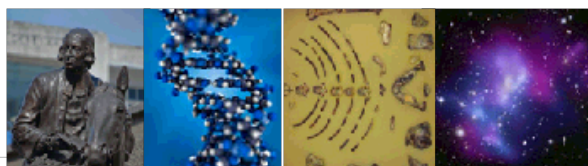


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

May 24, 2016

May 15 was Pentecost Sunday, the celebration 50 days after Easter when, according to Book of Acts, a small group of Jesus followers experienced a profound experience marked by violent wind, tongues of fire and the filling of each by the Holy Spirit. Two thousand years later we are still remembering that exceptional, transformative experience and trying to make sense of it. For some, depending on a secular or a spiritual frame of mind, the experience can be reduced to a more causative explanation: a misfiring of brain networks or the simple transparent movement God's miraculous intervention. Others continue to ask what sort of experience it was that lead a group of inconspicuous peasants to have both the conviction and the energy to risk all for the vision of a new creation. Simple reductionism, either of materialism or spiritualism, doesn't seem to answer all the questions. The mystery persists. In this month's newsletter we will not try to answer this question which is certainly beyond our ability to fully comprehend. However, we will point out some suggestive resources for reflection that point to the dimension of aesthetic encounter, experiences that go beyond words, beyond creeds and beyond rational proof. While words, creeds and reason are all important, as the Wesleyan tradition has always affirmed, there is a dimension of personal and communal engagement that provides existential grounding for a deep faith. Science, art, literature and music comprise aspects of this experience as well. Robert Neville in his recent book on religion quotes Karen Armstrong saying **"An increasing number of people find traditional religious doctrines and practices irrelevant and incredible, and turn to art, music, literature, dance, sport, or drugs to give them the transcendent experience that humans seem to require. We all look for moments of ecstasy and rapture, when we inhabit our humanity more fully than usual and feel deeply touched within and are lifted momentarily beyond ourselves. We are meaning-seeking creatures and, unlike other animals, fall very easily into despair if we cannot find significance and value in our lives."** (Robert Neville, *Religion: Philosophical Theology, Volume 3*, p. 16). Given the conflict over creed, law and discipline in the recently concluded General Conference of the United Methodist Church, WesleyNexus wants to highlight this experiential aspect of our human life, an aspect shared by people religious and secular alike.

WesleyNexus is an all-volunteer organization and relies on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. 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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**Will You Hold My Hand? By Rev. Laura Easto**

Rev. Laura Easto is Superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District in the Baltimore-Washington Conference and one of five bloggers sharing insights on the United Methodist General Conference in Oregon this month. She entered the ministry in 1984, pastoring churches in a number of locations throughout Maryland. In 2007, she served as the superintendent of the former Baltimore North District, then served as pastor again in Westminster, MD. In 2013 she became Superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District. In this blog Rev. Easto focuses on the healing, profoundly rejuvenating power of being with another, holding hands. Simple touching, beyond words, beyond belief, just being and being with.



Read her blog [here](#).

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**Common Good City Farm (“Secular” Grace in the City)**

The mission of Common Good City Farm is to grow food, educate, and help low-income DC community members meet their food needs. Their vision is to serve as a replicable model of a community-based urban food system.



Common Good City Farm's programs provide hands-on training in food production, healthy eating and environmental sustainability. The Farm itself serves as a demonstration site to individuals, organizations and government agencies in the DC Metro area. The site and our programs integrate people of all ages, classes and races to create vibrant and safe communities.

Since 2007, Common Good City Farm has taught over 1000 DC residents in workshops, engaged over 1500 DC school children, and hosted over 2000 volunteers. In 2010, Common Good City Farm provided over 6000 servings of fresh vegetables to low-income DC families.

The Common Good Farm experience, in the center of the Ledroit Park section of Washington, is spiritually uplifting and emotionally stimulating. The energy and dedication that is exhibited by the managers of the farm reflect their personal sense of calling. While the language of the church may not be found, the spirit of the Gospel is present, to feed the hungry and provide a sense of community connection. Ironically, when asked if any churches were engaged in their project, they could not think of one. Here is an obvious opportunity for missional collaboration between faith communities and those outside the faith. You can find out more information about Common Good City Farm [here](#).

Enjoy the beauty of their engagement in the pictures below.



