

STARDUST RITUAL
Featuring "The Buddha Bowl" Parable

created by Beth Fitzgerald
and reported in November 2006

Note: "The Buddha Bowl" Parable can be accessed through:

<http://www.TheGreatStory.org/parables.html>

Beth Fitzgerald writes:

At the Swedenborgian Church [about 5 yrs ago] I did a service in which I spoke about the New Cosmology -- drawing on Brian Swimme's work -- and read the parable, **THE BUDDHA BOWL**.

THE RITUAL: ". The "altar" was a low table in the middle of a circle with a buddha statue on a black satin cloth (to represent the "black stone floor" in the parable). The ritual was in 2 parts -- first, the performance of "The Buddha Bowl" by volunteers, followed by the stardust ritual. For the latter, people came forward to receive "stardust" [glitter] on their foreheads, I used my thumb to place a spot of oil first and then my finger to add the stardust. While I did that I said *"Receive the mark of stardust -- a sign of the mystery and miracle of your origin."* Then we poured a small amount of tea into miniature teacups, augmented by small glass communion cups, and before we all drank I said, *"May the simple ceremony of taking tea together remind us that we all take refuge in the One Being of the Universe -- we are not separate -- we are one with all of Creation."*

HOW IT WAS RECEIVED: It was a very small community -- about 20 participants -- and they really liked the service. I heard that several people had later enjoyed explaining to others curious about the mark on their foreheads, about "our being stardust."

I DID A SIMILAR LAY-LED summer church service 3 yrs ago at the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church in Portland Maine, but changed it somewhat because I thought UU's might have a problem with a "priest" dispensing the "ashes" (lots of religiously wounded folk out there and I didn't want to open old scars!) So I used the same altar and tea ritual, but changed the stardust part by inviting them to come forward, take a pinch of "stardust" and cast it across the "black stone floor" in front of the buddha as "a sign of the mystery and miracle of your origin". I suggested they might sprinkle each other also -- saying those words -- and many did. After the service, one young mother brought her son to the altar when he

came back from his religious education class, and she blessed him there with stardust glitter. I'm thinking I might do another UU summer service sometime and have the congregation anoint one another -- it feels more "sacred" that way.

In that UU service, there were wonderful readings and hymns I used from the UU Hymnal: Responsive Reading #445, ("The Womb of Stars") and #530 ("Out of the Stars"); and hymns #319 ("Ye Earthborn Children of a Star") and #363 ("Alleluia! Sing Stars"). Chalice Lighting #451 references "Flame of fire, spark of the universe.." and Chalice Extinguishing #434 says "May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected, in mystery and miracle to the universe, to this community and to each other". I used a reading from Carolyn McDade ("we were born of earth, born of stars...") and I played two pieces of her music ("Longing Suite" and "Awakening"). Also, I used a quote from Christopher Newbert : "...all creation evolving from the same source, in a process which continues..." Printed at the beginning of the order of service was: "Each of us, and all of us, are truly and literally a little bit of stardust" — William Fowler.

I spent hours putting this service together, but had a ball doing so.