

# EAU CLAIRE LEADER-TELEGRAM

## Matter of Faith: Exploring evolution and religion

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By The Rev. David Huber

**E**volution shows that we are not separate from other life, but are related to it. Climate change shows we are not above the created order, but live within it. Our actions affect God's creation; or at a minimum, this pale blue dot called Earth. We are not outsiders looking in, but are part of this grand experiment of God's called "life."

This is Evolution Weekend. Hundreds of religious communities around the world are celebrating how science and faith ought not be confrontational, but cooperative. They will talk about evolution and other scientific truths, like climate change, genetics, the Big Bang, a 4.5 billion-year-old Earth.

Evolution Weekend was started by the Clergy Letter Project ([theclergyletterproject.org](http://theclergyletterproject.org)) by Michael Zimmerman, a biology professor at Evergreen State College. As the CLP's website says, "Evolution Weekend is an opportunity for serious discussion and reflection on the relationship between religion and science. An ongoing goal has been to elevate the quality of the discussion on this critical topic, and to show that religion and science are not adversaries."

As good as that news is, there are still religious communities that deny some science. This is why I and other faith communities continue to speak that there is no controversy, and that reasonableness is better than dogma when it comes to things scientific.

America has an incredible scientific history, but we also have one of world's largest anti-science populations. People deny evolution and climate change because of what they claim is their literal reading of scripture; though, even the literalists cannot agree on what "literally" reading Genesis means, and so date the age of the Earth variously from 6,000 to 10,000 years, or allow for a billions-year-old Earth, but life only existing for 6,000 to 10,000 years.

As I've written before, the Bible was never intended to be scientific revelation, nor to be taken literally (However, one wants to define that word). Don't take it literally, take it seriously.

I saw a Facebook photo meme on Groundhog Day that said "Only in America do we accept weather predictions from a rodent but deny climate change evidence from scientists."

Climate change, like evolution, gravity and the impossibility of lifting oneself by one's bootstraps, is established science accepted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA. The Department of Defense says climate change is a significant threat to our national security. It is a critical theological and ethical issue because it affects people and our entire planet.

We are to love our neighbor — if we believe Jesus' words anyway. But our consumption habits and policies made by politicians who deny science are hurting our neighbors.

Forcing neighbors to choke on dirty air or lose their shorelines because we refuse to live sustainably is not an act of love. South Pacific islands like Tuvalu and Maldives are losing shoreline to, and their fertile ground is being poisoned by the salt in, rising oceans. Belize and Bolivia have had armed conflict because of water shortages. Climate refugees leave their homelands because of water and food shortages.

We have a responsibility to consider our neighbors. Our policies and lifestyles ought to be such that the Earth remains healthy for all life. This is our only livable spot in the universe, and it is a precious gift from God. Our neighbors also are precious gifts. Let us trust the people who have the training and expertise to give us facts however difficult it is to hear.

My congregation is celebrating Evolution Weekend with a talk by a climate change scientist — Jim Boulter, a chemistry professor and Watershed Institute director at UW-Eau Claire. He will speak about how his faith informs his scientific and civil work during our 10:30 a.m. worship service Sunday at Plymouth United Church of Christ, 2010 Moholt Drive, with question-and-answer session afterward. For more information, go to [pcucc.com](http://pcucc.com) or [facebook.com/plymouthunitedchurchofchrist](https://www.facebook.com/plymouthunitedchurchofchrist).

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