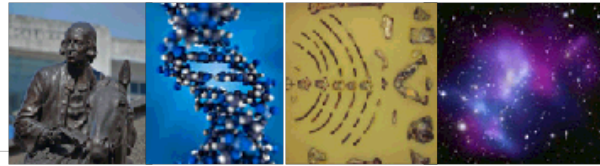


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



Home 15

Back

Links

Contact Us

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

May 30, 2017

A lot has happened since the last newsletter. While it is easy to get fixated on political news from Washington, it is important to keep plugged into what is happening beyond Capitol Hill politics. Sometimes events overlap as we saw last month with the March for Science on April 21 and the Peoples Climate March, both of which took place in Washington, DC and other locations around the country. WesleyNexus was there. You can see some of the pictures taken by WesleyNexus participants below. WesleyNexus also participated in the yearly Ecumenical Roundtable for Science, Technology and the Faith, a meeting of mainline church groups dedicated to the belief that science and faith are complementary and enrich each other when one is open to the insights of the other. Jennifer Secki Shields previewed her work in Christian Education at the Biologos conference in Houston, TX and Dr. Roy Clouser spoke at Bethesda United Methodist Church on "How Do we Talk about Genesis in the 21st Century?" In all of these engagements, WesleyNexus joined with others, frequently from very different backgrounds and faiths, to identify and work towards greater understanding and social justice in a world that is rapidly changing. These engagements can be broadly understood as progressive. Progressive in this sense should not be understood politically but as an attitude of working with others towards a better world. The Wesleyan tradition has always been progressive in this sense. In our newsletter this month, we are focusing on this progressive tradition. In addition, we are including resources (articles and videos) on panentheism and process theology. Both these concepts are deeply related to progressive thinking. We hope that you will find these articles and videos instructive and helpful in stimulating discussion.

We continue to appreciate the collaborating groups and sponsors that helped us underwrite expenses for our February live-streamed event, especially The Clergy Letter Project and the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science, but also the several churches and individuals who have sent donations since January 1. Now our budget is in a state of recovery, so if you can manage a contribution, large or small, it will help us tremendously as we develop and present several additional programs during the year. WesleyNexus is a 501 (c)(3) charitable, educational organization, and we will acknowledge all gifts from individuals for tax reporting purposes.

Please send us your pictures of the March for Science to WesleyNexus@aol.com. When we receive them we will post them [here](#).

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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Dr. Roy Clouser visited in Bethesda and Washington DC, May 19-21

WesleyNexus was pleased to co-sponsor a public presentation on the topic "How Do we Talk about Genesis in the 21st Century?" This event was held May 19th, co-hosted by the Bethesda United Methodist Church, Bethesda, MD where the Rev Jenny Cannon serves as Pastor. Dr. Roy Clouser is professor emeritus of philosophy and religion at the College of New Jersey. He holds an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1997 won a Templeton Foundation award for his course in science and religion. A popular lecturer, Dr. Clouser spoke also with the American Scientific Affiliation's Washington Metropolitan Chapter on Saturday evening May 20. He also met for a luncheon discussion with the science and religion group sponsored by the Washington Theological Consortium, and spoke on Sunday morning May 21 at the National Presbyterian Church in Washington DC, hosted by Dr. Paul Arveson. Bethesda United Methodist Church was a perfect location for the Mat 19 program since this congregation has a number of NIH scientists in its membership and a regular discussion class each Sunday morning, chaired by Dr. Donald Ross, that includes a number of WesleyNexus participants. The program on May 19th drew about 35 people on a stormy evening, all of whom seemed deeply engaged with the topic, based on a recent ASA article "Reading Genesis" written by Dr. Clouser. In his presentation, Clouser made several key points: (1) Genesis must be correctly read to be correctly understood, and that means reading poetry as poetry, reading narrative as narrative, and reading the Bible contextually, not as a science encyclopedia. (2) He showed how the creation account in Genesis 1 is structured formally to convey the message that God is the creator and sustainer of all that is, not as a historical account presaging the "big bang." In the question and answer period, which lasted more than an hour, Clouser helped many in the audience come to a new appreciation of time as more than a "counting of days" and showed graphically how the ancient Hebrew writers conveyed the essence of the relationship of God to the people within the concept of a covenant. Dr. Clouser's article published in the ASA Journal (December 2016 issue) can be found [here](#).



