

“Listening to each other’s stories is better anthropological practice than reading text books on kinship”

Opening Prayer

Oh God, who is jealous enough to punish the children for the sins of their great-grandfathers,
and loving enough to show mercy to a thousand generations beyond,
be kind to us today as we gather.
We cannot enter our mothers’ wombs again,
yet you promise us rebirth
into the holy and mysterious family that is each other, and you.

Bryson

Welcome. And congratulations. I am delighted that you could make it. Getting here wasn't easy, I know. In fact, I suspect it was a little tougher than you realize. To begin with, for you to be here now trillions of drifting atoms had somehow to assemble in an intricate and intriguingly obliging manner to create you. It's an arrangement so specialized and particular that it has never been tried before and will only exist this once. Being you is not a gratifying experience at the atomic level. For all their devoted attention, your atoms don't actually care about you indeed, don't even know that you are there. It is a slightly arresting notion that if you were to pick yourself apart with tweezers, one atom at a time, you would produce a mound of fine atomic dust, none of which had ever been alive but all of which had once been you. The bad news is that atoms are fickle and their time of devotion is fleeting-fleeting indeed. Even a long human life adds up to only about 650,000 hours. And when that modest milestone flashes past, for reasons unknown your atoms will shut you down, silently disassemble, and go off to be other things. And that's it for you.

However, you have been extremely - make that miraculously - fortunate in your personal ancestry. Consider the fact that for 3.8 billion years, a period of time older than the Earth's mountains and rivers and oceans, every one of your forebears on both sides has been attractive enough to find a mate, healthy enough to reproduce, and sufficiently blessed by fate and circumstances to live long enough to do so. Not one of your pertinent ancestors was squashed, devoured, drowned, starved, stranded, stuck fast, untimely wounded, or otherwise deflected from its life's quest of delivering a tiny charge of genetic material to the right partner at the right moment in order to perpetuate the only possible sequence of hereditary combinations that could result-eventually, astoundingly, and all too briefly - in you.

A Moment to Reflect

Prayer

God, my genes and atoms may have been made selfish and indifferent,
But I am more than this.
When my time is done, they will dissolve away, without care,
But we are more than this.
Invisible and weightless,
Your mystery is inside of me. Our genes may be selfish; may our spirits be generous.

[A Member of the Gathering Talks Through Their Family Tree]

Confession | Waiting to be reborn

Romans 8:22,3: “We know that the whole of creation, right from the beginning has been groaning as if in labour, just as we who resonate with the Spirit groan inwardly too as we wait for our rebirth in God.”

Eucharist

We break bread to remember our genetic families; the sacrifices and commitments
they have made that allowed us to be here.
We drink wine in celebration of the family you have grafted us into,
thankful for your sacrifices and commitments that allow us to be here.
Amen.