

EVOLUTION PROJECTS

a compendium of ongoing, pending, and proposed projects by Connie Barlow, Michael Dowd, and colleagues

posted 3 February 2009 to coincide with "The Year of Evolution"
by Connie Barlow (updated 11 February 2009)

<http://www.TheGreatStory.org/evolution-projects.pdf>

NOTE: February 12, 2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. November 24, 2009 marks the 150th anniversary of publication of his landmark book, *On the Origin of Species*. For both of these reasons, 2009 is regarded as "The Year of Evolution." **Darwin Day / Evolution Weekend** is an international celebration of science and humanity held on or around **February 12**, the day that Charles Darwin was born on in 1809. Specifically, it celebrates the discoveries and life of Charles Darwin — who first described biological evolution via natural selection with scientific rigor and a wealth of diverse empirical evidence. More generally, Darwin Day expresses gratitude for the enormous benefits that scientific knowledge, acquired through human curiosity and ingenuity, has contributed to the advancement of humanity.

1. NEW WEBSITE - "ThankGodforEvolution.net"

<http://www.ThankGodforEvolution.net>

Feb 2009: nearing initial launch by Paul West and Joshua Gorman

ThankGodforEvolution.net, an **online community platform** and companion website to [ThankGodforEvolution.com](http://www.ThankGodforEvolution.com), will be officially launched early in 2009. This site will serve as a meeting ground where people of all religious traditions, scientific backgrounds, philosophies, and spiritual paths can come together to help create a movement and culture that **celebrates religion and science as one integrated worldview**. Visitors to the site will have the opportunity to post ideas, questions, projects, and stories to the **community discussion board**, and to become part of a dynamic community of inspired individuals and organizations committed to a sacred and meaningful future. From Baptists to Buddhists to Big Bang theorists and beyond, all will be encouraged to engage in fresh conversations about matters of ultimate concern and to learn how to apply this work to their own lives.

2. E-ZINE: "Evolutionary Times"

<http://www.thankgodforevolution.com/evolutionarytimes>

Ongoing periodic free e-zine by Michael Dowd, Connie Barlow, and Paul West

This e-zine (launched in 2008) is available for **free online**, both the current issue and the archive. At his speaking events, Michael gives audience members an opportunity to sign up for email notification of each new issue. The mission of this e-zine, as expressed by Michael Dowd "This newsletter will now be our main means of communicating with the millions in the middle who, like us, find inspiration, comfort, and encouragement in our common creation myth—**The Great Story** of cosmos, Earth, life, and humanity told in meaningful and empowering ways. Here you will find key links to informative blog posts, news coverage, our itinerary, mention of what's

new on our websites, and suggestions for how you can join us and play an important part in furthering this movement.”

3. EDUCATIONAL WEBSITE: “The Great Story”

<http://www.thegreatstory.org>

Initiated in 2002 and managed by Connie Barlow

This is one of the **outstanding websites to support the movement** variously known as Epic of Evolution (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_of_Evolution), the Universe Story, or The Great Story. Many educational materials, curricula, and dramatic scripts are **freely available** for download at this website.

4. YOUTH MOVEMENT & BOOK – “Generation Waking Up: Coming of Age in the 21st Century”

Book and website underway by Joshua Gorman (seeking funding)

Joshua Gorman is a member of the younger generations who are **waking up to their place in the Great Story and who are finding their life's calling within the Great Work of these times**. Currently he is writing a **book** (not yet contracted to a publisher) titled *Generation Waking Up: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*. It will be a **big-picture generational narrative helping young people** understand the unprecedented challenges and opportunities they face as a generation living at this decisive moment in human history. Generation Waking Up is also the name of an **emerging youth organization** working to connect young people with the New Story and supporting the awakening youth movements of the new millennium. To learn more, read an **article by Joshua** that was published in *Kosmos* journal: <http://www.kosmosjournal.org/kjo/articles/articlessub2/generation-waking-up.shtml>

“Generation Waking Up: Coming of Age at the Crossroads of Civilization”

5. WORSHIP MATERIALS POSTED - “Darwin Day Worship Materials”

<http://thegreatstory.org/worship-materials.pdf>

Jon Cleland-Host and Connie Barlow posted this new pdf February 2009

Because Cleland-Host and Barlow are both Unitarian Universalists, this pdf provides suggestions and online links to materials that can be used for **each component of a standard Order of Service**, such as one would encounter Sunday mornings in a Unitarian Universalist church or fellowship. These include scores of short and longer prospects for Opening/Closing Words and Readings — all freely available online via TheGreatStory.org website. Chalice Lighting readings (and unison readings) are also suggested, as is an evolutionary introduction to the Offering. Unitarian Universalist hymns compatible with an **evolution theme** are also suggested. For sermons, this pdf links directly to the Clergy Letter Project site, where sermons are listed by author and by religious faith: http://www.butler.edu/clergyproject/Resources/Res_Sermons.htm