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March for Science, April 22, 2017

From AAAS:
Thousands participated in the March for Science on April 22, in Washington, DC, and in cities across the country and around the world. Religious groups were well represented among the science supporters and enthusiasts gathered for the day's activities. For many, faith convictions compelled them to show their support for the process and societal benefits of science. See the May 3, 2017 article by Christine A. Scheller [here](#).



WesleyNexus Pictures:
WesleyNexus was present and could be seen in our specially designed t-shirts produced just for the walk. We celebrated faith and science together! See the WesleyNexus webpage for the link:
http://www.wesnex.org/H_Events_March4SciencePictures.html

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Ecumenical Roundtable for Science, Faith and the Church

The Lutheran Center

Friday, April 28, 2017, Chicago, Illinois

From early April 26 through April 29th, representatives of five mainline Protestant denominations met to affirm the importance of science and religion and to provide energy and encouragement for these efforts in the coming year. The first two days were spent on internal discussions and planning followed by two days of joint sharing, presentations, meals and worship. The host for the program was the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) which graciously provided meeting rooms and meals for those days. Rick Barr was present representing WesleyNexus and unofficially representing the United Methodist Church. During those two days we had a chance to share what we were doing to promote dialogue within our churches and to gather information about the efforts of the other denominations.



The Ecumenical Roundtable has been active for many decades, starting in the 1980s with consultations between members of the National Council of Churches of Christ, including the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ and the ELCA, all active in the current Roundtable. WesleyNexus has participated since our founding as the unofficial representative of the United Methodist Church and more broadly, smaller denominations in the Wesleyan tradition.

As indicated on the newly published website, hosted by the ELCA, the purpose of the Roundtable is as follows:

We are clergy and lay, scientists, technicians and those who come to science and technology from a theological lens.

The purpose of the Roundtable is to share experiences, information and, where possible, material resources related to these initiatives; to provide mutual encouragement in the effort to elevate scientific and technological issues in the lives of the churches; and to engage in projects of mutual interest.”

- *Engaging, connecting, and communicating good science in our ecumenical church communities*
- *Addressing complex issues that might be created by or solved by newly-gained understandings and emerging research*
- *Exhibiting awe toward the richly unfolding universe; and gratitude for the tools of science and technology*
- *Reflecting on justice concerns and policy*
- *Supporting faithful stewardship of science and technology in service of our neighbors and Creation, with attention to sustainability and quality of life around the globe*

The last two days of the meeting were accented by three lectures given by two scientists and one theologian. **Dr. Grace Wolf-Chase**, an astronomer at the Adler Planetarium and a senior research associate in the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Chicago, was the first to present.

Wolf-Chase talked about her journey into the faith and science dialogue and her current initiative in encouraging non-scientists to join real scientific research as “citizen scientists”. Her talk, “Connecting Public Science Participation with Faith Communities”, described how ordinary citizens are getting involved in real scientific projects sponsored by established research institutions such as Adler and Oxford University, two leaders in this effort.



Dr. Wolf-Chase has granted us the privilege to post the slides of her presentation [here](#) (reformatted for our website).

