##### Journal & Courier

**Guest column: Creation science's 'how' steps over the 'why'**

By Dave Schmidt

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I am a United Methodist pastor who graduated from an evangelical college with a degree in biology and from a major university and seminary with a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies. I have followed the debate in the Indiana legislature to mandate teaching creationism in science classes. I appreciated Dave Bangert's Jan. 29 column setting forth some of the issues, but I believe there are elements he did not touch upon.

I am one of more than 12,700 Christian clergy, 480 rabbis and 250 Unitarian Universalist clergy who have signed The Clergy Letter Project advocating the teaching of evolution, and not creationism, in our public school science classes ([www.theclergyletterproject.org](http://www.theclergyletterproject.org)). We understand creationism to represent a religious belief and not a scientific method.

Scholars who have argued otherwise have been shown to have misstated facts and failed to have their studies recognized by juried academic journals. Read Kenneth R. Miller's "Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for Americas Soul."

As a follow-up to the clergy letter, Evolution Sabbath/Sunday started seven years ago advocating that churches and synagogues take time on the weekend closest to Charles Darwin's birthday to explore the relationship between science and religion, including the abuse of religion to attack evolutionary science.

I am part of one 523 congregations from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., and representing 10 countries scheduled to participate in Evolution Weekend 2012. These included 16 religious groups in Indiana, two in Lafayette. This effort has been endorsed by The United Methodist Church, the Southeast Diocese of the Episcopal Church, and the Southwestern Washington Synod of the Evangelical Church in America.

While Bangert reports correctly that there are congregations that choose to teach creationism according to their faith stance, it should now be obvious that this not the case for a large group of congregations. We too draw from the Bible a faith statement that God has created the world, but we see this to be the religious belief that we choose. We note that scriptures do not advocate one story of creation.

When the people of God were hunters and gatherers, they made the point that God created the human from the humus (Adam from Adamah) in a glorious paradise garden (Genesis 2:4 forward). When the people were carried off to exile in Babylon they made the point that God created instead of the Babylonian gods by telling the story of seven days of creation (Genesis 1:1 to 2:4). In Proverbs 8, wisdom is presented as an agent of creation addressing the rising awareness of this "godlike being" in some cultures.

These comparisons suggest to me that, while we may have a variety of understandings about the creation process, as Christians we understand God to be behind them. We don't get hung up on one story (Genesis 1) of "how," but we celebrate the affirmation together of "why." After all, that is the belief tenet. Evolutionary biology is now helping understand "how" creation functions without destroying our faith.

I hope people of faith may let our legislators know that teaching of faith is a church concern and should not be foisted on the public school science classroom. This Evolution Sunday (Feb. 12, Darwin's birthday) would be a fine time to do that.

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