

Annual Report of the Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum

December 15, 2021

Summary

At the end of 2021 the Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum completed its fifth year as an official 501 (c)(3) corporation as well as its 8th season of presenting a summer seminar series. The theme of this year's series was: Why Do Faith and Reason Interact? These timely issues were addressed weekly by members of the forum in an electronic format. Because of the Pandemic, our other activities were curtailed. We did not host an external speaker, we did not attend any national Faith & Science conferences outside of Los Alamos, there was no Lenten Series here in town, and our writer's group did not meet. Even so, our summer 'zoom'-lecture series was quite successful, as summarized in this report. Our website (<http://www.lafsf.org>) provides more information, not only about the 2021 season but also concerning prior years. Appendices to this report add further information. Appendix A is a list of the Forum Board members. Appendix B is the agenda of the annual meeting held in December.

Summer 2021 Activities

Now in its 8th year, the Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum investigates contemporary issues at the interface of faith and science with a weekly lecture series every summer. This year we considered a wide range of topics, under a unifying theme: "Why Do Faith and Reason Interact?" Instead of our usual supper-lecture-discussion format at the Unitarian Church, all sessions took place via Zoom. Typically, we had ~ 40 people on-line during these talks and the discussions that followed. Because of pandemic restricted travel, we did not host an external speaker this summer.

Press release from Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum, May 2021

The Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum invites you to our Eighth annual summer program entitled "Why Do Faith and Reason Interact?" – this year again via Zooming. Our lecture series will begin every Wednesday evening at 6:30 pm, starting on June 2 and running for 9 weeks, through July 28. These sessions will be available on the internet via Zoom. Information has already been sent to our members and previous years' attendees. Otherwise, you can connect to these sessions using this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83384636721?pwd=WDZHa08xaUhvVWRqd2NHTXcrYkxidz09>

This summer's series will again explore a wide range of issues at the forefront of the science-religion intersection. At the first session, we will remind our audience about the mechanics of 'Zooming' and Bob Reinovsky will then present an introduction to and relationship between the topics that will be presented throughout the summer. The summer series includes two talks on the foundations of modern science, two talks dealing with ethics related to science and religion, three talks related to Adam and Eve, and a final lecture on the very timely issue of vaccines.

Here is the schedule of the presentations:

- June 2 "Why Do Faith and Reason Interact? An Introduction to the Summer Series" – Bob Reinovsky
- June 9 "How Christianity Laid the Foundation for Modern Science ... and many other things, such as human rights and individual freedom -- Part I: The Psychology of Europe" – Nels Hoffman
- June 16 "How Christianity Laid the Foundation for Modern Science ... and many other things, such as human rights and individual freedom -- Part II: The Work of the Church" – Nels Hoffman
- June 23 "Ethics: The Common Ground Between Faith and Science" – Bob Dryja
- June 30 "Ethics of Science Informing Theology" – Gerry Wood
- July 7 "Scientific constraints on the Existence of Adam and Eve" – Chick Keller
- July 14 "Christology without the 'fall': Do we need Adam and Eve? Impact on Jesus' mission(s)" – Morrie Pongratz
- July 21 "Adam and Eve's origin and impact: How they fit into evolutionary history, why they are essential to religion, and how they enabled the explosive success of mankind" – Gary Stradling
- July 28 "History of Vaccines and Christian Response" – Glenn Magelssen

During our first six summers, the Forum presented programs featuring Wednesday evenings of suppers, lectures, and discussions, based on specific themes and featuring highly recognized experts in areas at the intersection of religion and science. Last year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, large gatherings and strong social interactions were not allowed. In response to this situation -- while maintaining the desire to continue our tradition of a summer lecture series -- we embraced electronic social media as our solution and used 'Zoom' to stream our talks out to all our previous participants as well as new people interested in these topics. We continue this

tradition for the 2021 summer series, with many of us now well experienced with this new mode of interaction and information exchange. Copies of the abstracts for this season's presentations and viewgraphs of the talks themselves can be found on our website: www.lafsf.org .



A Comment on the Summer 2021 Program

A retrospect on this summer's question, "Why Can/Should Faith and Reason/Religion and Science Interact?", was given by Bob Reinovsky's in his opening lecture, June 2, 2021. Bob reminded the audience of the purpose of the Forum, namely: "(To) Invite the communities of science and faith to join in **living deeply** in the mysteries of faith and the mysteries of science by **looking deeply** into both." He also briefly reviewed the themes of previous summers, which addressed one aspect of **looking deeply** into the mysteries of both faith and science. This is the Forum's ongoing effort to explore topics of current interest such as "Origins", "What Makes Us Human?", "Evolution and Hope" and "Purposeful Evolution", "Are You a Robot?", and "Hope,

Nature, Sin and Transhumanism” from both the perspective of faith and from the perspective of science. This has been done by generally using the tools of the physical sciences and, largely, the tools of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Another aspect of **living deeply in**, and **looking deeply into**, the mysteries of faith and science is to explore why Faith and Reason/Religion and Science can or should interact at all. The twin disciplines Faith and Reason/ Religion and Science, F(RR)S both:

- (1) Share a common objective, asserting that there are fundamentals of truth and both are working to find it;
- (2) Share the desire to address the same Big Questions;
- (3) Share common processes for thought and exploration;
- (4) Share similar values (virtues) such as Curiosity, Humility and Shalom;
- (5) Place boundary conditions on each other while still respecting each other’s unique approach and data sets;
- (6) Address the uncertainty that seems to plague human thought.

