

Astrobiology News June 2015: Bringing Science and Religion Dialogue to Sunday School

In the coming months, you'll hear more from me about two remarkable NASA missions: New Horizons' encounter with Pluto (in July) and Dawn's adjustment to a closer orbit of dwarf planet Ceres (in August), but this month I wanted to deviate from my typical posts to let you know about a curriculum that has been developed to bring science and religion content to the religious education of youth. This project is sponsored by the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science (CASIRAS)¹, which was founded in 1965 by Ralph Wendell Burhoe, a pioneer in science and religion dialogue. CASIRAS supports the Zygon Center for Religion and Science² (in partnership with the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago³) and co-publishes *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*⁴ (in partnership with the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science⁵). CASIRAS has also graciously offered to fund costs for emailing The Clergy Letter Project's monthly newsletter for the coming year!

Ms. Kim Eighmy⁶, a Christian Educator who has served as an Associate in Ministry within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), has developed a six-part Science and Faith curriculum⁷ designed to encourage discussions between adult religious leaders, adolescents and their parents on important topics at the intersection of faith and science. Although this curriculum has been developed for the ELCA, I suspect it can be adapted to serve a spectrum of Christian denominations, and quite possibly suggest useful approaches for other religious traditions. The goals of this inquiry-based methodology are: to incorporate scientific understanding into a theological worldview; to engage in open and informed dialogue in matters of religion and science; and to gain awareness of the impact of both scientific and theological perspectives as they apply to decision making in both private and public realms. Although the web site is a work-in-progress, the curriculum is basically "good to go" and Kim encourages people potentially interested in using it to check it out! In the coming months, I'll be working with Kim to develop a series of introductory videos, which will introduce the content of each session and set the stage for discussing the issues.

Many people, not just youth, have a difficult time reconciling what they hear in church and what they hear in the science classroom. I am very excited about the prospects of this new curriculum to help adolescents and their parents form conceptual bridges between their scientific and religious understandings of the

¹ www.casiras.org

² <http://zygoncenter.org/>

³ <http://www.lstc.edu/>

⁴ <http://www.zygonjournal.org/>

⁵ <http://www.iras.org/>

⁶ Preferred contact: growlover94@gmail.com; also, faithintersections@gmail.com

⁷ <http://www.faithintersections.com/>

Cosmos! I doubt I need to convince anyone on this newsletter distribution list how vitally important it is that science and religion work together to address the many challenges that face us in the 21st century.

Until next month,

Grace

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