2014 COLLOQUIUM AND CONFERENCE ON THOMAS BERRY’S LEGACY AND PROMISE: MAY 28-30 AND MAY 30-JUNE 1, 2014

The year 2014 will be the 100th anniversary of Thomas Berry’s birth (November 9, 1914) and the fifth anniversary of his death (June 1, 2009). Thomas Berry’s work is significant because of the work it has inspired, but what about the significance of his work itself? With so many recent books on the ecological crisis and the “Great Transition” or “Great Turning,” what is the continuing relevance and role of Thomas Berry’s work? Thomas Berry’s work remains well known to an impressive but small group of people, yet little known to the world at large. Does this matter? If so, what needs to change so that Thomas Berry’s work will be known, studied and applied by more people? Are there aspects of Thomas Berry’s work that need greater attention? His work purports to provide guidance for a new geo-biological era, but have events already passed by his vision and guidance? Does his description of the Great Work still ring true?

CES is calling for a colloquium and a conference on Thomas Berry in the Chapel Hill area of North Carolina. The target times and dates for the colloquium are Wednesday afternoon, May 28, through Friday lunch, May 30; and for the conference, Friday evening May 30, through Sunday morning, June 1, 2014. The colloquium is tentatively scheduled to be held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the conference at Camp New Hope, near Chapel Hill.

The working title for the colloquium is “Thomas Berry’s Legacy and Promise.” The colloquium will follow the form of an academic colloquium and participants will be asked to present a paper on some aspect of Thomas Berry’s work. For example, a participant might present on any one or more of, among other aspects, his “Determining Features of the Ecozoic Era” or his “Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process”; his understanding of bioregionalism, patriarchy, or education; his critique of science, religion, or industrial society; the inadequacy of the contemporary language of meaning and value; the meaning and importance of subjectivity; his theology, Thomas Berry and Aquinas, Thomas Berry and Whitehead, or Thomas Berry and Asian or indigenous thought; Thomas Berry’s historical analysis; or Thomas Berry’s understanding of the “Great Work,” or his vision and guidance for ecozoic societies.

Each presenter would summarize the topic chosen, analyze the development of the topic in Thomas Berry’s work, critique Thomas Berry’s treatment of the topic, and discuss the applications or implications of the topic at the personal, communal, or institutional/policy level. The papers from the colloquium would be considered for publication. Non-presenters could also attend the colloquium, though the overall number of attendees would be limited for this event.
The working title of the conference is “Thomas Berry’s Great Work Now.” The conference would be a combination of lectures and hands-on learning and experiential events. The conference would be held in a natural setting and would allow for participation by 150-200 people. The final day would be a time of commitment and renewal of commitments to the Great Work.

We will keep you informed of the progress of these events. Please send us your comments and suggestions. If you have an interest in assisting in planning these events, participating in or leading one of these events, or being a sponsor of one of these events, please let us know.