

Heart of G*d, Holy Mystery, Wholly Mystery **Women's Critical and Creative Dialog with G*d and Science**

New scientific frames put long-confessed truths of Judaism and Christianity in new light. Interfaith dialogue happens in our neighborhoods and families. In our pews some Christians can no longer profess the classic Creeds in their entirety. Creation. Incarnation. Redemption. Trinity. Putting an asterisk in the word G*d reminds us words fail when it comes to Holy Mystery and the Whole Mystery of all we can become.

New theologies work at reconciling science and religion. In a cosmos that is dynamically evolving from the singular fireball of energy that we call the Big Bang, we are cocreating our future with G*d. In Einstein's world after $e = mc^2$ everywhere is a center of interrelationships; the world is no longer fixed and static. Quantum physics invites quantum prayer and play like the molecules, protons, electrons in constant unpredictable motion, the generative soup out of which life emerges, tending toward greater diversity and complexity, evolving toward consciousness and communion.

We who question and seek can only describe the Holy Mystery in which we live from our experience. We stand in awe. We write poems and sing songs that celebrate being alive. We lament our capacity for destruction. We mine the scriptures and sacred texts of the world for hints and half guesses. In this course we seek Holy Mystery with current theologians, scientists, and each other.

Instructors

Lynne Lorenzen, M.Div. Luther Seminary; Ph.D. Claremont Graduate School; Associate Professor of Religion, Augsburg College

Joan Mitchell, CSJ, MTS, Harvard Divinity School; Ph.D. Luther Seminary; Publisher Good Ground Press

Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, Ph.D. Vanderbilt University; University Chaplain and Director of The Wesley Center for Spirituality, Service, and Social Justice, Hamline University

Mary Kaye Medinger, MA Theology, St. Paul School of Divinity, University of St. Thomas; Consociate Services Office, Sisters of St. Joseph

When: Mondays, 6:00-8:30 p.m., September 20 through December 6, 2010

Where: Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul

Syllabus: Available online at wisdomwayscenter.com

Cost: 12 sessions, \$240; any 4 sessions, \$90; 1 session, \$25

Texts: Ilio Delio, *Christ in Evolution*; Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

Requirements

1. Read assignments in *Christ in Evolution* and *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* or at least one other recommended book, actively preparing questions, insights
2. Join in table conversation
3. Create a reflection project: write or create a ritual, a song, a visual

Heart of God Sessions

9/20/10 **The Universe Story** (Lynne Lorenzen, Joan Mitchell)

- Video: *The Awakening Universe*
 - How do you respond?
- What questions does the scientific creation story raise about traditional religious teachings?
- What insights into the mystery of the holy does evolutionary cosmology suggest?
- How have Einstein's theory of relativity, the Hubble telescope, and quantum physics changed the way we see our world?
- "Tell us about the God you don't believe in."

Ritual: "O Wisdom"

Sources:

Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story*

Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, 1-26

Fiand, *Awe-filled Wonder*, 1-40

Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 25-38

Walter Isaacson, *Einstein, His Life and World*

Krista Tippett, *Einstein's God*

9/27/10 **Creation: Out of nothing or out of the deep** (Nancy Victorin-Vangerud)

- What is at stake in both theological outlooks?
- Process theology seeks to reconcile religion and science
- Discerning God in process, in chaos theory

Readings:

Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery*, 45-67; *Out of the Depth*

Karen Baker Fletcher, *Dancing with God*,

Sally McFague, *Life Abundant*

10/4/10 **The human and scriptural roots of God as three in one** (Lynne Lorenzen, Joan Mitchell)

- Scripture: Spirit, Source, Son in NT; creator, spirit in OT
- Cappadocians create the concept of "person" as being in communion
- Augustine, oneness over three; Thomas, absolute Beingness
- Oneness prevails in the West over a communion of relations
- Feminist critique of western "subsistence" theology of Trinity, and reclaiming of God as a communion of relations.
- Three as the threshold of the social; room for one more

Readings:

Gebara, *Thirsting for Living Water*

Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

LaCugna, *Freeing Theology (Trinity chapter)*

John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 27-48

10/11/10 Why does our theology of Trinity matter? Are we all a-theists now?

