Great News in the context of the epic of evolution? This talk enriches and extends the ideas first presented in Michael’s 1991 book, *EarthSpirit: A Handbook for an Ecological Christianity*, which has been widely read and discussed in Christian circles.

• 10. SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY, AND PASSION FOR LIFE (Michael)

In recounting his personal faith journey, Michael shows how a pentecostal fervor gained during a born-again experience as a young man continues to enrich his life, his sense of the sacred, his trust in time, and the intimacy of his relationship with God - even while preaching the new sacred story born of science. Drawing upon his own experience and our taped interviews of a wide range of people inspired by the Great Story (a project that will continue as we tour America), Michael shares the transformative power of the Great Epic - the gospel of evolution - and discusses how this perspective can enrich one’s faith in Reality (God), rekindle a passion for life, and evoke compassion for others, human and non-human alike.

• 11. AMERICA’S GREAT AWAKENING TO ITS DESTINY (Michael)

Cultural and religious historians recognize two spiritual “Great Awakenings” that swept through America during the 18th and 19th centuries and which stimulated major social reforms - notably, an expanded opposition to slavery. These Great Awakenings were catalyzed by religious revival meetings - the tent encampments that brought passion and possibility for salvation to millions of Americans in small towns and rural counties. Itinerant preachers and teachers played vital roles in these two awakenings. What about today? Michael shares evidence that we are in the early stages of a new and far more inclusive Great Awakening, whose sphere of influence will be larger, wider, and even more enlivening than the previous two. He also shares a deeply inspiring vision of America coming to play a crucial role in moving humanity into a sustainably life-giving future.

• 12. DARWIN’S GREAT GIFT TO RELIGION (Michael)

As one of Christianity’s greatest theologians, Thomas Aquinas, said centuries ago, “Any error about creation also leads to an error about God.” In pre-scientific western cosmology, there was no conception of “the Universe.” “The world” was considered a thing, an artifact made by the hand of God, perfect and

unchanging. From this perspective, the idea of change over time, or evolution, was seen a deviation from God's plan. Not surprisingly, any shift in theology was also suspect. If the entire cosmos is in fact evolving, however, then our theologies - how we conceptualize and speak about the divine - must also evolve, or gradually become irrelevant and meaningless. But what if this fact is not a problem, but a blessing? Is it possible to move beyond ignoring, resisting, or tolerating evolution, to excitedly embracing and celebrating it? To make this shift is to understand why theologian John Haught regards evolution as "Darwin's great gift to theology." This presentation/workshop will assist all of us, no matter what our particular faith background, to reweave our notions of the divine with an understanding of the world as presented by science, so as to create a tapestry that delights and empowers us as individuals and blesses our world.

- 13. CAN THE UNIVERSE BE TRUSTED? (Michael)

William James, the great philosopher and father of American pragmatism, believed that how we regard the Universe makes a huge difference in the way we live in the world. He wrote, "From a pragmatic point of view, the difference between living against a background of foreignness and one of intimacy means the difference between a general habit of wariness and one of trust." In this presentation (the core of which is included in many of his other talks, as this is a foundation of his faith), Michael offers that perhaps the most important philosophical stance we take - knowingly or unknowingly - is the degree to which we trust Reality (or have faith in God). In an animated stage presentation, he presents five ways in which science reveals that the Universe can be trusted. More, he shows the practical difference it makes in our lives when we confront the challenges of life from a stance of wariness, disconnectedness, or trust. (This presentation has been enthusiastically received by Christian, Unitarian, and secular audiences.)

- 14. GREEN SPACE, GREEN TIME: THE WAY OF SCIENCE (Connie)

Renowned Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson has written, "The evolutionary epic is probably the best religious myth we will ever have." In this presentation, Connie draws from her 1997 book, *Green Space, Green Time*, to offer a pathway toward ecospirituality that she calls "the way of science." Well received in the deep ecology community and among those inspired by the Great Story (as told by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme), this "Way of Science and the Epic of Evolution" (as extracted from her book) was the cover story of the Nov/Dec 1998 issue of *UU World* magazine, which serves North American members of Unitarian Universalist societies. She has presented this talk at UU churches in New York and New Mexico and as the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the American Teilhard Association.

- 15. THE MARRIAGE OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION (Michael and Connie)

Alternative title for Unitarian audiences: "How Science Discovered God and Vindicated Atheism"

The most significant scientific breakthrough of the last century may turn out not to be the decoding of the human genome, nor our detection of the remnant energy of the Big Bang. Rather, we may come to see the pivotal contribution of 20th century science as the gradual uncovering of that creative Reality which many cultures have traditionally called God. Paradoxically, this same science also supports the atheistic claim that the Universe is best understood as genuinely and profoundly creative, not merely created. As this "Universe as nested creativity" awareness spreads throughout the world and its implications become manifest, there is a real likelihood that it will transform the social, political, and economic landscape much as the "Universe as machine" metaphor transformed western culture and values during the 18th and 19th centuries. This presentation offers a realistic, hopeful, and inspiring vision of our past, present, and possible futures. Along the way, Michael shares his experience of evangelical/pentecostal Christianity and United Church of Christ ministry opening to an inclusive, Earth-honoring embrace of evolution.