6. WORSHIP MATERIALS TO UPDATE - “Evolution Day Worship Materials”

<http://thegreatstory.org/worship-materials.pdf>

Jon Cleland-Host and Connie Barlow to rework the above post in time for November 2009 Evolution anniversary

Update the Darwin Day Worship materials to have them specifically work for the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. Anniversary is November 24, 2009. For Americans and Canadians, **a theme of gratitude for our evolutionary ancestry could enable this event to synergize with Thanksgiving.**

7. DARWIN DAY SERMONS - "Clergy Letter Project"

http://www.butler.edu/clergyproject/rel_evolution_sun.htm

Jon Cleland-Host is a contributor to this website, which is aimed at clergy

In 2004 biologist Michael Zimmerman (now Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler University, Indianapolis) launched an initiative for **Christian clergy** to sign a short **public letter** in which they testified:

"We the undersigned, Christian clergy from many different traditions, believe that the timeless truths of the Bible and the discoveries of modern science may comfortably coexist. We believe that the [theory of evolution](#) is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as "one theory among others" is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children.

As of Feb 2009, **11,815 Christian clergy** have signed the letter. Later, a Rabbi Letter was developed (with **433 Jewish rabbi** signatures as of February 2009) and a **Unitarian Universalist** letter (with 155 signatures). More clergy are encouraged to sign on.

8. NEW PDF POSTED: "Darwin Day Letters to Newspaper Editors"

<http://thegreatstory.org/evolutionary-letters.pdf>

Jon Cleland-Host posted this pdf February 2009

Here anyone can download sample "Letters to the Editor" to send to their local or regional newspaper. **Four different templates are provided.** They can easily be adapted to also work for Darwin Day announcements in future years and for the 150th anniversary of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, 24 November 2009. Ministers and others may find these templates easy to use themselves or to recommend to their congregants.

9. BEST EVOLUTION RESOURCES: online links

<http://www.thankgodforevolution.com/node/1527>

Michael Dowd posted online January 2009

In this blog post, Michael Dowd offers links to great online resources grouped in these categories: "The Creationism vs. Evolution Conflict," "Acclaimed Books Revealing Compelling Evidence for Evolution," "Finding Meaning and Inspiration in an Evolutionary Worldview," "Evolutionary Emergence and Life's Trajectory," "Evolutionary Origins of Morality and Ethics."

10. BLOG: "The Evolutionary Evangelist"

http://www.thankgodforevolution.com/blog_archive

Michael Dowd posts new blogs ongoingly

Since July 2007, Michael Dowd has been blogging, bringing **a sacred evolutionary perspective to current events and other topics.** He uses this blog, as well, to launch his newest ideas and to relate "Stories of Awakening" to the evolutionary perspective that he encounters on the road. Connie Barlow also posts "**Stories of Awakening**" at her own web page: <http://thegreatstory.org/stories-awaken.html>.

11. TRAVELING EVOLUTIONARY MINISTRY of Michael Dowd & Connie Barlow

<http://thegreatstory.org/index-us.html>

Launched in 2002 and ongoing

Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow live permanently on the road as "America's evolutionary evangelists." An introduction to their ministry is available at:

http://thegreatstory.org/who_we_are.html.

Michael's book website, <http://www.thankgodforevolution.com/>, also supports their mission.

12. EDITED BOOK VOLUME - *Sleeping with the Fishes: Charles Darwin and the Spirit of Liberal Religion* (Fred Muir, editor, to be published by Skinner House Books, October 2009)

For autumn 2009 publication: In February 2009, Connie Barlow contributed a chapter on Kids' Curricula and Michael Dowd contributed a chapter on "Evolution Theology"

Editor Fred Muir (Senior Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis MD) initiated this book project with this goal: "to introduce and/or broaden Darwin in such a way that **religious professionals, lay leaders, congregations**, and readers in general can find him and the implications of his ideas, especially as they pertain **to liberal religion**, more accessible."

13. EVOLUTIONARY PILGRIMAGE POST – "Down House" (Darwin's home)

Connie Barlow posted this webpage on 11 February 2009

On The Great Story website, Connie posts short photo-essays of actual pilgrimages made to "**Sacred Sites of the Epic of Evolution**": http://thegreatstory.org/sacred_sites.html.

Connie plans to post a new photo-essay of a pilgrimage she made in 1993 to Down House, the **home of Charles Darwin**, south of London.