Later on that Friday, two additional talks were given. The first was “What the Heck is CRISPR & Why it Matters: A Quick Review” given by **Dr. Gayle Woloschak**. Dr. Woloschak is a professor of Radiation Oncology at Northwestern University in Chicago and an adjunct professor of Religion and Science at the Lutheran School of Theology Chicago (LSTC), and at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She holds a Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Toledo (Medical College of Ohio), and a D.Min. in Eastern Christian Studies from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. For some, this was old news but for others her talk helped to peel back the mystery of this new and awesome technology. CRISPR at its most basic level enables scientists to leverage natural functions within viruses to target specific sequences within DNA structures for splicing and insertion. What makes CRISPR so awesome in both the hopeful and frightening is the way the technology can manipulate the genetic profile of a specific organism or perhaps even an entire species. The ethical implications are truly staggering. This is where people of faith need to become engaged and to become engaged one needs to be informed. Dr. Woloschak helped those in attendance to become more informed. WesleyNexus sponsored a similar program earlier this year, with a presentation by visiting professor Dr. Ted Peters, whose writing on this and related subjects is often featured in the journal *Theology and Science*, published by the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley.



Later that evening, The **Rev. Dr. Barbara Rossing** continued the discussion of Christian ethics in the age of CRISPR with her talk “Christ the Healer and the Age of Biological Manipulation”. Dr. Barbara Rossing, is a professor of New Testament at LSTC, where she has taught since 1994. Her talk included a discussion of the risks and rewards of pursuing these technologies and how they may affect the call to social justice.



The ELCA has committed resources towards hosting a new website to support the Roundtable. While the current information posted is minimal there are plans in place to expand the content to support the Roundtable and others interested in Roundtable activities. The website can be found [here](#).

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Ecumenical Roundtable for Science, Faith and the Church Participants

Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology: (From the Covalence Website)

“The Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science, and Technology is dedicated to expanding awareness and promoting conversation about the implications of science and technology for Christian faith and life. (Prior to becoming the Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology in 2002, the effort was known as the Working Group for Faith, Science and Technology.)



In 1987, 45 young scientists, technologists, and theologians from 5 continents and 17 countries gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus in for a consultation entitled, “The New Scientific/Technological World: What Differences Does It Make for the Church?” The meeting, sponsored by the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) in cooperation from the Lutheran World Federation, was organized by the Rev. John Mangum, director for planning, LCA Division for World Mission and Ecumenism. This meeting was the genesis of the Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science, and Technology, as well as similar groups in other denominations.

Since 1991, the Alliance has been an independent Lutheran organization recognized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with liaison through the Theological Discernment Team in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The membership includes scientists, science teachers, rostered leaders (clergy and lay), and other interested lay people.”

Covalence is the official website that supports the Lutheran science and religion initiative and is open to anyone. On this site there are news articles and announcements, longer featured articles and commentaries. It can be found [here](#):

Lutheran pastor Bruce Booher also has a website called **Mystery, Awe and Wonder** [here](#).

**Presbyterian Association on Science,
(From the PASTCF Website.)**



What is PASTCF's general purpose?

To challenge and assist the Presbyterian Church (USA), at all levels, to study, understand, discuss, and act on the implications of science and technology as they affect the theology, worship, practice.

What are PASTCF's objectives?

To provide for the exchange of ideas and information among the members and to develop programs as appropriate to the interest of the members and the needs of the church.

What are some of PASTCF's major activities?

We publish the journal SciTech† quarterly.

We maintain the Association's website, www.pastcf.org

We provide members with a brief bibliography and make available a variety of other resources.

The website contains a wide variety of information on what the PCUSA is doing, highlighted by their quarterly journal. Copies are available online going back to 2013 [here](#)..

United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ was one of the original denominations engaged in ecumenical dialogue on science and faith. Until recently, they have supplied staff and resources to the initiative but, due to challenges related to the changing times, they are in the process of reflecting on how best to engage as a denomination. Since 2008, however, their initiatives have been defined by a 2008 following pastoral letter written by The Rev. John H. Thomas, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ.

From A New Voice Arising: A Pastoral Letter on Faith Engaging Science and Technology

The Rev. John H. Thomas

General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/1489/pastoral-letter.pdf?1418424941

The Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church is currently in the process of discerning how best to be engaged at the Roundtable in the coming years. Our Church now has a large scale church-wide Stewardship of Creation effort which

stemmed from our previous Executive Council Committee on Science, Technology, and Faith, a long time and very active participant in the Roundtable. WesleyNexus will continue to reach out to them as they discern their future direction.

