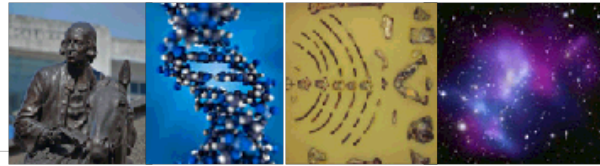


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

March 23, 2016

WesleyNexus produces our newsletter once a month targeting the last 10 days of the month for completion and distribution. This month we are producing the letter right in the middle of Holy Week, the most significant week on the Christian calendar. With our focus on the Wesleyan tradition, this presents an interesting dilemma. Either postpone for a week or more or risk publishing when most of our readers are focusing on what it really means to be a Christian. We have chosen the latter but hope that the contents this month will enhance your Easter experience. As usual, we are providing information on upcoming events of note. In addition, you will find resources that we hope will enrich your Holy Week reflections and worship experiences. We have classified them into three categories, Awe and Mystery, Humility, and Hope, themes present from the very beginning of Christianity.

WesleyNexus is an all-volunteer organization and relies on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. Evolution Weekend again was successful and as mentioned last month, depletes a significant amount of funds available to us. We thank everyone who helped contribute to this effort. Going forward, we will need support for our ongoing programs and to accumulate funds for the rest of the year. As always, all funds that we collect as donations are spent on maintaining our web presence, sponsoring programs, distributing the newsletter, and promoting activities of other organizations within the science and religion space. **All contributions are acknowledged for tax reporting purposes either through PayPal receipt or by letter.** 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



Thanks in advance for your support.

God Bless,

Rick, Maynard, and the rest of the  
WesleyNexus Board of Directors

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## Upcoming Events IRAS Conference

The Summer Conference is IRAS's flagship event. It is an exceptional opportunity to get away from daily routines long enough to engage in deep and trans-formative learning; to encounter others with a passion for

human well-being; to participate in respectful and informed dialogue illuminated by the best scientific, religious and philosophical insights. All of this occurs in a setting that is physically beautiful, ecologically responsible, psychologically safe, intellectually reliable, personally challenging, spiritually uplifting and family/child friendly. Each Summer Conference explores a focal question that demands the best of science, religion, spirituality and philosophy to map its dimensions. The theme of the 2016 IRAS Summer Conference, scheduled for June 25-July 2 on Star Island (off the coast of New Hampshire) is **How Can We Know? Co-creating Knowledge in Perilous Times: *What does knowing and living reliably, inclusively, sustainably and humanely now require of us – as persons, communities, institutions and whole societies?*** As a collaborating partner with IRAS, WesleyNexus benefits from the following discounts available to those in our network. Any person in the WesleyNexus network – any of you who subscribe to our monthly newsletter – can take advantage of these discounts:

- Conference registration at a 30% discount
- Room and Board 30% discount on Star Island, plus another \$50 back.
- More information on our website [www.wesnexus.org](http://www.wesnexus.org)
- More information on the IRAS website [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org)

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**Process and Faith online**  
 April 4, 2016  
 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM PT  
**ONLINE CONFERENCE:**  
 Real Spirituality for Your Church. Workshops on prayer, preaching, Bible study and more.  
 Keynote lectures by Dr. Bruce Epperly and Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinosa



For more information check out [www.processandfaith.org](http://www.processandfaith.org).

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**The Story of God**  
 The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, premiering Sunday, April 3 at 9/8c, will take viewers on a trip around the world to explore different cultures and religions on the ultimate quest to uncover the meaning of life, God and all the questions in between.



Go to National Geographic's **The Story of God** [here](#).

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**Gerald May Seminar with Ilia Delio**  
**April 29 -30, 2016**  
**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville, MD**

**(From the website)**  
 The Gerald May Seminar is offered in memory of the life and legacy of Gerald (Jerry) May. Jerry served on Shalem’s staff for many years and was our Senior Fellow for Contemplative Theology and Psychology. The Seminar is held every year to strengthen the great themes of contemplative understanding and practice that Jerry so valued.



**Ilia Delio, OSF** is a Franciscan Sister and the Josephine C. Connelly Endowed Chair in Theology at Villanova University. She holds a doctorate in Historical Theology from Fordham University and is the author of fourteen books, including Care for Creation; The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love; and From Teilhard to Omega: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe.

Friday, 7-9: “Have We Lost Our Minds (Literally): Ecology in an Age of Technology”  
Saturday, 10 AM – 4 PM: “Consciousness and Christogenesis: Teilhard's Two Energies”

Registration and additional information can be found [here](#).

