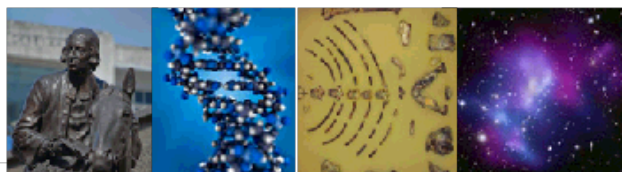


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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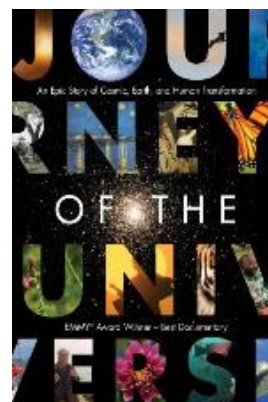
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September 30, 2014

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague,

September marked a significant milestone for WesleyNexus. On September 19-20, 2014, WesleyNexus hosted the first ever science and religion discussion retreat at the West River United Methodist Center near Annapolis, Maryland. Given the limited funds available to us for an activity of this kind and the requirement of a minimum of twenty attendees by the Center, we took a significant leap of faith by taking on this initiative. I am happy to report that it was a smashing success! Thirty five people attended with twenty seven spending the night in accommodations that were quite comfortable but more akin to a college dorm than a penthouse at the Ritz. We gathered Friday evening with folks battling the Friday traffic as they exited the Baltimore and Washington urban centers for the retreat on the Chesapeake bay. After checking in and getting to know each other's names, home towns and congregational affiliation, we settled in to watch Brian Swimme's "[Journey of the Universe](#): An Epic Story of Cosmic, Earth and Human Transformation." This one hour video expertly produced by Yale University historian of religions Mary Evelyn Tucker covers the cosmic story of our evolving universe from the big bang to the symbol using, meaning-seeking sapiens that we are.



After the film, we had a short discussion reflecting on the themes of the film. It was not surprising that our group noticed a significant gap in the presentation of the development of human species: the failure to mention the ubiquity of the sacred across languages and cultures going back to prehistoric times. It turns out that this was a deliberate choice on the part of Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker. In conversation with one of our invited discussion leaders, the choice was made by the producers to limit the references to religion as such in order to reach and hopefully awaken the sense of the cosmic story in an audience that is increasingly secular, theologically unformed and frequently confused about how the cosmic story can be told credibly within communities of faith. It appears that those of us interested in the science and religion dialogue have a lot to do in presenting this story to our constituents.

The next day, after beginning with worship, (the order of worship can be found [here](#)) we were graced by the introductory keynote given by Dr. Connie Bertka, who serves as Chair of the Societal Impact Committee at the Hall of Human Origins at the Smithsonian Institution, and lecturer at Wesley Theological Seminary, in Washington DC. More of a conversation than a lecture, Dr. Bertka presented insights from her experience as an astro-biologist, having served for years at the Carnegie Institution and now teaching science and religion courses to future ministers in a Protestant seminary.

(We will be posting Dr. Bertka's Powerpoint presentation when it is available.) This discussion set the table for breakout sessions that covered themes from cosmology, to biology to neuroscience. Each participant was able to attend two sessions with 6-8 persons in each group. Because each session was interactive and dynamic, a summary of each session is not available but from personal experience I can attest to the value of both the content and the interpersonal transactions. I learned a great deal and made new friends at the same time. The outline of each discussion session can be found [here](#). After attending two sessions, we came together for a final breakout to discuss future options within the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church on how to reach young persons within the faith and science dialogue. The latter session was led by David Hosey, chaplain intern, the Associate for Campus Ministry at Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church in Washington, DC, who works every day with students from the American University.

We finished the day with a short [worship service](#) with the recognition that we all are responsible to extend the dialogue to those within the United Methodist Church, those within the Wesleyan tradition and even beyond, who may be enriched in both knowledge and faith. At WesleyNexus, we perceive our mission to enable this outreach as best we can. We invite you to join us in this effort.