(Lynne Lorenzen)

- What does an a-theist think about G*d?
 - God is dynamic, immanent, open to cocreating
 - Creation emergent toward consciousness, diversity
 - Nothing is fixed in the quantum world of pattern, freedom
- Being as communion, divine energy as dance
 - Perichoresis
 - panentheism
- How does who we think is in heaven affect how we are on Earth?
 - Equality, mutuality, a just and relational vision for humanity

Readings:

Johnson, "Creator Spirit in the Evolving World," *Quest*

Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*

10/22-23 Fall Soul Conference: Toni Nash, CSJ

10/25/10 Who is Jesus? Who Is Christ? (Kathie McLaughlin)

- The turn toward the subject, Karl Rahner
- Christians will be mystics or not Christians at all
- From the historical Jesus to the Christ of faith
 - Christologies low and high
- New questions:
 - Jesus and women: Feminist/Womanist/Mujerista theologies
 - Jesus and the poor: liberation theologies
 - Jesus and other religions

Readings:

Johnson, *Consider Jesus; Quest for the Living God*

Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

11/01/10 Who is Christ in our global, interfaith, openended world? (Mary Kaye Medinger)

- Chardin: The Christic Universe
 - Who is Jesus in the framework of universe story?
- Raimon Panikkar: the Unknown Christ
 - Who is Jesus in the light of Asian religions?
- Merton, Griffiths: Transcultural Christ

Readings:

Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution*

Johnson, *Quest for the Living God, 153-180*

Wessels, *Christ and the New Universe Story*

11/08/10 **What about the cross? What does Jesus save us from or for?** (Lynne Lorenzen)

- What happens to sin and sacrifice in our world context?
- Why does Anselm's satisfaction theology still reign?
- What about suffering, evil? Holding life and suffering at the cross
 - Evil, Holocaust, Genocide, Palestine
- Rediscovering resurrection

Readings

Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

Johnson, *Consider Jesus, God and the Cross, 115-128*

Johnson, *Quest for the Living God, 49-69*

11/15/10 **Christ in Evolution** (Mary Kaye Medinger)

- Move from a spirituality of conformity in a fixed, androcentric, patriarchal cosmos to a spirituality of cocreating in a dynamic, omniscient, openended cosmos,
- Conscious, relational, open, communion seeking spirituality
- Sustaining Earth
- Valuing Diversity

So What? Participant reflections

Readings:

- J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts*
- Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*
- Ilio, *Christ in Evolution*, "Cocreating in evolutionary cosmos,"

11/22/10 **Spirit & Culture** (Nancy Victorin-Vangerud)

- In word and dance Chung Hyun Kyung challenges the World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly to cultural conversion beyond its European, androcentric, colonial roots
- Video and discussion:

So What? Participant reflections

11/29/10 **Vivifying Spirit: Cinderella of the Trinity** (Joan Mitchell)

- Naming the activity of the Spirit, giver of life, breath of God, lure, drive within cosmos toward consciousness, diversity, communion
- How is Spirit nudging us ecologically, ecumenically, interreligiously?
- How do we pray and live? God as being in communion
 - Emergent rather than transcendent divine presence
 - Relational rather than substantial description of God
 - Both pattern and chance operate in the quantum world
- Perichoresis: divine dance of interrelationship, persons in communion
- Panentheism: cosmos is within God but does not exhaust who God is

So What? Participant reflections

Readings

Corcoran, *Secrets of Prayer*

Johnson, "Creator Spirit in the Evolving World, *Quest*, chapter 9

Johnson, "Generous God of the Religions," *Quest*, chapter 8

Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

Fiand, *Awe-filled Wonder: the Interface of Science and Spirituality*

Miriam Therese Winter, *Paradoxology*, spirituality in a quantum universe

12/06/10

Integration

How do we pray and play?

What do we practice and protest?

Ritual and participant reflections

Recommended Books

Nancy Corcoran, *Secrets of Prayer* (in sync with new cosmology)

Karen Baker Fletcher, *Dancing With God* (process theologian, Pentecostal)

Ilio Delio, *Christ in Evolution* (worth the read)

Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (readable, well organized)

Barbara Fiand, *Awe-filled Wonder* (Stimulating, scientific, Madeleva Lecture 2009)

Ivone Gebara, *Thirsting for Living Water* (liberation theologian, Brazil)

Lynn Lorenson, *Trinity*

Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God* (readable)

Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus* (readable)

Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Out of the Depth* (process theologian, hard)

Catherine LaCugna, *Freeing Theology* (Trinity chapter) (readable)

Sally McFague, *Life Abundant* (ecological spirituality)

J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts* (readable, poetic)

Nancy Victorin Vangerud, *The Raging Hearth* (challenging)

Miriam Therese Winter, *Paradoxology* (readable)

Other Books

Patricia Fox, *God as Communion* (Hard: Reflects on Johnson and Zizioulas)

Walter Isaacson, *Einstein, His Life and World* (lots of science, fun)

Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story* (readable)

Krista Tippett, *Einstein's God* (transcripts of interviews from her MPR show)

Cletus Wessels, *Christ and the New Universe Story* (challenging)

John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion* (very challenging)