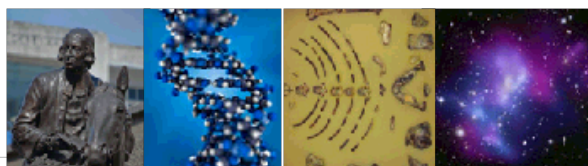


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

November 24, 2016

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

This is a challenging verse. It clearly states what is good and what is required. The verbs that follow are all action oriented: do, love and walk. It does not say think, believe, or reflect on. The target is on what is good and then lays it out as broadly and as succinctly as possible. Do justice, love kindness (or sometime translated mercy) and walk humbly. The problem of course is that doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly are too big on which to get a firm grasp. What, how, by whom and for whom are not laid out and though the rest of the book of Micah provides a bit of clarity, it was written over 2000 years ago with a context profoundly different from ours. WesleyNexus affirms the foundational importance of this passage and seeks to provide a platform for engagement whereby one is encouraged to discover what the world is really like and how things work by promoting science knowledge and awareness at all levels. At the same time the command to act is also affirmed. By understanding of the best hard science, the best social science and the best philosophy and theology available, provisional answers can be developed to reach out and do justice while at the same time promoting kindness with humility. This is the best of the Wesleyan tradition. Humility warns that no single, simple answer is possible or even desired. Yet the command remains.

It is now three days since the world changed. Donald Trump is our President Elect. Many are thrilled at the prospect of a new president and his party taking control. Others are angry, dismayed and even terrified. WesleyNexus does not take a political position on which party should be in power. But it would be disloyal to our mission and call to fail to point out that some policies and beliefs that are being espoused within the administration are concerning. Two in particular need to be pointed out. First, based on current reports, it appears that climate change deniers will be well represented within the administration.

WesleyNexus affirms the conclusions of the majority of climate scientists and strongly urges the necessary action to make progress in this area. Secondly, biological evolution is a well researched and established model understanding how life changes over time. The Book of Discipline (160. Part IV - Social Principles - I. The Natural World) affirms the authority of scientific disciplines to make claims describing the natural world. Biological evolution is one of those claims and this claim is understood as being complementary with our theology. WesleyNexus strongly affirms the Discipline but understands there is much work to be done to communicate this message.

This February, WesleyNexus will sponsor an Evolution Weekend program at the Mission Center of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in Fulton, MD. The timing could not be more urgent. The new administration will be in place and engagement with issues relating to climate change, feeding the planet and the role of minorities will be front and center. For us at WesleyNexus, this is a Micah 6:8 moment. We invite you all to join us and become Micah 6:8 people.

We remain an all-volunteer organization and need support from our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. We thank everyone who helped contribute to this effort. To continue our programs, we will need support from others. 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. You can now designate your contribution in whole or in part to “Discovery & Faith,” our new initiative announced in September that has a focus on developing study materials for children at the *nexus* of science and religion. **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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WesleyNexus again sponsors Evolution Weekend Maryland in 2017

WesleyNexus looks forward to the fifth consecutive **Evolution Weekend** on February 12 – Evolution Weekend which is recognized across the country with sermon, lectures and other programs by a wide spectrum of faith communities. As mentioned last month, our program this year will be “**Are Our Children at Risk? Food Insecurity, Climate Change, Racial Bias.**” It will be live-streamed and available to individuals and groups across the world! For United Methodists in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, we are particularly excited in having **Bishop LaTrelle Easterling**, newly appointed this year as the Episcopal leader in the National Capitol Area, as an active participant in the conversation. Many of us have had an opportunity to welcome Bishop Easterling in a series of district meetings where we have experienced her energy, intelligence and commitment to the Wesleyan way of living out the Christian faith. For those who have not experienced her presence yet, we invite you to attend for she is truly an inspiring leader, even for those who are not Methodist!



We have available now a flyer with the essential information on the program which can be found [here](#). We hope you will plan to attend and invite your friends and neighbors.

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Speaking the Language of Living Faith to a Science Culture by Jennifer Secki Shields

The Discovery & Faith program is still in the early stages of its launch and recently I decided it was time to write a statement of faith for this new ministry. Simple, right? I wrote the first draft and sent it to my WesleyNexus colleagues. What ensued was deep discussion—not about science or religion, but about language and careful

parsing of words. Three drafts and much valuable input later, Discovery & Faith's Statement of Faith emerged.



So what does language have to do with work at the intersection of science and religion matter. The Bible has much to say on this. The book of James (3:5) points out that even the smallest member of the body, if it can do the most damage. Proverbs 18:21 says de the power of our words. Given the decline of the Christian faith in the U.S. and the unprecedented numbers of young people leaving our churches, one wonders if they are hearing words of life?