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**Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, June 3 @ Marriott Wardman Park Hotel  
WesleyNexus holds its annual Breakfast Briefing for Conference Attendees**

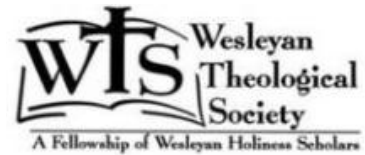
During the Baltimore-Washington Conference session June 1-3, at the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington DC, WesleyNexus will hold its fourth annual breakfast briefing for any Conference delegate who wishes to attend. Registration is now open for Annual Conference, and one simply needs to register for the meal on Friday June 3 using the regular meal registration process. This is an informal discussion around the breakfast table in a private room, and will feature a short presentation by Mr. Curtis Baxter, who will speak about the “Science and Seminaries” project being implemented by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. NOTE: Any interested clergyperson or lay delegate to the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference is encouraged to register for the Friday morning breakfast using the standard registration form on the BWCUMC website. If you have already registered for the Conference but did not buy the Friday breakfast, an email to the Conference registrar will serve to make the addition to your registration: [AC2016@BWCUMC.org](mailto:AC2016@BWCUMC.org) and Darlene Washington can help you add the meal to your registration. If you already bought the general meal ticket for Friday morning, just use it, follow the signs and come to the breakfast. Finally, our colleagues in other Annual Conferences might follow this lead and organize a sharing session at your own Annual Conference. It is a good way to discover who might be interested in participating in the ongoing science and religion dialogue.

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**Past Events**

**Report of the 51st Annual Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society  
March 2016**

“Held March 11-12, on the beautiful campus of Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA, the 51st Annual Meeting was a great success with over 250 society members and friends in attendance! More than 25 institutions, churches, and Wesleyan/Holiness groups were represented, international attendees came from as far as Norway, the UK, and Korea, and over 40 graduate students were with us at the meeting”. See the whole report [here](#).



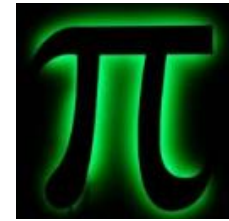
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**Reflections for Easter**

**Awe and Mystery:**

## The Puzzling Nature of Pi

March 14 was Pi Day, the day when math nerds, philosophers and even a few theologians reflect on the meaning of infinity within our daily lives. Pi ( $\pi$ ), is a number used in the measurement of the circumference of circles, approximately 3.1415. As we all learned in school, pi can only be measured approximately, for it is a continuous number that never repeats. It never settles in to any kind of pattern.



Its use is so common that we forget how really weird this is. As Ilana Strauss points out, however, it is in pi that “infinity merges with the earth”. She goes on to say that “When you dig into pi, you encounter questions that are as much theological as mathematical: is there a pattern to the universe? Or is it fundamentally random? And how do we reckon with the infinite?” At Easter, Christians affirm that the infinite God, source of all creation, including pi, is also uniquely, fully present the one who died on the cross and yet remains with us still as a living reality and as an ever-present mystery. As the Gospel of John states: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being”.

You can read Strauss’ article [here](#).

Also go to <http://www.piday.org/learn-about-pi/> for more information on pi.

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## Quantum Weirdness Now a Matter of Time by George Musser

Those of us who have dipped our toes into the world of modern quantum physics via the popular writings of physicists such as Paul Davies ([God and the New Physics](#)) and John Gribbin ([In Search of Schrödinger's Cat](#)) are familiar with the notion of quantum weirdness. As Richard Feynman stated, “If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics.” Things may have just gotten a little weirder. “In 2012, Jay Olson and Timothy Ralph, both physicists at the University of Queensland in Australia, laid out a procedure to encrypt data so that it can be decrypted only at a specific moment in the future. Their scheme exploits quantum entanglement, a phenomenon in which particles (or points in a field), such as the electromagnetic field, shed their separate identities and assume a shared existence, their properties becoming correlated with one another’s. Normally physicists think of these correlations as spanning space, linking far-flung locations in a phenomenon that Albert Einstein famously described as “spooky action at a distance.” But a growing body of research is investigating how these correlations can span time as well. What happens now can be correlated with what happens later, in ways that elude a simple mechanistic explanation. In effect, you can have spooky action at a delay... Quantum correlations come first, space-time later. Exactly how does space-time emerge out of the quantum world? Brukner said he is still unsure”. Awesome! Read the article [here](#).



For a more extensive treatment of this phenomenon, pick up a paperback copy of Brian Clegg's [The God Effect: Quantum Entanglement: Science's Strangest Phenomenon](#). We would welcome anyone in our network to write a brief (two page) review of this book for a future newsletter.