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**Harmonic Resonance by Harmonic Introductions.**

The 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month, a small group gathers together at Bar Louie in Rockville, Maryland to discuss theology. The group was started by Rev. Jill McCory of Twinbrook Baptist Church as a mechanism to reach persons who feel disconnected from traditional religion. Twinbrook Baptist Church is a progressive faith community which welcomes all and isn't afraid of the tough questions about faith and belief. The “pub theology” group is an extension of this open approach to faith. On the first Wednesday in May, a group of four “20 something” young people attended for the first time. The discussion focused on spiritual experience and the nature of novelty and transformation. As we introduced ourselves and got a little background from each of us, one individual pointed out that he was not religious himself but was a member of a musical group, Harmonic Introductions, that is provided support and encouragement from a local Episcopalian church. And while he and others in his musical group were not necessarily persons of faith, he believed that there is a clear spiritual aspect to the unique singing performed by the group. Their music is based on the auditory physics of harmonics, (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harmonic>) and leverages the understanding of harmonic resonance to create an unusual (from a western perspective), meditative sound accomplished through the coordination and manipulation of multiple human voices. You can hear the wonderfully calming creations of Harmonic Introductions, all made by human voice, and read a little about the group [here](#).



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**On Harmonic Resonance as an Interpretive Metaphor by Dominique Peccoud, S.J**

In a 2011 interview with Katherine Marshall of the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Dominique Peccoud reflected on what is unique about the Christian faith and the importance of faith in providing meaning to life. Midway through the interview, Peccoud remarked that the metaphor that captures the nature of his work is “harmonic resonance.” He characterized the working relationships as harmonic resonance, enhancing the constructive relationships in very challenging circumstances. Here is how he described it.



“As I reflect on what constitutes a positive human relationship, the best example I can point to here is our own relationship, the two of us. I see it as one that is positive, a success. Our relationship began one day many years ago, when I was at the ILO, working on a range of questions around labor and international

issues; you were still at the World Bank, focused on a group that Jim Wolfensohn, then the President of the World Bank, had created that was trying to see what links there might be between faith and development. I believe that we met first, at my request, at your office in Washington. We spoke, and already, in that first conversation, there was a fit that arose from two things. The first was that we were both concerned, even preoccupied, by the diversity of religious approaches in the world, and by the positive and negative impacts that this diversity could have. We found a common point of interest, where our activities and the direction our respective work was taking converged. The second thing that I recall from our relationship was that, from the beginning and continuing from there, we found ourselves almost immediately in a relationship that involved creative reasoning with lot of peaceful, even though sometimes difficult, discussions. There was a harmonic resonance.

What do I mean by harmonic resonance? I am a cellist, and my cello hangs on the wall in my room. When I sing in the morning, sometimes the tone makes the strings of the cello vibrate. That is resonance, a harmonic effect that finds a resonance in something else. What do I think makes for such creative resonance? It implies, in our case, that we were in a relationship of mutual confidence, in which there has never been any kind of game, no issue of the power of one of us over the other. You were doing your job at the World Bank, and I mine at the ILO, and we were not seeking anything particular from the other. There was no sense that one of us was in a dominant position over the other. It was a relationship that was reciprocal and mutual. So in this relation, from the start, we were able to establish a working “culture” that drew inspiration from common, shared qualities: our knowledge of the international organizations, our passion and opening to the wonders of the world, our love of travel and the diversity of cultures. Thus we found various fields where there was resonance. And after that first meeting, we found a common desire to do something together.”

“Dominique Peccoud, S.J., was the former special advisor to the Bureau for External Relations and Partnerships of the International Labour Office (ILO). He led several interfaith consultations focused on the concept of “Decent Work,” a central theme of the ILO. As a member of both the French Academy of Agriculture and the French National Academy of Engineering, Fr. Peccoud led various advanced educational institutions and advised the French government and non-governmental organizations on the ethical dimensions of social and economic issues and on problems regarding the application of new technologies. He is the editor of Philosophical and Spiritual Perspectives on Decent Work (2004).”  
<http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-dominique-peccoud-s-j>

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### **Smithsonian's Broader Social Impacts Committee of the Human Origins Program**

