

## **Across the Cosmos April 2026: Back to the Moon**

I imagine I'm not the only person on this e-list who remembers when the now-famous "Earthrise" photo was taken by astronaut Bill Anders from the Apollo 8 spacecraft on Christmas Eve in 1968.<sup>1</sup> The Apollo 8 crew read from the book of Genesis,<sup>2</sup> and the people of Earth experienced a rare sense of unity, during what had been a tumultuous and devastating year. The first human being walked on the Moon on July 20, 1969, and the entire Apollo program ended just a few years later in December 1972.

Fast forward more than a half-century, and on April 1, 2026 (no joke!), the Artemis II spacecraft launched with a U.S.- Canadian crew to orbit the Moon and to help pave the way for sustainable human lunar exploration and future missions to Mars. On Easter, Canadian Astronaut Jeremy Hansen delivered an inclusive message of love and unity from Artemis II<sup>3</sup> that included the words, "... no matter your faith or religion, for me the teachings of Jesus were always a very simple truth of love — universal love. Love yourself and love others." I hope the Artemis program will help inspire post-Apollo generations the way I was inspired as a young girl watching the Apollo astronauts, and that it will help all generations recognize Earth's beauty and fragility!

I am proud to say that three of my Planetary Science Institute (PSI) colleagues, Jamie Molaro, Hanna Sizemore, and Catherine Weitz, are among the ten scientists selected by NASA to help shape the science plan for the Artemis Program.<sup>4</sup> Molaro brings expertise in understanding how weathering processes affect different environments. Sizemore brings theoretical, laboratory, and field work to understanding icy planetary surfaces. Weitz brings more than two decades of experience supporting operations and scientific analysis of data acquired from several NASA missions, and she has worked to help astronauts and crew surrogates prepare for surface operations on the Moon.

Many things have changed since the Apollo program, including the demographics of those involved in human missions and space science. Artemis, Apollo's twin sister and goddess of the Moon in Greek mythology, was also known as the protector of young women. Notably, eight of the ten scientists selected to formulate the lunar science plan are women,<sup>5</sup> something that would have amazed and excited the young girl who watched every single Apollo mission. Furthermore, now people from all walks of life can also participate in research projects that advance lunar science, such as Lunar Melt<sup>6</sup> and Impact Flash!<sup>7</sup> And whether you want to participate or not, you can help advance planetary research, as well as extend the reach of education and outreach programs, by donating to your favorite PSI initiative!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nasa.gov/image-article/earthrise-by-nasa-astronaut-bill-anders/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEmn0uaQCYc>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-V4pBZfNem0>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.psi.edu/blog/three-psi-scientists-selected-to-support-nasas-artemis-science/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://science.nasa.gov/missions/artemis/nasa-names-scientists-to-support-lunar-south-pole-science/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://mappers.psi.edu/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.geodes.umd.edu/impactflash>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.psi.edu/donate/>

Until next month,

Grace

Grace Wolf-Chase (she/her/hers)

Senior Scientist; Senior Education & Communication Specialist

Planetary Science Institute

[gwolfchase@gmail.com](mailto:gwolfchase@gmail.com)

<https://www.psi.edu/staff/profile/grace-wolf-chase/>

Vice President, Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science

([CASIRAS](#))