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## Learning to Connect with the Divine: An Interview of Christopher Rodkey

Christopher D. Rodkey is a United Church of Christ pastor and religious educator, professor, and author. He is pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in

Dallastown, Pennsylvania, and teaches at Penn State York and Lancaster Theological Seminary. He holds doctorates from Drew University and Meadville Lombard Theological Seminary and is a graduate of the University of Chicago and Saint Vincent College. He is the author of multiple books including The Synaptic Gospel: Teaching the Brain to Worship. In this interview by Tripp Fuller ([www.HatcheryLA.com](http://www.HatcheryLA.com)), Christopher Rodkey reflects on how our emerging knowledge in science tells us that we need to introduce Christian practice early on. The sense of awe and mystery needs to be developed early as children (through practice) participate in worship and other forms of religious life. It needs to be done at an appropriate level, not as a separate activity but as an integrated aspect of church life. You can view the video [here](#).

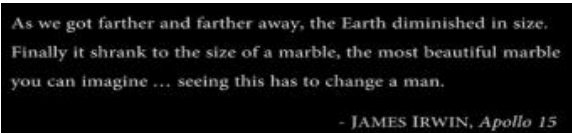


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**Humility:**

**Model of the Solar System to Scale**

We get used to throwing huge numbers around when we discuss that age of the universe or the breadth of the cosmos. It has been 13.7 billion years since the big bang and the universe is similarly 13.7 billion light years across; this is the limit as to what we can see since we cannot see a greater distance than light can travel. Even the size of our solar system defies the imagination. Film maker Wylie Overstreet has created a film which depicts to scale our solar system. A group of friends discovered there were no proportional models of the solar system with complete planetary orbits—most portray the planets and moons as too close together. So, they decided to build a proportional model. On a dry lakebed in Nevada, the group constructed a model by drawing circles in the desert around a 1.5 meter sun and a marble-sized Earth small enough to get lost in filmmaker Wylie Overstreet's pocket. The result is a stunning work of land art that allows viewers to see the full circle of the Earth with their own eyes.



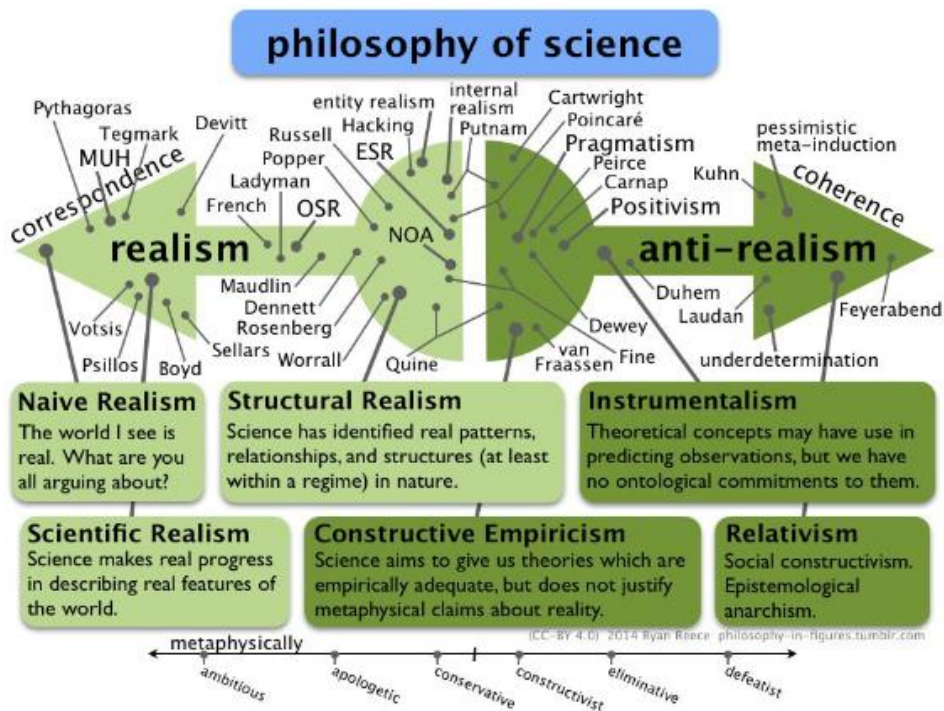
<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/417309/our-place-in-the-universe/>

Thanks to Terry Bradfield, Vice President for Administration at Wesley Theological Seminary for pointing this out. Even though the model demonstrates an earth size that appears insignificant, a couple of recent articles present a different take. In the February 19 edition of Scientific American, the authors portray the special nature of the earth. And a companion article by Nathaniel Scharping in Discover, an online journal, makes the claim for earth's uniqueness. Neither of these articles has (as yet) appeared in peer-reviewed literature, but you can access each, very short, article [here](#) and [here](#)..... Thanks to Dr. Alexandra McPherron, Principal Scientist at MYO Therapeutics, for accessing and sharing these two articles.

