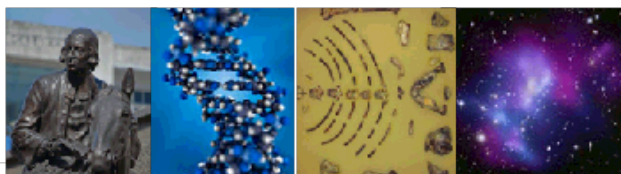


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



Home

Back

Links

Contact Us

August 22, 2014 [Go To Page 2](#)

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague,

The summer is winding down and the routines that occupy our days will soon settle in like the coolness of fall. We at WesleyNexus hope your summer has been refreshing, renewing and even a bit transforming. I finished up my summer travel with a trip to Colorado to attend a music festival called [Folks Festival](#). It is held every year in the small town of Lyons, a town known in bluegrass circles as the epicenter for bluegrass and traditional music in this country.

I went with my son and his wife and did something I have never done before. We signed up to be festival volunteers and work four hours each day in return for free admission. We were assigned a very non-Methodist thing to do... serve beer and wine to hundreds of Festivarians, as the festival goers call themselves.



Through this volunteer activity, I engaged in conversations with dozens of people, inquiring where they came from, how many years they attended Folks Festival (some have attended for over a decade) and what motivated them to endure the 100 degree heat that pounded us the entire three days of the festival. Most of them responded that it was the spirit of the place, the sense of a sort of grace that renewed their souls and reignited their sense of hope in community. It was like an old Methodist camp meeting for the "spiritual but not religious" but with music, dancing, drinking and I suspect, a bit of cohabiting. In spite of these seeming contradictions with the Methodist tradition, I could not help feeling that Wesley's notion of prevenient grace was alive and active within all those attending. Also through my conversations, I realized that one of the main stumbling blocks preventing people from reengaging with their religious roots is the perception that religion has become a fantasy, an ideology that is against nature, against science and against the very form of experience that draws people to the Lyons festival. If faith in God is to be reborn in these folks, it must grapple with the issues of science and religion and develop credible models that integrate these two pillars of wisdom. As S. Paul Schilling wrote many years ago, we need not search for God as though he were somewhere else. He is everywhere. In our daily experiences of depth, dependence, meaning, and social responsibility, and outreach toward the future in hope we are already in his presence. If we at least hold ourselves open to the possibility that this is true and act upon it, we may discover God is no longer absent or even present incognito, but a living reality in our own experience here and now. (God Incognito, p. 202) Then perhaps we will find God in the midst of our science, in our art and even in the midst of a music festival in the middle of the Colorado foothills.

As I mention every month, we are dependent on you, our participants, for donations to cover expenses for these activities. WesleyNexus is a certified 501(c)(3) charitable organization, so please consider supporting this initiative with a contribution either through the PayPal DONATE link below, or, by

sending a check to:

WesleyNexus, Inc.
24500 Fossen Road
Damascus, MD 20872



We will use these funds to further our efforts to promote the dissemination of resource material promoting the dialogue between sound science and religion across the country.

God Bless,

Rick Barr, Secretary,
WesleyNexus, Board of Directors

Update: WesleyNexus Retreat/Discussion, September 19-20, 2014

[Click here to register today.](#)

Registrations for the WesleyNexus retreat on September 19-20, 2014 at the West River Center near Annapolis, Maryland has been open for a few weeks now and we have already registered the minimum required by the Center. There are still plenty of spots open, however, so I invite you to check out the website [here](#) and register for this



wonderful event. As I mentioned last month, our Keynote speaker on Saturday morning will be Dr. Connie Bertka. Connie has many years working in the science and religion arena and is currently Adjunct Professor at Wesley Theological Seminary and is the Co-Chair of the Broader Social Impacts Committee in the Hall of Human Origins program at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History. The rest of the day will be in discussion workshops on a variety of topics such as:

- The story of evolution as a framework for religious thinking.
- How can I speak about evolution within a faithful perspective?
- The paradigm of creation as a framework for scientific thinking.
- What does "created in the image of God" mean in the 21st century?
- How do new discoveries re: DNA impact our thinking about humanity?
- What does brain science have to say about our self-identity as humans?
- How is our witness as Christians impacted by our taking science seriously?
- Science findings re: human identity for church decision making.
- The perspective of young people that the church is "anti-science."

Our discussion leaders identified so far are:

Dr. Gordon Cragg, Ph.D. with a focus on international collaboration in the discovery of novel molecules from nature for the treatment of human diseases, and two decades of university teaching, most recently served as Chief of the Natural Products Branch at the National Cancer Institute at NIH in Bethesda. He is active as a layman at North Bethesda UMC.

Dr. Geoff Kaiser, holding a baccalaureate and a master's degree in natural sciences and a Ph. D. in elementary particle physics from Cambridge University in UK, is best know for work on the

atmospheric dispersion of radiotoxic materials. Professionally he completed assignments with the UK Atomic Energy Authority and in the US with DOE, NRC, and EPA as well as the last 25 years with the Science Applications International Corporation (now Leidos). He is active as a layman at Fairhaven UMC in Darnestown.