To read the rest of the article, click [here](http://www.discoveryandfaith.org).
<http://www.discoveryandfaith.org>

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Sinai and Synapses



WesleyNexus has always encouraged dialogue with other faith communities and part of our mission is to reach out and dialogue with other faiths. Sinai and Synapses has recently come to our attention whose mission is consistent with ours. Their mission is as follows:

[Sinai and Synapses](#) offers people a worldview that is both scientifically grounded and spiritually uplifting. It provides tools and language for learning and living to the millions of people who see science as their ally as they pursue personal growth and the repair of our world. Through classes, seminars, lectures, videos and writings, it helps create a vision of religion that embraces critical thinking and scientific inquiry, and at the same time, gives meaning to people's lives and helps them make a positive impact on society.

The article "[How Should We Talk About Science and Religion?](#)" by Rabbi Geoffrey A. Mitelman addresses the science and religion relationship directly as it responds to a talk by Jennifer Wiseman Director of the Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion at the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Of particular note is a quote by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel: "Religion for religion's sake is idolatry...The human side of religion, its creeds, its rituals and instructions is a way rather than the goal. The goal is 'to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'" (Micah 6:8)"

The article can also be found on the Huffington Post [here](#). We invite you to take a look at their website blogs [here](#).

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Charter for Compassion



Another organization that grounds its work in the imperatives of Micah 6:8 is the Charter for Compassion. It is an interfaith, multi-ethnic and multi-national organization. "The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect". It grew out of a February 2008 the TED prize awarded to Karen Armstrong for her wish to create, launch, and propagate a global compassion movement based on the Golden Rule.

You can find their very rich website [here](#).

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Preparing for Public Violence by Jim Skillington

We live in a violent society. Thousands of violent acts occur every day and we expect the “experts” to respond to them. But for the most part, we would like to ignore them and live our lives. Jim Skillington, a United Methodist minister is executive director of the Center for Public Violence Recovery in Columbia, MD. In a conversation with WesleyNexus board member Rick Barr after a forum to meet the new Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Bishop, he identified the crucial need for faith communities, the United Methodist Church in particular, to take pro-active steps to be more effective in preparing for violent events that affect our communities. We should not expect the experts to do it all. Just as important is to work as partners with other societal institutions to alleviate the causes of violence. In this article, Rev. Skillington provides a framework to begin the discussion. <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/7848/preparing-for-public-violence>



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GC2016: The impact of climate change by Linda Bloom

For many United Methodists, taking care of the planet is not just a matter of “going green.”As reflected in petitions to General Conference, the denomination’s top legislative body, the church is moving beyond the still-needed practices of recycling and household energy conservation to larger public policy issues related to fuel consumption and the impact of “business as usual” on global climate change.



The rest of the article can be found [here](#).

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What Science Taught Me About Compassion, Gratitude and Awe by Dacher Keltner

“Dacher Keltner delivered an address at an Awakin Circle in Santa Clara, CA this year. As a world renowned psychologist and researcher, Dacher is credited with expanding the field of science to include emotions like compassion, gratitude, and awe. As the author of many books and over 100 papers, he has offered thought leadership that can shift our cultural narrative towards kindness and care. As an adviser to companies like Facebook, he has applied his research into systemic implementations. As the founder of Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, he has started many projects that put these insights into the societal circulation. His most recent course on 'Science of Happiness' has been taken by 360 thousand students”. While Keltner does not focus on the Judeo-Christian faith in this very personal article, his three pronged approach touches on many issues relevant to living out the Micah 6:8 command. The article can be found [here](#).

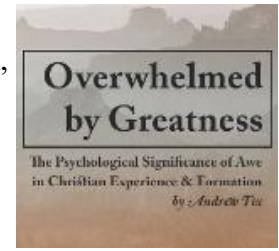


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Overwhelmed by Awe by Andrew Tix

In general, awe may be one of the most spiritually significant emotions that humans experience. And understanding and cultivating awe may be one of the keys to

Christian formation. So states Andrew Tix, Ph.D. who teaches in the Psychology and Religious Studies programs at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota. This article is written from an explicitly Judeo-Christian perspective but pulls together insights from social science research and tradition. While a short, economical piece, it contains numerous links to other articles. The author closes with the following poem from Michael Yaconelli's book Dangerous Wonder:



Tameness is not an option. Take surprise out of faith and all that is left is dry and dead religion. Take away mystery from the Gospel and all that is left is frozen and petrified dogma. Lose your awe of God and you are left with an impotent Deity. Abandon astonishment and you are left with meaningless piety.

The article can be found [here](#).