Over the week-end just completed, the Smithsonian's Broader Social Impacts Committee of the Human Origins Program, Co-Chaired by Dr. Connie Bertka and Dr. James Miller (both of whom serve on WesleyNexus' Advisory Board), held a committee consultation in the Museum of Natural History on the Mall in Washington, and on Sunday May 22nd, the Committee sponsored a public event in the Museum Theater featuring a presentation by Dr. David Sloan Wilson, Professor of Evolutionary Biology at the State University of New York, Binghamton. The audience packed every seat and was fully engaged with Wilson's presentation, which focused on the significance of social and cultural evolution that is unique to the human species. In a progression through millennia, Wilson demonstrated how “what is good for me might be bad for my family,” then what is good for my family might be bad for the group, and what is good for the group might be bad for the clan, and what is good for the clan might be bad for the nation, and what is good for the nation might be bad for the planet.” Gradually and with many failures and much retrogression, humanity is learning that we must adapt a planetary perspective if our species is going to flourish, and, in fact, this “other-centric” stance is totally consistent with how the human species has

evolved in a multi-group context. Wilson has pioneered much creative thinking over the last three decades on the importance of altruism in human evolution, and is actively participating in several projects being sponsored by such “interspirituality” groups as the Fellowship of Intentional Community, the Dancing Rabbit, and The Evolutionary Institute. He is collaborating with Father Kurt Johnson, an ordained monk, promoting global consciousness and prosociality. Wilson is well known to those of us active in the science & religion dialogue through his previous books Evolution for Everyone, and Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion and the Nature of Society.

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**Why is simpler better? By Elliott Sober**

Elliott Sober is co-author with David Sloan Wilson of the influential book Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior (Harvard University Press, 1998). The subtitle of Sober’s May, 2016 essay on the scientific understanding of simplicity is: “Ockham’s Razor says that simplicity is a scientific virtue, but justifying this philosophically is strangely elusive.” It seems so obvious and fundamental, but it is “demonstrably relevant to forming judgments about what the world is like, there is in the end no unconditional and presuppositionless justification for Ockham’s Razor.” It is an insight that we cannot do without in science but in the end is not provable. In this essay Sober unpacks issues behind Ockham’s Razor.



<https://aeon.co/essays/are-scientific-theories-really-better-when-they-are-simpler>

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**On Being by Krista Tippett, April 28, 2016**

Frank Wilczek is a Nobel Prize winning physicist who was recently interviewed by Krista Tippett in a segment of her NPR radio program, which can be found OnBeing.org. In the interview, Wilczek reflects on the nature of beauty and meaning. Contrary to the notion that beauty is in the eye of the holder, Wilczek states that beauty and meaning have the same feeling. Beauty is not just a subjective feeling but something beyond private experience. Beauty is to be found in the deepest themes of art, science and, in particular, mathematics. As such, mathematics is not just about propositions and logic but points to something deeper and more profound, for “All Things Are Number.” Referring to the first page of his new book, A Beautiful Question, Wilczek asks a simple but enigmatic question: Is the Universe a work of art? In this one question, Wilczek invites us to move from objective, dispassionate description to aesthetic encounter, from the state of flux (which is the world) to the eternal, to the realm of numbers in which we participate. You can hear the interview [here](#) and also read a book review on Slate.com [here](#).



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**Harold Morowitz (1927-2016): A Philosopher, a Molecular chemist, an essayist, and a good friend of WesleyNexus**

On March 22, Dr. Harold J. Morowitz died with complications from pepsis, even as his most recent book is in the final stages of publication. Since 1988, Dr. Morowitz had been a Clarence Robinson Professor of biology and natural philosophy at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. He had earlier spent 32 years at Yale University, where he became a professor of molecular biophysics and biochemistry. Author of 19 previous books on a wide range of subjects, Morowitz helped establish at George



Mason University the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study, a body of scholars, including four Nobel Prize-winners, who determined that the Institute would function as a think tank to study the brain. Dr. Morowitz was its director from its opening in 1993 until 1998. He was known to many of us the field of Science and Religion dialogue from his early 1980s testimony at the so-called “Scopes II” trial in Arkansas, in the McLean case that challenged a state law calling for the teaching of “creation science” in public schools alongside evolutionary biology. Dr. Morowitz gave expert testimony that there is no scientific basis for the creationist belief in the origin of life and therefore it should not be taught as science in the public school curriculum. He authored the influential book The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex, and in recent years, was working with colleagues at George Mason and at the Santa Fe Institute on questions concerning the origin of life. Dr. Maynard Moore, President of WesleyNexus, frequently visited with Dr. Morowitz at his apartment near the George Mason campus, and writes the following: “I first met Harold Morowitz in 2004 at a presentation at the National Academy of Science sponsored by the National Capital chapter of the Academy, and in discussions afterward, he somehow took a liking to me, and invited me as his guest to the annual session of Cosmos and Creation, sponsored by Father Jim Salmon at Loyola of Baltimore. He subsequently made several presentations at our churches under WesleyNexus sponsorship, and made several additional connections for us with scientist colleagues. He would always introduce me to them as “his favorite Methodist panentheist,” and I ended up with a complimentary copy of about a dozen of his books, several of which had been long out of print. He was always eager for a lunch conversation, which I could accommodate once about every ninety days when I had appointments in the vicinity of the University. I treasure those conversations and the many email exchanges on questions I would pose concerning entropy, chemical processes, human consciousness and emergence. So I now must fill a new void in my own life, but I will always remember Harold's towering intellect and his uncompromising sense of humor. There won't be another like him in our lifetimes.” You can read the full obituary in the Washington Post [here](#).

