

**Small Talk – July 19 2021**  
**By Michael Small**

There are people of faith, people of science, those who study history, those who are experts in many fields, and those who are mix of all of the above and more. The United Church of Christ takes seriously scientists, their research and development done, the hard facts that help us to build bridges, fly to the moon, develop vaccines, work with understanding climate change, work on sustainable practices for the earth, and explore the unfolding mystery of the cosmos, the universe around us – and much, much more. Theology, faith, medicine, teachers and professors, workers in the service areas, and scientists will not always agree on the fundamentals, but we can and do learn from one another as we hold each other in respect and honor. Knowledge and wisdom shared always leads us to better decisions for all humanity. When we honestly and openly talk and listen to one another there is possibility for more.

Writing from the perspective of a highly respected and published scientist, as a professor of physics and mathematics at Columbia University, Brian Greene in 2020 penned the book, *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe*. Greene makes physics understandable to the lay person. In this book he asks many of the big questions and ponders them and is able write with carefully thought-out responses and then leaves the reader with more questions. The very ending of the book brings the best of science honestly to the foreground and at the same time raises the deepest questions. Pay special attention to the ending sentences.

*As we hurtle toward a cold and barren cosmos, we must accept that there is no grand design. Particles [of which all creation is composed of] are not endowed with purpose. There is no final answer hovering in the depths of space awaiting discovery. Instead, certain special collections of particles can think and feel and reflect, and within these subjective worlds they can create purpose. **And so, in our quest to fathom the human condition, the only direction to look is inward. That is the noble direction to look. It is a direction that forgoes ready-made answers and turns to the highly personal journey of constructing our own meaning. It is a direction that leads to the very heart of creative expression and the source of our most resonant narratives. Science is a powerful, exquisite tool for grasping an external reality. But within that rubric, within that understanding, everything else is the human species contemplating itself, grasping what it needs to carry on, and telling a story that reverberates into the darkness, a story carved of sound and etched into silence, a story that, at its best, stirs the soul.***<sup>1</sup>

This cosmos, this universe – they are beyond comprehension. Perhaps, this cosmos, this universe can be explained with mathematics, or the best of theories, or even string theory – and these are “just the facts” as we currently understand them! As knowledge and understanding increase we understand with more clarity and truth. The facts can describe the creation of the universe up to 10 seconds before the big bang. They can be as dry and cold as is the darkness of outer space itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, Brian. *Until the End of Time* (pp. 317-318). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

As a cluster, community, we who as a “collection of particles who think, feel, and reflect” it is our amazing and wonderful task to tell “a story that reverberates into the darkness, a story carved of sound and etched into silence, a story that, at its best, stirs the soul.” (These words are poetically written by a physicist).

Words that stir the soul! What words, which stories, which songs stir your soul. I suspect when media graphically portrays the many struggles upon the earth and those living upon the earth – they too stir our souls. There is the picture of a refugee child, lying dead on the beach, or a child running naked from napalm, or a collapsed structure in Florida, or the devastation left by flood and fire. Being a people grounded in and shaped by faith, and the words and ways of those who have gone before us, and the ever expanding and mysterious ways of that which is holy – we are informed and now can continue to write the evolving stories to be carved out and told.

I think we are in a time of opportunity, wonder, and the potential of miracle. With the spirit of a “StillSpeaking God” let us continue to craft, modify, write the stories that stir the soul to its very depth. Together with the many may we speak to the soul and write the stories that inspire and give hope in the deepest and darkest of nights.

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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