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Conflict Between Science, Religion Lies in our Brains

Summary: "The conflict between science and religion may have its origins in the structure of our brains. To believe in a supernatural god or universal spirit, people appear to suppress the brain network used for analytical thinking and engage the empathetic network. When thinking analytically about the physical world, people appear to do the opposite."

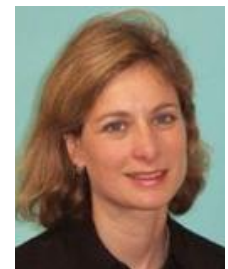


The article can be found [here](#).

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True Breakthroughs Become Part of The Culture by Lisa Randall

Lisa Randall is a physicist at Harvard University and the author of a number of popular books including Dark Matter and the Dinosaurs: The Astounding Interconnectedness of the Universe. In the article linked below, Randall responds to the Annual Question posed by Edge.org. Each year Edge.org asks dozens of intellectuals, mostly of a secular bent, to answer a very broad, probing questions. The 2016 question is: "WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST INTERESTING RECENT [SCIENTIFIC] NEWS? WHAT MAKES IT IMPORTANT?" Randall's response is a bit different from most. In this time of rapid scientific discoveries when something significant seems to happen every month if not every week, true importance is not necessarily measured by the impact on science proper but on how an idea slips into the broader culture. These ideas have staying power. With that in mind, she identifies a number of discoveries that she thinks will stay current in the coming years. For those who participate in the science and religion discussion, these may well become the focus on where science and religion discussions meet in the next few years. You can read the article [here](#).



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Why America's 'nones' left religion behind by Michael Lipka

"Perhaps the most striking trend in American religion in recent years has been the growing percentage of adults who do not identify with a religious group. And the vast majority of these religious "nones" (78%) say they were raised as a member of a particular religion before shedding their religious identity in adulthood."

Half of 'nones' left childhood faith over lack of belief, one-in-five cite dislike of organized religion

Reasons for disaffiliating among those who were raised in a religion and are currently ...

	NET Unaffiliated	Atheist	Agnostic	Nothing in particular
	%	%	%	%
Don't believe	49	82	63	37
Disenchanted/don't believe	36	71	46	25
Not interested in/don't need religion	7	3	8	7
Views evolved	7	7	12	5
Went through a crisis of faith	1	2	1	1
Dislike organized religion	20	10	19	22
Anti-institutional religion	15	2	17	16
Religion focuses on power/politics	4	5	1	6
Religion causes conflict	1	3	2	1
Religiously unsure/undecided	18	5	12	22
Unaffiliated but religious	7	1	1	10
Seeking/open-minded	6	3	5	7
Spiritual but not religious	3	2	4	3
Uncertain about beliefs	2	0	4	2
Inactive believer	10	0	3	14
Non-practicing	8	0	2	11
Too busy	2	0	1	3
Other	<1	0	<1	1
Unclear/no answer	6	3	7	6

Note: Excludes those who said they had been misclassified and were still affiliated with a religion. Figures do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC13.

"Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Examples of reasons why people are unaffiliated

Don't believe

- "Learning about evolution when I went away to college."
- "Too many Christians doing un-Christian things."
- "Religion is the opiate of the people."
- "Rational thought makes religion go out the window."
- "Lack of any of sort of scientific or specific evidence of a creator."
- "I just realized somewhere along the line that I didn't really believe it."
- "I'm doing a lot more learning, studying and kind of making decisions myself rather than listening to someone else."

Dislike organized religion

- "I see organized religious groups as more divisive than uniting."
- "I think that more harm has been done in the name of religion than any other area."
- "I no longer believe in organized religion. I don't attend services anymore. I just believe that religion is very personal conversation with me and my creator."
- "Because I think religion is not a religion anymore. It's a business ... it's all about money."
- "The clergy sex abuse scandal."
- "The church's teachings on homosexuality."

Religiously unsure/undecided

- "I don't have a particular religion because I am open-minded and I don't think there is one particular religion that is right or wrong."
- "I feel that there is something out there, but I can't nail down a religion."
- "Right now I'm kind of leaning towards spirituality, but I'm not too sure. I know I can pray to my God anywhere. I do believe in a higher power, but I don't need a church to do that."

You can read the full article

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Wesley's Notes on Micah
<http://www.christianity.com>

[8] He hath shewed thee, C
and to love mercy, and to v
He — God hath already to
To do justly — To render
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To love mercy — To be k
Walk humbly with thy G

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Love in All Things by Sc

This is a time of thanksgiv
song written nearly twenty years ago in response to the simple Wesleyan admonition to treat all with charity and live with gratitude.

Bless you all and happy Thanksgiving.

Love in All Things can be found [here](#).

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efore him.
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everity towards any.
humble, holy faith.

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