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Why it Matters and Where to Begin:

Panentheism

As persons of faith struggle to understand how faith can be both believable and effective in a world dominated by science and pluralism, many thoughtful, searching scholars have proposed adjustments in how we understand the God/World relationship. One approach that has made significant inroads in understanding this relationship is known as panentheism. While not everyone is convinced that this is the best model, it is affirmed by a significant number of writers within the science and religion dialogue, including many in the Wesleyan traditions such as John Cobb, Schubert Ogden, Marjorie Suchocki, Catherine Keller, Tom Oord and Roger Wolsey. Below you will find links to three short videos by Roger Wolsey that explain panentheism and also progressive Christianity. In addition, there are two videos by Roger Ray, a pastor at Community Christian Church in Springfield, MO.

What is Panentheism, Roger Wolsey? | Conversations with Peacemakers by I

Roger Wolsey, author of *Kissing Fish*, sat down for a series of discussions as part of a series of Conversations with Peacemakers sponsored by the Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church in Clayton, CA. The series explores how Christians can become closer to God and Christ through faith and practice. Other topics are available on YouTube.com.



[What is Panentheism](#)

[What is Progressive Christianity](#)

[How does Progressive Christianity Differ from Fundamentalist Christianity](#)

Roger Wolsey is an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church. He has served as a pastor for churches in Minnesota, Iowa and Colorado. He currently serves as the Director of the Wesley Foundation campus ministry at the University of Colorado in Boulder, CO. He is the author of *Kissing Fish: Christianity for People Who Don't Like Christianity.*

What Do We Mean When We Say "God"? by Dr. Roger Ray

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB0w8o5rVHs>

We say that "God is love" but what does that really mean? Beyond the soft "feel good" aspects of extolling love as the principal characteristic of God, how do we actually incorporate that into our lives and our spirituality?



Time to Talk about Trinity, Monotheism and Panentheism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUQLBWS-M5s>

Dr. Roger Ray holds masters and doctoral degrees in divinity from Vanderbilt University as well as a bachelor in philosophy from Murray State University. He was a 2004 Merriell Fellow at Harvard Divinity School. His most recent books, Progressive Faith and Practice and Progressive Conversations, have led to many invitations to speak both in the United States and in Great Britain. Dr. Ray wrote an ethics column for the Springfield News-Leader for more than 20 years and has had many sermons published in professional preaching journals over his long career. He had 28 years of experience in pastoral ministry before becoming the founding pastor of Community Christian Church in August of 2008.

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What to do Next?

Reminder: The Chautauqua Institution 2017 Programs



“The Chautauqua Institution is a not-for-profit, 750-acre community on Chautauqua Lake in southwestern New York State, where approximately 7,500 persons are in residence on any day during a nine-week season, and a total of over 100,000 attend scheduled public events.

Chautauqua is dedicated to the exploration of the best in human values and the enrichment of life through a program that explores the important religious, social and political issues of our times; stimulates provocative, thoughtful involvement of individuals and families in creative response to such issues; and promotes excellence and creativity in the appreciation, performance and teaching of the arts.”

You can find more information about Chautauqua [here](#).

A recent article in the NY Times can be found [here](#).

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Reminder: IRAS Summer Conference, June 24 – July 1, on Star Island



Soon it will be time for the IRAS summer conference on Star Island.

We don't want you to miss out: The **"Wicked Problem" of**

Climate Change: What is it doing to us and for us? The 63rd annual

Summer Conference in 2017 is organized in collaboration with the

Parliament of the World's Religions. It should be an enlightening and enriching program you will not want to miss, and **as a WesleyNexus participant**, you will qualify for a 30% discount on registration. Below you will find a brief description of the conference and speakers. For more information about the program, speakers and Star Island, please visit this new website specifically for our conference -

[2017 IRAS Conference Website](#). As always, you can also find information on the [IRAS website](#).