Meanwhile, Connie's spiritual journey as a Unitarian Universalist, coming from a nontheistic perspective that celebrates her roots in and passion for science, brings her to surprising common ground with her neo-evangelical partner in marriage.

- 16. CELEBRANTS OF THE GREAT STORY (Connie and Michael)

What is the role of the human in the epic of evolution? As we work to lessen our impress on planet Earth and to turn around the Sixth Great Mass Extinction we ourselves have ignited, is there also a nobility we can aspire to? If we are, as biologist Julian Huxley first observed, evolution become conscious of itself - the Universe awakening to the grandeur of its own story - what is our unique role in this stupendous process? How can we fulfill Thomas Berry's call for us to become Celebrants of the Universe story? This interactive workshop presents tools for generating the healing and enlivening force of gratitude in our everyday lives. Participants are invited and empowered to actually feel the creativity of the Universe flowing through them, and to regard themselves as unique and precious expressions of Ultimate Creativity. (In Christian settings, Michael also draws upon and interprets traditional Christian doctrine from an evolutionary perspective in original, fresh, and exciting ways.)

- 17. FINDING HOPE IN CHALLENGING TIMES (Michael)

See the videotape description, below.

- 18. GOSPEL OF EVOLUTION REVIVAL MEETING, with Reverend Slippery Sly Mold (Michael)

For longer workshops and retreats, Michael encourages participants to laugh with him at his own excesses of spirit as he preaches the gospel of evolution according to Rev. Sylvester Mold - a.k.a. Brother Slippery Sly Mold. This half-hour humorous performance includes a skit created and recorded by peace activist and comedian Charlie Varon.

- 19. SACRED STORYTELLING, with Mike the Monk (Michael)

Donning the costume and persona of Mike the Monk, Michael tells sacred stories from a variety of spiritual traditions that touch the heart and renew the spirit. As a former member of the steering committee of the International Network of Biblical Storytellers, Michael also enjoys telling cherished biblical stories, such as the tale of Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 37-48), Mark's passion-resurrection narrative (Mark 14-16; a favorite around Easter), and many of Jesus' parables.

The Great Work

In his latest book, "The Great Work," Thomas Berry beckons us as a species and as individuals to find our callings and to respond to the needs of the Earth Community at this challenging and creative time in the Great Story of the Universe.

- 20. FINDING AND FULFILLING YOUR OWN GREAT WORK (Michael)

It takes a Great Story, a story experienced as Great News, to inspire Great Work. What is the Great Work of our time and how do we each find and respond to our callings at the growing edge of evolution? This workshop highlights an exercise in which participants will be invited to reflect on the key facets of their own great joy, and to notice where their hearts are most touched by Earth's great need. One's role or roles in the Great Work are revealed at the intersections of these two sets.

- 21. ENVISIONING THE ECOZOIC ERA (Michael and Connie)

Geologists have divided the last 550 million years into three eras of life: Paleozoic (oceanic and early land life), Mesozoic (dinosaurs, ferns, redwood trees), and Cenozoic (mammals, birds, flowering plants). The human impact on landscapes, ecology, and biodiversity is now so great, however, that one can make the claim that the current geological era, the Cenozoic, is coming to a close. To empower the shift to a reverent and restorative relationship with Earth, beloved cultural historian Thomas Berry urges us to envision an Ecozoic Era. In this interactive workshop, we'll discuss Thomas's vision and create our own.

- 22. HOW IS THE ECOZOIC EMERGING WITHIN YOU? (Connie and Michael)

This provocative exploration can be done interactively in community, or offered as a handout for participants to use post-conference. This, or the preceding topic, can conclude with a short physical exercise to actually launch or inaugurate the Ecozoic Era. Inaugurating the Ecozoic Era (first facilitated by Michael at the EarthSpirit Rising conference in Louisville, Kentucky, June 2001) takes only a few minutes; though whimsical, it can nevertheless be moving and transformative.

- 23. ECOZOIC ACTIVISM (Connie and Michael)

In the Summer 2001 issue of *EarthLight*, Connie and Michael outlined "Four Pillars of Ecozoic Activism": Allurement, Trust, Compassion, and Gratitude. These four ways of being are a foundation upon which plans and actions for making a difference in the world can be generated. Depending upon the activism experience of participants, this workshop will vary in the mix of presentation and participant sharing/leading. Our hosts, or local activists, may wish to co-facilitate by presenting a pressing local or regional issue, which can then be used to explore how the four pillars might be applied. Connie draws from her experience as a wilderness activist in Alaska and New Mexico, as a biodiversity advocate, and as a correspondent for *Wild Earth* magazine. Michael draws from his involvement in the bioregional, deep ecology, permaculture, peace and justice, and voluntary simplicity movements, and from his experience with Global Action Plan's EcoTeam and Livable Neighborhood programs.