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**Hilary Putnam (1926-2016): A Philosopher of Science's Late-Life Return to His Native Judaism – by Erik Deff (University of Chicago Divinity School)**

In March, 2016, Hilary Putnam, professor of philosophy at Harvard University died leaving a legacy of fifty years of scholarship in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of science. He was raised an atheist by progressive, politically active parents and was unaffiliated with any faith for most of his life. When he turned 68, both Putnam and his wife, also an accomplished scholar in her own right, returned to the Jewish heritage of their ancestors. While not one to believe in any form of supernaturalism, he was drawn to the existential faith of Jewish thinkers such as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas. As Erik Deff points out, “by returning to the religious heritage his parents had consciously marginalized, Putnam demonstrated that even for a philosopher, life’s spiritual and existential dimensions must be given their place. It was through Judaism, that he found a way to make sense of the soul searching and questioning many Westerners have and of the inner tensions most feel.” Deff’s article can be found [here](#).



For a recent review of one of Putnam’s last books, read the article by Malcolm Nicholson [here](#).

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**AN OFFERING FOR A WAY FORWARD: Statement from Council of Bishops, May 18, 2016**

For those who are not aware of the United Methodist Church’s Council

Of Bishop’s Statement, it can be accessed through the link below. Bishop Ough delivered a response to that plea on behalf of the Council of Bishops. "We share with you a deep commitment to the unity of the Church in Christ our Lord," he said. "We accept our role as spiritual leaders to lead the UMC in a 'pause for prayer - to step back from attempts at legislative solutions, and to intentionally seek God's will for the future." The Council of Bishops' report recommends that “The General Conference defer all votes on human sexuality and refer this entire subject to a special Commission, named by the Council of Bishops, to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality. We continue to hear from many people on the debate over sexuality that our current Discipline contains language which is contradictory, unnecessarily hurtful, and inadequate for the variety of local, regional and global contexts. We will name such a Commission to include persons from every region of our UMC, and that will include representation from differing perspectives on the debate. We commit to maintain an ongoing dialogue with this Commission as they do their work, including clear objectives and outcomes. Should they complete their work in time for a called General Conference, then we will call a two- to three-day gathering before the 2020 General Conference.” Click [here](#) to read the full statement.” From <http://www.wisconsinumc.org>



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**Action at General Conference on Science and Religion petitions:**

There were five separate petitions submitted for consideration to the section on Church and Society at the recently concluded General Conference in Portland. Largely thanks to the work of Rev Jong-Woo Park, Dean of the Cabinet in the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Advisory Board member with WesleyNexus, one of these petitions was passed by majority vote at the “11th hour” before adjournment. At the legislation section during the first week, the five petitions, three of them authored by our colleague Dr. Gary Sherman, were combined into one, and tabled until the language could be word-smithed. At the petition of Rev JW Park, the combined resolution, having been edited and streamlined, was taken off the table and passed by the committee and sent to the floor. One of the recommendations from the earlier petitions, that supporting the Clergy Letter Project, was added back in as an amendment. Among the affirmations in the final draft, this language can be found:

**Our Commitment**

As The United Methodist Church we understand our responsibility to address and our complicity in the challenges facing God’s creation. We urge all United Methodists, local faith communities, agencies, and institutions to examine their roles as caretakers of creation and to study, discuss, and work to implement this resolution. Specifically, The United Methodist Church: Designates one Sunday each year, preferably the Sunday closest to Earth Day or World Environment Day, as a Festival of God’s Creation incorporating creation care into the church’s worship and study. Promotes an environmentally sound lifestyle mindful of consumption amid a culture that encourages overconsumption and waste. Commits to reducing, reusing, and recycling goods and to the use of recycled and “processed chlorine free” paper by United Methodist boards, agencies, and publishers. Encourages all institutions to perform energy audits, improve energy efficiency, and utilize clean, renewable energy sources where available.