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**Philosophy of Science**

Too often we argue with those with whom we disagree by using phrases such as “the science says this” or “science tells us that” or “we know from scientific evidence proves such and such”. WesleyNexus is all for science -- it tells us a great deal about the world and about ourselves. However, it also identifies that which we do not know and points to many questions that cannot be answered through science. One of these questions is “What is science?” The diagram below depicts the various ways that philosophers of science have answered this question. Like so many deep questions, what first appears as plain and obvious begins to be less so as one digs deep into questions of what we are doing when we do science. Perhaps a bit of humility is in order even within the profoundly successful sciences such as physics and chemistry.



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**Who Was Jesus**

Perhaps one of the most humbling questions that a Christian can ask is “who was Jesus, really?” Like the diagram above, the answers will be all over the map ranging from traditional to radical understandings of Jesus the human being, Jesus, the Son of God and Jesus the Savior. We tend to rely on popular books that are easily accessible and digestible to move our investigation forward. With the exception of pastors and academics, few are able to immerse themselves in a semester long course given by a world renowned scholar without spending money and commuting to a university or seminary campus. With the internet and open courses given by top universities, all this has changed. Open Yale now offers, free of charge, a 22 session course on the Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature presented by Dale Martin, Woolsey Professor of Religious Studies at Yale. The course can be found [here](#).



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**Hope:**

**Resurrection by Iliia Delio**

Evolution means that Christ is not yet complete and WE are not complete. In Jesus, God's self-communication explodes into history. For the theologically inclined, evolution assumes a direction and a purpose. The ever-changing, evolving universe in encompassed by God, with the hope that the promise will one day be fulfilled. For Christians, Jesus is the Christ, the culmination of that long development through whom the world becomes aware of itself and comes into a conscious relationship with God. Ilea Delio, the author of the recent book Emergent Christ has succinctly captured this uniquely Christian hope. The reflection excerpted from Delio's book last year can be found [here](#).



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**Celebrating Mixed Religion: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Syncretism by Rev. Carl Gregg**



We live in a time of great religious pluralism where the once dominant Christian Protestantism is rapidly giving way to religious diversity in belief and practice. This diversity makes many feel uncomfortable and anxious. Methodists, though having a long history of interfaith contact and conversation, are not immune. Even Unitarians, not generally perceived as confessional, can still feel the pangs of discomfort when engaging in interfaith dialog. While science and religion provide a framework for engaging with other faiths a shared process of inquiry, it, too, pushes to the boundaries of acceptable “faith.” In a 2014 blog, Unitarian pastor Carl Gregg suggested we celebrate this diversity and he invites us to engage in selective syncretism whereby one combines beliefs and practices of one or more religions. He points out that both Christmas and Easter have ancient predecessors. While not necessarily beneficial, syncretism does, at its best, provide “hybrid vigor.” It is inevitable in any case with Christianity being one example. Syncretism can be hope-filled and promising and does not always lead to conflict and discord. We should therefore be “grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision.” The article can be found [here](#).

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**Philip Clayton on Transforming Theology**

Philip Clayton engages this new syncretistic, multiple religious reality that statistics show is becoming the dominant mode of spirituality in a short video recorded in 2009. As an Easter meditation, it is worth reflecting on the insights presented [here](#). (Note: Phil Clayton is on the WesleyNexus Advisory Board)



**Find One’s Own Radical Voice.**

In 2012, Philip Clayton participated in an Interfaith Lecture Series hosted by the Chautauqua Institution. The title of his lecture was “The Faces of Radical Religion in the Early 21st Century.” In this lecture he presents in more depth some of the themes mentioned in the short video above.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMks39yVQRk>

**Other lectures from the series can be found on youtube.com as well.**

Buddhism (Elaine Yuen) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUGibvq86Xw>

Episcopal (John Chane) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfCm57kHIis>

Eboo Patel (Interfaith Youth Core) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39QoHPFVP2U>

Judaism (Rabbi Arthur Waskow) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwxEd\\_BXbW4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwxEd_BXbW4)

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**Albert Schweitzer: From the Quest for the Historical Jesus**

**“He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words: "Follow thou me!" and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall**

pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.”

**Happy Easter!**

