

# RED DIRT REPORT

## Tenth Evolution Weekend shows cooperation between science and faith

[Richard A Brown](#) | February 13, 2015

OKLAHOMA CITY -- While many people will be focusing on romance this upcoming weekend, it's significant in another way as well. This weekend, February 13-15, marks the tenth annual Evolution Weekend, an event meant to help bridge the gap between science and religion at a personal level.

The theme for this year's Evolution Weekend is "Science and Religion in Dialogue: Past, Present, and Future." The project's founder and director Michael Zimmerman believes that this is an important dialogue to foster.

"Religion and science use different methodologies to ask and answer different questions," Zimmerman said via email. "We are richer as a species when we can approach different facets of the human condition from a wide array of perspectives."

Approximately 459 congregations across the United States will participate in Evolution Weekend in one way or another this year, according to figures from the Evolution Weekend site. This is down from a high level of 1,049 in 2009, but the 2015 figure still represents congregations in 45 U.S. states and 12 other countries. Charles Darwin's birthday in February 12th.

The Evolution Weekend began in 2006 as an offshoot of the Clergy Letter Project, an open letter that supports teaching evolution and embracing scientific learning that has been signed by 12,994 Christian clergy members from various denominations around the country. Zimmerman directs the project and also serves as the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at Olympia, Washington's Evergreen State College.

Zimmerman believes that the Evolution Weekends and the Clergy Letter Project have been very successful in bringing people together to explore the relationship between religion and science.

"This is the 10th Annual Evolution Weekend and during the time we've been holding this distributed event, we've reached approximately three-quarters of a million people directly," Zimmerman said. "We've also reached many millions more via the media coverage we've received."

In Oklahoma, five churches have agreed to participate in the event, including two in Oklahoma City and one in Tulsa.



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Can we bridge the gap between science and religion? Evolution Weekend examines those questions.

The Rev. Dr. Paul J. Kirbas spoke about his church, the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Oklahoma City, and its participation in the Evolution Weekend events.

“I think that [the Evolution Weekend] is important for bringing science and faith together,” Kirbas said in a phone interview, adding, “The Westminster Presbyterian church has been very supportive. They have a lot of experience working with science and medicine.”

Kirbas did explain that his sermon this Sunday would not be based around science and evolution. Instead, he will be teaching a 7-week long course which, in his words, “is bringing religion and science together to solve one mystery – is there a human soul?”

Kirbas also says he hasn’t experienced much animosity from people for trying to reconcile faith and science. “Surveys around the country show a large number of people are opposed to bringing these two things together, but that’s not my personal experience,” Kirbas said.

Zimmerman is adamant that the Clergy Letter Project and Evolution Weekend do not work against the goals or spirit of faith. “The Clergy Letter Project is comprised of more than 14,000 clergy members, people who have devoted their lives to living and promoting religion,” Zimmerman said. “It simply makes no sense to say that all of these people are working against their own interests and passions.”

“What is true ... is to recognize that there are some proponents of a narrow religious perspective who argue that their way is the only way,” Zimmerman said. “While these individuals are certainly free to speak their mind and to make their case, it's important to note that they're not speaking for thousands upon thousands of religious leaders or the vast majority of the world's religions and denominations.”

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To learn more about the 2015 Evolution Weekend and The Clergy Letter Project, visit the Clergy Letter Project website at <http://www.theclergyletterproject.org>.