- 24. GLOBAL ACTION PLAN'S ECOTEAM AND LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAMS

One of the most exciting examples of the emerging Ecozoic era, and a practical way that individuals and communities can participate in the Great Work, is through the Global Action Plan's EcoTeams and Livable Neighborhood Teams. The EcoTeam Program helps team members get to know each other better and live more Earth-friendly lifestyles - showing folks how to save time, money, and resources in their homes while building community with their friends and neighbors. The Livable Neighborhood Program helps us take actions with our neighbors to improve the health, safety, beauty, and overall livability of the street where we live. Both programs strengthen neighborhood security and community connections while promoting ecological values. Michael will share his experience managing Sustainable Lifestyle Campaigns in Portland, Oregon, and Rockland County, New York, and will show participants how they can work with their local governments to help the programs get started in their own region.

- 25. rites of passage for an ecological age (Michael and Connie)

One path of Great Work is to nurture Earth-honoring values within oneself and others. Rites of passage - births, deaths, graduations, weddings, physiological turning points, uprootings and settlings - these are all

extraordinary opportunities for deepening one's participation in what Thomas Berry calls "the Ecozoic Era." Michael and Connie are just beginning to develop and collect from others ideas on this theme, so the session would likely center on participant sharing and discussion. The particular rite of passage they have personally experienced in an intentionally Ecozoic way was their own wedding at a conference on Ecology, Spirituality, and The Great Work in Louisville, Kentucky, in June 2001. The ritual began with a short Great Journey enactment; before taking their vows, each married Earth (as primary relationship) and invited witnesses to strengthen their own bonds to the life community. The ceremony also included a playful launching of the Ecozoic Era.

• 26. SACRED SITES OF THE GREAT STORY (Connie)

North America abounds in geologically, biologically, and aesthetically significant places that speak to the major moments of transformation in the Universe story. Some, like the Great Unconformity in the Grand Canyon, are of global importance. Others, like the Ice Age Refuge for plants along the Apalachicola River of northern Florida, are of continental scope. Many more are local treasures. This workshop (and possible field trip) will help further the identification and honoring of sacred sites in the region.

• 27. COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS (Michael and Connie)

This half- or full-day experiential process was developed by John Seed and Joanna Macy nearly two decades ago, and rapidly became a core approach for nurturing an expanded sense of self, for offering release of grief over human-caused biodiversity losses and despoilment of Earth, for gaining valuable wisdom and insight from our other-than-human companions, and for empowering participants to make a difference in the world. Michael has been trained by Joanna Macy to facilitate this moving, co-creative, participatory ritual.

• 28. GREAT STORY SHARING CIRCLES AND STUDY GROUPS (Connie and Michael)

Connie and Michael are intensely interested in visiting and participating in ritual and sharing circles that are emerging around the continent among people inspired by the Great Story and Thomas Berry's vision of an Ecozoic future. They are in the process of developing "how to" guidelines for such support circles and aim to facilitate networking among groups in different regions. They will work with host organizations to ensure that those who are inspired by their talks and workshops will have an opportunity to continue meeting on their own for mutual support, learning, and celebration.

SCHEDULING PRESENTATIONS

Michael and Connie are passionate about these topics (obviously!) and will present them wherever there is interest. To help ensure that groups and institutions with limited financial resources also have an opportunity to hear this Great News, rather than charge a set fee for their services, they prefer to accept whatever is offered and trust that their needs will be met. To discuss the possibility of having them speak, preach, or otherwise bring one or more of these presentations to your area or organization, call or email:

Michael Dowd & Connie Barlow
46 South Mountain Road, New City, NY 10956
(845) 634-3380 / MBDowd@bigplanet.com / cbtanager@aol.com

BOOKS, AUDIOTAPES and VIDEOTAPES

Copies of Michael's book, *EarthSpirit*, are available for \$10 through www.EcozoicResources.com. For discounted quantity purchases (5+ copies), contact Michael directly by email or phone. Connie's books are available through major web booksellers and many bookstores. Best quality copies of Michael's videotape (below) may be purchased for \$10, and his audiotape for \$5, by sending a check to Michael Dowd at the address above. If you already have a copy of the audio or video and would like to share it with others, feel free to duplicate it on your own. If you do so, however, please also include a copy of this description of program offerings.

Videotape: FINDING HOPE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

How does our perception of the "big picture" impact us emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually? How can we understand difficult times in ways that empower and enliven us and our communities? In this videotape presentation of a talk given in October 2001, at the Newman Center in Canton, NY (just weeks after 9-11), Michael interprets widely accepted scientific and historical understandings that can support each of us in creating our own realistic and hopeful visions of the future. The last half hour is an introduction to Global Action Plan's EcoTeam Program: a plan of action that has helped tens of thousands of people all over the world strengthen neighborhood security and community connections, increase their quality of life, and reduce consumption and waste. (90 minute videotape)

Audiotape: THE GOSPEL OF EVOLUTION AND THE REVIVAL OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

An audiotape presentation of a lively talk Michael gave at St. Briget's Roman Catholic Church in Copake Falls, NY, in August 2001. Side B continues with a presentation he gave a week later at the Ross Institute Center for Wellbeing, in East H