Climate change is a “wicked problem” with causes and consequences in economic, ecological, ethical, and technological realms. As climate change continues to alter our planet, how can we use this monumental change as an opportunity for societal and spiritual transformation? What is the way forward? We must confront climate change as a planetary community. It affects every institution, society, public policy, culture and ecosystem into the foreseeable future. Every possible course of action intertwines with issues of international and intra-societal economic and social justice. Climate change is a multi-generational,

transnational “wicked problem” with no single, simple solution.

If you would like a paper registration form visit Star Island's website for instructions - [Star Island Registration](#).

If you have questions about registration, please reach out to our Registrar, Marion Griswold, at mbgriswold@yahoo.com.

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Why Theologians Need Spirituality and Spiritual Guides Need Theology by Bruce Epperly



Bruce Epperly has spent the bulk of his career promoting practical implementations for spirituality using the panentheist/process model. Epperly was a student of John Cobb, an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and one of the top process scholars in the world and longtime Director of the Center for Process Studies. Continuing Cobb's legacy, Epperly has written numerous books and articles on Process Theology including his most recent book, **Praying with Process Theology**. In this book, Epperly invites his readers to see the Christian faith with new eyes and take a seven week spiritual journey with him as he explores how process, panentheist and progressive concepts can enrich faith. The seven week program provides a weekly chapter summary and reflections for each day of the week. Each day’s meditation begins with a quote from a process scholar followed by additional reflection from Epperly. Then the reader is invited to do their own thinking by reflecting on three areas, faith affirmation, faithful action and prayer.

Recent article on process spirituality can be found [here](#) and the book can be found [here](#).

Epperly wrote an article for non-theologians called "**Process Theology for Everyday People**" which can be found [here](#).

Bruce Epperly is a theologian, pastor, spiritual guide, author, and recognized leader in lay and pastoral faith formation; Bruce Epperly serves as Pastor at South Congregational Church, Centerville, MA. He has served on the faculties and often in administrative and chaplaincy roles at Georgetown University, Claremont School of Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary, and Lancaster Theological Seminary. Prior to coming to South Congregational Church, he served as Director of Continuing Education and Professor of Practical Theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary. Concurrently with his faculty and academic appointments, he has served as pastor or interim pastor of congregations in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

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Digging Deeper: A Quantum of Time by Philip Ball

John Haldane, a prominent biologist of the last century, is well known for saying that “it is my supposition that the Universe is not only queerer than we imagine, it is queerer than we can imagine.” In the linked BBC article [here](#), this insight seems to play out in spades. In this article, “the quantum-mechanical picture of time's arrow leads to something deeply peculiar. In some experiments, it looks as though influences can work backwards in time. The future can affect the past.” Termed retro-causality, this phenomenon is viewed by some as an illusion but, as physicist George Ellis interprets it, “we can regard retro-causality as a kind of fuzziness in the crystallisation of the present. Quantum physics appears to allow some degree of

influence of the present on the past, as indicated by delayed-choice experiments," he says. Ellis has argued that "the past is not always fully defined at any instant. It is like a block of ice that contains little blobs of water that have not yet crystallized." Interestingly, some process philosophers and theologians have proposed something similar.

<http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20160708-the-past-is-not-set-in-stone-so-we-may-be-able-to-change-it>

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Descartes was wrong: ‘a person is a person through other persons’ by Abeba Birhane



Abeba Birhane is pursuing a PhD in cognitive science at University College Dublin. She blogs regularly about embodied cognition and “the enactive approach” to cognitive science.

In this article, Birhane reflects on what it means to be a person. While she admits that most “scientific psychology is only too willing to adopt individualistic Cartesian assumptions that cut away the webbing that ties the self to others”, another view is possible and complementary. Using the term “ena” or selfhood which comes from Ubuntu philosophy, people are born without selfhood but acquire it through experience and relationships over time. She also points to a Zulu insight, ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’, which means ‘A person is a person through other persons.’ For Birhane, this is a richer and better understanding of what a person is than the Cartesian cogito, ‘I think, therefore I am.’ I think St. Paul would agree. Her reflection can be found [here](#).

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