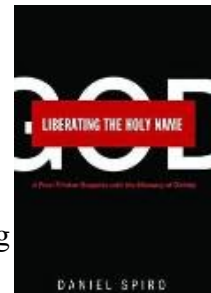
Dr. Gary Sherman, MS, DVM, PhD with expertise in reproductive, microbial, molecular and evolutionary biomedical science; National Program Leader for Veterinary Science and Agrosecurity at USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Three decades of service in academic and Federal science positions. Member of Oakdale-Emory UMC.

Rev Dottie Yunger, Associate Pastor at Metropolitan Memorial UMC in Washington DC, earned a BS in Marine Biology and worked for over ten years at the Smithsonian; she has an MDiv and MTS with an emphasis in environmental justice and the Hebrew Bible.

West River is a United Methodist Church Conference Center and camp with 45 beautiful acres on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay just 20 miles south of Annapolis, MD. Lodging for guests is in adult accommodations in a modern Conference Center, generally two persons per room, with bath rooms. Delicious meals are prepared by a professional staff. There is a maximum of 50 persons for this retreat so please register early. Acceptance is on a first come, first person basis. Click [here](#) to register.

Liberating the Holy Name: A Free-Thinker Grapples with the Meaning of Divinity

E. Maynard Moore, President of WesleyNexus has written a dust jacket endorsement of the recently published book, *Liberating the Holy Name: A Free-Thinker Grapples with the Meaning of Divinity* by Daniel Spiro. Daniel Spiro "works full-time as an attorney and has devoted his career to investigating and litigating against corporate fraud. He coordinates the Jewish-Islamic Dialogue Society of Washington, DC, and the Washington Spinoza Society, both of which he co-founded. He is active in working for peace in the Middle East, and is the author of "The Creed Room" (2006) and "Moses the Heretic" (2008)." (Amazon.com) Here is Maynard's endorsement:



Liberating the Holy Name is an extraordinary book, a rare undertaking that succeeds in filling the immense gap between the negativism of the flaming atheists and the intransigent fundamentalists. Spiro writes as one who has spent the better part of five decades asking the deep questions of life that we all ask, and now puts it all together in a philosophical approach by embracing the uncertainty that both Socrates and Spinoza would applaud. It is an inquiry with all the intellectual tools at our disposal and a celebration of the journey that honors the best in contemporary thinking. How can reading a book with a new question arising from every answer be such an intellectual joy? You have to try it and discover for yourself.

Additional endorsements by William Abraham, Michael Lerner and Zulfiqar Ali Shah can be found here: <http://www.wesnex.org/LiberatingTheHolyName.pdf>

NASA/Library of Congress Astrobiology Symposium: Preparing for Discovery

Astrobiology has revealed new discoveries about our world and the solar system. Living organisms thrive in



harsher environments on Earth than we ever previously imagined. Microbial biodiversity and extremophile life are now known to be ubiquitous and abundant. Beyond Earth, science has identified more than 1,400 exoplanets. That life thrives in multifarious conditions, coupled with these potentially habitable exoplanets and the detection of life-giving elements on numerous moons on asteroids, means we must face the possibility that simple or complex organisms may be discovered beyond Earth. How might we prepare for such a discovery?

On September 18-19, The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress will host a discussion with a number of distinguished scientists, historians, philosophers and theologians from around the world for a two-day symposium to explore how we prepare to face new knowledge that may challenge our very conceptions of life and our place in the universe. The program will be led by Dr. Steven J. Dick, Baruch S. Blumberg NASA/Library of Congress Chair in Astrobiology. Dr. Dick is a well-known astronomer and historian of science, serving previously as the Charles A. Lindbergh Chair in Aerospace History at the National Air and Space Museum and as the NASA Chief Historian and Director of the NASA History Office.

A live stream option is available for those who are not able to attend in person. Information on the program can be found [here](#).

Jim Miller to Step Down as the Coordinator of the Ecumenical Roundtable Coordinator of the AAAS Exhibit

The Ecumenical Roundtable on Science, Technology, and the Church ([ERT](#)) is an interdenominational association of persons representing initiatives within various Christian denominations in the United States. They seek to assist their faith communities in giving more deliberate attention to developments in science and technology, to consider the significance of these developments for the thought and practices of their churches, and to explore constructive engagement with the scientific and technological communities. WesleyNexus has been a supporter of the exhibit for the last three years.

That exhibit has been coordinated for many years by Jim Miller who is on the Advisory Board of WesleyNexus. Next year, 2015, will be a transition year for the ERT's exhibit at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Starting in 2015, new participants will be doing the work that Jim Miller has done so faithfully. The first will be Bob Keefer, Presbyterian Minister and longtime participant in The Presbyterian Association on Science, Technology and the Christian Faith.

To the right you will find pictures of the most recent AAAS exhibit in Chicago. Though the United Methodist Church, nor any denomination within the Wesleyan tradition, does not officially belong to the ERT, we at WesleyNexus applaud



their work and hope that one day the UMC and others will be willing to officially set aside time, talent and treasure to participate in the annual conference that takes place every year a few weeks after Easter.

[Go To Page 2](#)