Bob’s full lecture, as well as his viewgraphs, can be found on the Forum’s web-site.

Other Board Activities

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic and related covid restrictions, a number of activities in which Forum members usually participated in were not held in 2021. These include: Community Lenten Series and our Writers Group. Furthermore, we did not have an invited speaker as part of our summer lecture series. Members did use zoom to listen to presentations sponsored by national faith and science groups such as BioLogos and internationally, such as the 2021 Boyle Lecture [Feb. 3, 2021, by Prof. Tom McLeish York University, UK, entitled “The rediscovery of contemplation through science”]. Several of our members attended a local in-person conference: Society of Catholic Scientists New Mexico Chapter Regional Conference (Los Alamos, Sept. 11, 2021) and made presentations: Chick Keller – The existence and nature of the human soul, Morrie Pongratz – The end of everything, and Dan Winske – Transhumanism. Even though we did not have a summer guest speaker, a number of Forum members watched via zoom Prof. Elaine Ecklund’s presentation to the Faraday Society entitled “Varieties of Atheism in Science”, based on her new book coauthored with David R. Johnson.

2021 Annual Meeting

Summary

The Forum’s annual meeting was held remotely via Zoom on Sunday, December 5, 2021. Nineteen Forum members were in attendance. President Dan Winske presented a summary of the year’s activities. Treasurer Bob Dryja presented a financial summary. Morrie gave a short technical presentation on “The End of Everything”. A discussion of possible topics for next summer’s lecture series occurred, and election of new Board Members took place, as summarized below. A copy of the agenda for this meeting is attached in Appendix B.

Possible Topics for Next Summer

Dan began with topics that have been proposed in previous years:

- Climate change
- Quantum mechanics and uncertainty
- Emergent behavior
- The nature of thought.

In the ensuing vigorous discussion there were many other suggestions:

- Gary Stradling asked for less exotic science and wanting a genuine intersection between faith and science.
- Gary mentioned that Kent Budge suggested “the Age of the Earth”.
- John Singleton suggested “super intelligence”.
- Susan Sprake suggested “Biblical Archeology”.
- Patrick Berg suggested “the methods and evidence used in New Testament criticism”.
- Nels Hoffman suggested “themes addressing fundamental science puzzles, e.g., the origin of life, and “fine tuning” constants of the universe.
- Gary suggested expanding the number of talks taking advantage of Zoom.
- Glenn suggested a balance between science and faith and continuing talks beyond the usual summer session.

Morrie suggested using “Survey Monkey” to let all members have input.

Election of Board Members

Board members of the Forum are elected to two-year terms by vote of attending members. At the annual meeting elections for board members to serve for 2022 were held. Chick Keller, Robert Reinovsky, and Gerry Wood are completing the 2nd year of their 3rd term on the board and were not available for reelection in 2022. We thanked them for their service on the board. In the years 2016-2021 Gerry has served as vice president and treasurer as well as the chairman of the curriculum committee, Bob has served as secretary and vice president, and Chick has been chair of the membership committee. Between them, they have given 13 lectures in the summer program over the last 5 years. Nelson Hoffman, Glenn Magelssen, Morrie Pongratz, and Dan Winske will finish the second year of their third term at the end of 2022. In addition, three board members, Amy Birnbaum, Eric Ferm, and Michelle Stump, will start the second year of their first term at the beginning of 2022. Robert Dryja, Susan Sprake, and Gary Stradling are finishing their first term at the end of 2021 and were elected to another two-year term. New board members were also elected for their first two-year term beginning in 2022: Patrick Berg, Andrea Favalli, Nick Hengartner, Daniel Holladay, and John Singleton. At the next board meeting in January 2022, the Board of Directors will elect new officers for the year.

Appendix A: Organization of the 2021 Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum

Board of Directors

- Amy Birnbaum; Member, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Robert Dryja (Treasurer); Member, Unitarian Church of Los Alamos
- Eric Ferm, Fort Collins, CO
- Nelson Hoffman; Member, First United Methodist Church of Los Alamos
- Charles Keller; Member, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Glenn Magelssen; Deacon, Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Morris Pongratz (Secretary); Member, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Robert Reinovsky (Vice President); Elder, White Rock Presbyterian Church
- Susan Sprake; Member, Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church
- Gary Stradling; Member, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Michelle Stump; Member, Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church
- Dan Winske (President); Member, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Gerry Wood; Elder, Los Alamos Church of Christ

Committee Chairs

- Budget – Robert Dryja
- Membership – Chick Keller
- Strategic Planning – open
- Planning for 2021:
 - Curriculum – Gerry Wood
 - Logistics – Nels Hoffman (acting)
 - Publicity – Morris Pongratz
 - Visiting Speaker – Nels Hoffman

Appendix B: Agenda for the Annual Meeting (Dec. 5, 2021)

Meeting held remotely via Zoom

- 4:00 pm Welcome
- 4:02 Introduction of attendees
- 4:08 Comments on the minutes of the 2020 annual meeting and report
- 4:10 2021 Annual Report – Dan Winske
- 4:28 Financial report – Bob Dryja
- 4:30 Comments from committee chairs
- 4:32 Morrie Pongratz: “The End of Everything”
- 4:45 Seeking topics/themes for 2022
- 5:00 Comments from Forum members
- 5:10 Election of board members
- 5:20 Adjournment