We are grateful to all those who worked so diligently on the legislation at General Conference, and give special thanks for all who worked on this resolution, after more than 36 months of preparatory work. The full text of the approved resolution can be found [here](#).

To review content of and track GC actions on approved petition 60448 see: <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/legislation-tracking>

To review content and track GC actions on deleted petition 60181, see:  
<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/legislation-tracking>

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**The STEAM PROJECT:**

The STEAM Project is a program for catalyzing the integration of Christian faith and science for emerging adults (18-30 years old) in college and post-college ministries. This is how the program works:

- Assemble a team - Two or more people with a knowledge-base in Christian faith/ministry and a knowledge-base in a science field
- Declare intent - Explain that you are developing a project
- Build your project - Design your unique program for your unique audience. Using the Request for Proposals form as a guide, review examples and utilize the Grant Project Creation Guide to increase success

Requesting proposals by June 15, 2016 for project awards of \$10,000-\$25,000.

The STEAM project has roots in an early 2011 project that first launched to help local ministries integrate science and theology. The project was called Scientists In Congregations. Scientists in Congregations is a \$2 million grant program, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, created to catalyze the dialogue of theology and science in local congregations. In 2015 Greg Cootsona, received a grant Science for Students and Emerging Young Adults (SEYA). The purpose was to spend sixteen months in research through surveying emerging adults to discover how they formed their views on religion and science and how these attitudes change. STEAM launched officially February 1, 2016 – fueled with excitement to continue moving the s

landscape of  quickly shaping the <http://thesteam.org>



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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.wesnex.org](http://www.wesnex.org)

More information on the IRAS website [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org)

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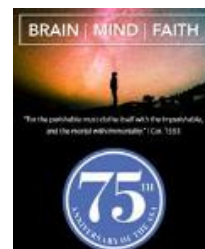
**Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, June 3 @ Marriott Wardman Park Hotel  
WesleyNexus holds its annual Breakfast Briefing for Conference Attendees**

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 remains open for Annual Conference, but the deadline to sign up for the special breakfast event has passed. We will enjoy 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: We have been notified that we have twenty persons registered, which is capacity for these breakfast rooms, so we expect a lively interaction. 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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**Brain/Mind/Faith**

Ted Davis and Justin Barrett will be two of the five plenary speakers at the American Scientific Affiliation 2016 Annual Meeting at Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, CA. The ASA Annual Meeting is being held on July 22-25, 2016. “Brain | Mind | Faith” will include various topical areas for parallel oral sessions. These areas include: Christian Women in Science and Engineering, Physical Sciences, Life and Environmental Sciences, Mind Sciences, Teaching Faith and Science, and more. There will be both introductory and advanced workshops on issues in science and faith. Be sure to stop by the BioLogos booth and receive additional papers and information on science and faith. – (From Biologos.org). Mike Beidler, Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Section of the ASA, along with several others in our section, will be attending the Azusa Conference, and we hope will offer his usual, insightful report for a future WesleyNexus newsletter. See more at: <http://network.asa3.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=798428>



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## **The 34th Annual Cosmos & Creation Conference**

The 34th Annual Cosmos & Creation Conference is scheduled for June 10-11, hosted by Loyola University in Baltimore. Keynote speaker in 2016 will be Brother Guy Consolmagno, S.J.

Director of the Vatican Observatory <http://www.vaticanobservatory.va/content/specolavaticana/en.html>

Theme for the 2016 Conference: Talking of Science and Faith: Frequently-Encountered Questions, and the Replies that Satisfy. Brother Guy's public lectures are: Talking Science to the Faithful, Friday, June 10, 2016 at 7:30 pm in the McManus Theater on the Loyola campus. And, Talking Faith to the Skeptics, Saturday, June 11, 2016, at 10:30 am also in the McManus Theater. Please direct friends, students, and colleagues to the Conference website <http://www.loyola.edu/joinus/cosmosandcreation.aspx>, which lists

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only the public events. Let them know about the public events, and invite those who fit into our membership to attend as a full registrant. Contact Margaret Daley of the Donnelly Center who is handling registration; her email is: [mdaley@loyola.edu](mailto:mdaley@loyola.edu) and her phone no. is 410-617-2464.