

## **Committee votes against Evolution Sunday**

By Elizabeth Broschart  
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Members of the Committee on Theological Issues, Institutions and Christian Education voted overwhelmingly to reject an overture to add Evolution Sunday to the list of special services or to support The Clergy Letter Project aimed at giving institutional support to the teaching of evolution.

Earlier in the day, commissioners heard a passionate plea by John Shuck, a member of the Holston Presbytery, urging commissioners to approve Evolution Sunday on the second Sunday in February and give an endorsement of The Clergy Letter Project that purportedly presents the scientific theory of evolution in a manner that respects and engages a thinking faith.

Shuck said he was presenting the overture with the endorsement of notable scientists working or retired from Eastern Tennessee State University. “Teachers need help from the church to deal with school boards who want an intelligent design theory of creation presented as scientific theory,” commented Shuck. “They need help to combat the popular religious culture that creates conflicts with the scientific theory of evolution, because they think it (evolution) is incompatible with faith. Evolution Sunday will encourage evangelism in that scientists will be welcomed back into the congregation as they learn that Darwin’s theory of natural selection is not something for people of faith to fear or to ignore. Charles Darwin is often vilified, and it’s time to welcome him back into the church and honor his input as a gift to the church.”

Just prior to voting Charles Wiley presented information regarding the overture and said that faith and evolution are not in contradiction, a belief that received some support from the commissioners. However, practical implementation of Evolution Sunday led the commissioners to speak against the overture.

Interestingly, none of the commissioners challenged the theory of evolution. They simply did not see how it could be effectively implemented. One commissioner said, “It’s another day on the calendar, and do we really want people speaking about evolution who aren’t knowledgeable?” Another commented that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of February is part of Black History month. Some felt evolution is a scientific theory and not something to promote during worship.

Others said that while they believe in evolution, there was no reason to add fuel to something that creates controversy among believers, nor were they willing to endorse The Clergy Letter Project that implied that all pastors in the denomination would support the project.

By a margin of 47 to 2, the commissioners made it clear that while some of them might be scientists, they were unwilling to tackle the topic of evolution during worship services.