



JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:

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UU Member Reports on GA 2004 Workshop: "What's Intelligent about Intelligent Design?"

Intelligent Design Creationism -- the latest insidious attempt to bring creationism into our schools' science curricula -- was subject of a lecture by Dr. Eugenie Scott, anthropologist and president of the National Council for Science Education, at one of the 2004 GA workshops.

Proponents of Christian creationism are taking advantage of a loophole in the Supreme Court's 1987 decision, *Edward vs. Aguillard*, which struck down the teaching of creationism as an alternative to evolution in the Louisiana school curriculum. However, the ruling allowed "...flexibility to supplant the present scientific curriculum with...alternate scientific theories, besides evolution, about the origin of life." Taking advantage of this loophole, Christian creationists are promoting Intelligent Design Creationism (IDC) in the science curricula of five states, including Texas, California and Ohio.

IDC has two aspects: scientific/philosophical and cultural. Its scientific thesis claims the universe was designed by an intelligence. IDC claims "design" can be detected in Paley's, "Natural Theology," published in 1802. He uses the example of someone who knows nothing and stumbles over a rock and a watch in a field. Unlike the rock, the watch and its complex interconnected parts reveal a complex structure that together measure the passage of time--clearly irrefutable evidence of intelligent design. Thus it is, according to IDC, with some aspects of life. Dr Michael Behe, head of biochemistry at Lehigh University, also argues creationism in his book, "Darwin's Black Box." Behe claims that certain biochemical processes are "irreducibly complex." They involve multiple proteins. Removing any one of them would destroy the function of the overall pathway. These pathways could not have evolved through natural

selection, but were created by an "intelligent designer," he concluded.

He uses the mousetrap as an example of Irreducible Complexity. Because the mousetrap is made up of several parts, it is irreducibly complex and if any one part of the mousetrap is removed, it cannot catch a mouse.

While IDC recognizes some aspects of conventional science and evolution -- the age of the universe, the process of natural selection-- it states that some structures have irreducible complexity not explained by Darwinism. This "God-of-the-Gaps" argument rests upon the false assumption that the unknown is unknowable. IDC states the hypothesis that Irreducible Complexity exists, then uses that hypothesis as proof of Intelligent Design.

The Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute in Seattle promotes the cultural renewal aspect of IDC, claiming that science points to a "knowable order," and a "theistic understanding that nature and human beings are created by God." Its argument confuses methodological materialism (scientific method does not compel any particular conclusion) with philosophical materialism.

While posing as a secular movement, IDC is achieving momentum. An attachment to the No Child Left Behind Act by Sen. Rick Santorum (R. PA) comes close to including creationism as an alternative evolution in the science curriculum. Watch out for this reappearance of creationism in your school's curriculum under the guise of Intelligent Design.

Submitted by Bryan N. Barrett, UU Church of Annapolis, MD

Bull Run UUs Collect Bicycles for Overseas

What to do with your grown-up child's bicycle, parked in the garage for the past 15 years? Bull Run UUs have an answer.

In partnership with Pedals for Progress, Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA are collecting old bicycles, later refurbished, and sending them to

developing countries where workers need non-polluting transportation to get to jobs, schools, medical services and to deliver goods to market. Forty-two were collected and sent to Ghana.

UUs Welcome, Say Farewell to Ministers

Ending (sort of) 30 years service in the UU ministry, Rev. John Morgan, minister of UU Church of Berks County, Reading, PA is retiring after four years at Reading. He was the first extension minister for JPD and launched UU Congregation of the Susquehanna Valley, Northumberland, PA and the UU Congregation of the Wyoming Valley in Kingston, PA in 1990, where he will now serve as quarter-time consulting minister. He was also consulting minister at the UU Fellowship of Pottstown, PA.

Retiring Revs. Robert and Sylvia Lewis, whose service began in 1998, are leaving Northern Chesapeake UU Society, Fallston, MD.

Called as settled ministers are: Rev. William Chester McCall, UU Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia, PA and Rev. Nancy McDonald, Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA.

Rev. Susan LaMar will be installed as settled minister of Channing Memorial Church UU, Columbia, MD on September 26.

The husband-wife team of Revs. Patricia Hart and Peter Newport, began serving as interim co-ministers at UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA this month.

Sandra Fees was ordained to the UU Ministry at Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA. She has served there as ministerial intern.

What's Happening....Davies Memorial UU Church, Camp Springs, MD launched a monthly newspaper, "Freedom Express," distributed in grocery stores, restaurants and libraries. First-issue topics were: "How do you handle the rough stuff--the storms of life?" and "How has UUism helped you?"....UU Congregation of Frederick, MD chalked up plusses since it moved to its new building: 44 new members; more volunteers, member involvement; \$20,000 netted in a campaign with 23 new pledges; and two special donations balanced a revised budget.

What We Care About....UU Congregation of York, PA's Social Justice Committee gave \$250 to UUA's "President's Freedom to Marry Fund," helping to fund newspaper ads and press conferences of local and state initiatives and to aid UU congregations supporting same-sex

marriage rights. This was in response to news of the two UU New York state ministers, charged with criminal offenses for conducting same-sex marriages....UU Fellowship of Harford County, Churchville, MD held a special collection to defray costs of the fire at Paint Branch UU Church, Adelphi, MD....Seventh-graders at Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD collected party dresses, make-up, and accessories and sent them to the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation. Young women, unable to afford a dress, choose one for their prom from the donations.

Community Causes Benefit From Offerings

The Social Concerns Committee and Green Roundtable of Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA sponsored a collection benefiting Coal River Mountain Watch that is combating strip mining in Marfolk Hollow, 40 miles south of Charleston, WV.

The mining by Massey Energy has caused boulders to crash into homes and car accidents. Mining wastes have polluted streams and, stored near schools, pose a potential health hazard. Residents are leading a court battle to decide if the company violates the Clean Water Act.

UU Congregation of York, PA sets aside 10 per cent of its cash offerings, half going to Our Daily Bread, the remainder to UU Service Committee. UUs of Sterling VA recently gave \$4,100 from weekly offerings to seven groups and community causes.

2004: 200th anniversary of Joseph Priestley's death. "Should free inquiry lead to the destruction of Christianity itself, it ought not on that account, to be discontinued." --Joseph Priestley

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