

May 9, 1991

THE BIRTH OF NOVA

(A Metaphor)

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Many years ago, the purple-robed leaders of a vast tribe met to select a new leader to replace their deceased, and greatly revered, leader who had lead their tribe successfully for many years. After a very long selection ritual, the leaders made a compromise selection of one of their peers, a very elderly man who had no enemies and a reputation for maintaining the status quo.

The leaders assumed that their newly selected leader would act only as a caretaker during his relatively short reign.

However, within a very short time, the new leader surprised the purple-robed leaders by calling a meeting to discuss tribal goals, practices and rules.

This was surprising, if not shocking.

But the new leader did even more.

He made it very clear that, if their goals, practices and rules were found to be outdated, he would open-the-window to change.

And further, he extended invitations to the meeting, not only to the purple-robed leaders, but also to the red-robed leaders -- who, while lower in status, were vast in their numbers and came from every corner of the world.

The invited tribal leaders met with their new leader for many months.

They debated, discussed and studied.

It was reported that they even prayed.

And finally, they produced new tribal guidelines.

When their work was done, the purple-robed and the red-robed leaders returned to their respective tribes.

Once home, they explained what they had done and what it meant to tribal members.

Much discussion and speculation ensued in tribal units throughout the world.

It was during that time, that a very small group of tribal members from the area where we are gathered tonight started meeting to discuss the new guidelines.

After a very short time, the People were not only discussing the new guidelines, they were acting upon them.

Unfortunately, when the purple-robed leader in this vicinity heard what the People were doing, he was not pleased.

And so, he forbade the People to meet any longer, and he directed them to return to their

traditional meeting places where discussions and activities were sanctioned and safer.

The People were understandably disappointed. But not for long.

When the red-robed leader from across the river heard what had happened to the People, he asked them to come to his side of the river.

And he promised them that they could meet and live according to their vision of the new guidelines.

And so they did. And because what they were doing was new, and because they were meeting in a place called Northern Virginia, the People called themselves NOVA.

It is now 23 years that NOVA has been meeting and living its vision of the new tribal guidelines.

During that time, the life of NOVA has been exciting, joyful, supportive, confusing, uncertain, struggling -- in a word, it has been life-like.

NOVA's life has been a dialog on many questions. For example, we have discussed:

Who are we?

What do we believe?

How shall we decide things?

Where shall we put our energies and resources?

How shall we celebrate our beliefs?

How shall we share our beliefs with our children?

How shall we share our beliefs with the world?

Tomorrow, during the workshops, you can learn from NOVA members how NOVA has attempted to answer these questions.

(Note: I presented this to a gathering of Nova type organizations.)