Well, that's all for now. Please let us know what you and/or your group might be planning in the months ahead so that we can post your meeting schedule and topics in our newsletter. Next month we will have more references and resources. Until then, please remember that we are dependent on you, our participants, for donations to cover expenses for activities like our West River retreat. Please consider supporting us 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

ASA present Dr. Roy Clouser on September 27, 2014

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the American Scientific Affiliation held its first Fall 2014 meeting on Saturday evening, September 27th. Dr. Roy Clouser, retired Professor of Philosophy at the College of New Jersey, presented a talk on "Faith, Reason, and Certainty." We often hear it said that science and religion are opposites because science proceeds by making rational theories and testing them, while religion is a matter of blind faith. Roy, in reference to a chapter in a forthcoming book, examines how the New Testament actually uses the term "faith," arguing that there are three distinct senses for this term in the NT, none of which describes an act of blind trust, belief beyond the evidence, or belief against the evidence. In fact, one of the three uses - the one used for belief that God is real - means

"certainty derived from experience," and is described in the same terms that had been used for centuries to speak of self-evident truth. Roy also reviewed why so few Christian thinkers have pointed this out, and defends the NT's view of self-evident truth over against the traditional view of Western philosophy.

Mark Schaefer's sermon at American University: "What's the Deal with Christians Not Believing in Science?"

Mark Schaefer, American University's full time United Methodist Chaplain, gave a sermon on September 28, 2014 in the Kay Spiritual Life Center tackling what he sees as a significant threat to Christianity, the perception that "Christianity as a whole seems to have a reputation as being anti-science". He addresses three primary reasons for this attitude: 1) The need for scriptural certainty, 2) The need to defend God, and 3) The need to feel we have a place in the cosmos.



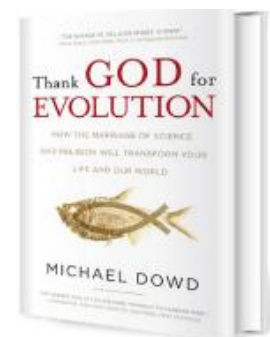
The Christian faith however, calls us to use reason and our ability to learn. "Learning and thinking are meant to be important spiritual disciplines" and there is nothing about science that should be detrimental to faith. To the contrary, when one understands science, "it should provide even more wonder, even more depth into the faith we already have". You can read Rev. Schaefer's sermon [here](#).

Mark Schaefer has degrees in Russian Language and Literature from the State University of New York at Albany before moving to Washington to attend the George Washington University Law School. Mark practiced law in the District for five years before beginning his theological studies at Wesley Theological Seminary. After graduating from Wesley, he was appointed by The United Methodist Church to serve as AU's full time United Methodist Chaplain. He also serves as campus ministry team leader for the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church. Mark has been teaching as an adjunct professor in the Philosophy and Religion Department since fall 2006. He is also a summer instructor in New Testament at neighboring Wesley Theological Seminary.

We thank David Hosey, the chaplain intern at Metropolitan UMC, for informing us of this sermon.

Michael Dowd: Thank God For Evolution

It has been over a decade since Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow hit the road and became "evolutionary evangelists," telling the story of the Epic of Evolution to whoever was willing to hear. His book, [Thank God for Evolution](#) has been praised by many across the intellectual and religious spectrum including six Nobel Prize winners representing physics, medicine, and economics. We who inherit and stand within the Wesleyan tradition can appreciate the dedication that Michael and Connie have given to their itinerant calling. Currently traversing faith communities in Ohio, they will be moving into Western

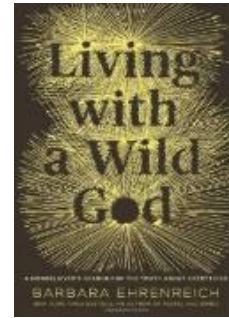


Pennsylvania before heading south to the Washington, DC area the end of October. They will be in Frederick, MD on October 26, swoop down to Silver Spring, MD the next day and then return to Frederick on the 28th. A schedule of all their events can be found [here](#). I encourage all who are able

to find a location near you and attend. To get a preview, check out Michael's TEDx videos [here](#).

Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori: Barbara Ehrenreich's Theophany

In this review of the new book by the well-known author, Barbara Ehrenreich, Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church, invites people of faith to engage the challenge of Ms. Ehrenreich, a self-professed atheist. Schori states that Living with a Wild God "is a brutally clear and honest example of the kind of account claimed by many of the unchurched and unreligious around us today. If you want to understand why Christianity struggles to explain itself, read this. If you want a glimpse of the "spiritual but not religious" milieu in which we live as Western Christians, read this. If you want a deeper sense of the struggles between Western and Global South Christianity, read this. If you want to re-encounter and re-enliven your own spiritual journey, read this". Given that the world we live in and the people we encounter seem to echo Ehrenreich's perspective, we in the science and religion dialogue need to understand and engage this perspective as well. Schori closes her review with an invitation: "Her ascription of agency may not use the same language, but the results have some real coherence with what the Church is out to be and do. Read and enter the conversation — and see what sorts of cardiac conversion might result!" I agree. I invite you to read this review [here](#) and make your own assessment.



Preparing for Discovery: A Rational Approach to the Impact of Finding Microbial, Complex, or Intelligent Life Beyond Planet Earth – A Symposium at the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, September 18-19, 2014.

Last month we gave you a "heads up" on this Symposium, and we hope that many of you connected via the live stream to catch the lectures and presentations. Several from our local science and religion discussion groups were in attendance, including our President Dr. Maynard Moore. Dr. Moore reports that the Symposium was an extraordinary event. It was organized under the direction of Dr. Stephen J. Dick, who serves until October 1 as the Blumberg NASA /Library of Congress Chair in Astrobiology. Dr. Dick provided a comprehensive lecture the first morning on "History, Discovery, Analogy" that set the stage for the entire Symposium. Dr. Seth Shostak of the SETI Institute, presented initial keynote remarks, and the remainder of the two days featured three hour sessions with four panelists on each topic, including scholars from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, the Technical University of Berlin, The Vatican Observatory, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, and the Center for Theological Inquiry at Princeton. Since the Symposium's end, Dr. Dick has announced that the proceedings will be published as a book (some months from now) but a number of the presentations will be available on the Library of Congress website, as they become available. We encourage everyone to log on to that website: www.loc.gov/kluge and blogs.loc.gov/kluge and follow on facebook: @klugeCtr.

Event: Capital Science Evenings

Capital Science Evenings are free and open to the public and last approximately one hour. No tickets are required but registration is recommended. Seating is on a first-come, first served basis. All programs are held at the Carnegie Institution, 1530 P Street, NW. Click [here](#) for more information.

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SCIENCE

Washington Theological Consortium 42nd Annual Faculties' Convention, Sept 29, 2014

The [Washington Theological Consortium](#), which brings together faculty and Deans at some twenty theological institutions in the greater Washington DC area, held an extremely successful, well attended Symposium hosted by the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America on



September 29, 2014. The theme of this 2014 Symposium was “Reframing Theological Anthropology for an Ecological Age,” and featured a stimulating lecture by Dr. Janie Schaefer, Professor of Theology and Ethics at Marquette University. One of her most insightful books is *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, and she has written extensively on the Climate Crisis, Environmental Justice, and the engagement of Theology with the natural sciences. The Symposium featured a series of discussion groups, one of which featured Wesley Seminary Professor Dr. Beth Norcross (who also serves on the Advisory Board of WesleyNexus), who is founder of the Green Seminary Initiative, and leads several other initiatives in ecological justice. The Symposium was held under the auspices of Dr. Gay Byron, Howard University School of Divinity and Chair of the Consortium Council of Academic Deans, and the program was organized by Dr. Larry Golemon, WTC Executive Director.