14. PAMPHLET: "MISMATCHED INSTINCTS: Introducing Evolutionary Brain Science and Evolutionary Integrity to 12-STEP and Other Recovery Programs"

High on the To-Do List of Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow

This writing project will overlap somewhat with Tom Atlee's "Evolutionary Integrity" project (see below) and bringing the evolutionary perspective to the Men's Movement. The ultimate goal will be to produce a written pamphlet that can become **supplemental reading in 12-step and other recovery work**. All research is already done, and Michael and Connie regularly preach and teach this material in their public and church presentations. Audiences universally find this material inspiringly useful, and it also encourages more compassion for self and others. Sample stories of how this perspective can change lives at:

<http://thegreatstory.org/stories-awaken.html#brain>. The *Christian Science Monitor* reported on the Christian recovery movement for internet porn addiction at:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0825/p14s01-lire.html>

15. DVD PROJECT: "An evolutionary understanding/celebration of DEATH"

High on the To-Do List of Connie Barlow (and Michael Dowd)

A year ago, Connie was asked by a small publisher of hospice literature to convert her "Death Through Deep Time Eyes" powerpoint into a pamphlet that can be sold and distributed to **hospices** and their clients. But Connie is now inclined to produce a DVD to visually and auditorially present the same materials, with far more power and accessibility. The project will

require development of a script, then Connie working text and still photos into a dynamic video with voice over by Connie and Michael. This will be a big project, but no funding or contract work is required, as Connie is skilled with using video software. All research is already completed. A DVD <http://thegreatstory.org/celeb-evol.html> of Connie's in-person presentation (to a Unitarian Universalist audience) has been available for 3 years, but it needs to be redone completely for hospice clients. A quick overview of the main points appears in Michael's book, and also on this webpage: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/death-programs.html>. An audio of a **sermon Connie Barlow** delivered on "Death through Deep-Time Eyes" can be listed to at: <http://thegreatstory.org/audio/deathsermon-cb.mp3>

16. WEBSITE, RESEARCH, COLLABORATIONS: "EVO-ECO-ECU: Evolutionary, Ecological, and Ecumenical Arts and Media for Contemporary Worship Services in Liberal Churches"

<http://thegreatstory.org/evo-eco-ecu.html>

Connie Barlow posted online in January 2009 the idea in proposal format; funding will be needed (Connie hopes another organization will develop and implement it)

Evangelical megachurches have made their worship services attractive to younger people, in part, by using **multimedia resources** specific to their Christian mission (e.g., dramatic videos and sing-along slide programs projected onto large screens). These churches, however, tend to be hostile toward the **evolutionary sciences** and toward **ecumenical, interfaith perspectives** that encourage global community. Modes of **ecological concern** deeper than a biblically defensible "stewardship" approach are also lacking in the evangelical churches. Liberal churches, on the other hand, tend to be open to the evolutionary and deep ecological worldviews and have inclusive interfaith perspectives, but **few offer "contemporary" worship** on a regular basis. This proposed project contains a number of subprojects, some of which are already completed and some already launched by Connie Barlow. The project is fleshed out in this companion draft webpage: <http://thegreatstory.org/evo-eco-ecu.html>

17. DVD: Sing-along Music Video of 8 Peter Mayer Songs

<http://thegreatstory.org/order-mayer.html>

Connie Barlow has finished 3 of 8 music videos; completion anticipated for early summer 2009, culminating in online sales of a DVD

This project is Connie's contribution to the umbrella idea of music videos proposed above. In 2006 she collaborated with singer-songwriter Peter Mayer to compile **13 of his songs that celebrate and evolutionary worldview into a CD: *Peter Mayer Sings the Great Story***, which is sold online at: <http://thegreatstory.org/songs.html>. Connie Barlow has long used powerpoints of 8 of these songs in her workshops, and as of February 2009 had reworked the photos and text into a **new kind of music video**: instead of featuring the artist, it features the **text** (for contemplation or sing-along), overlaid on top of lovely **photos evocative of the subject and emotional content**, and blended into movement.

18. POWERPOINT: Sing-along powerpoint of 5 Cosmic All Stars Songs

Underway by Connie Barlow and Keith Mesecher

Keith Mesecher, a lay leader of First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego, collaborated with Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd to stage an "**evolutionary revival**" in February 2008. (See a photo-essay of the event at: <http://thegreatstory.org/songs/evolutionary-revival.html>) Keith had written 5 songs for this (and related) events, and his band, "The Cosmic All Stars" performed all five at the revival. Connie produced a **powerpoint show of Hubble Space photos with the song lyrics overlaid**, and this was used during the revival to encourage the audience to sing along. Keith has since produced a **CD** (now sold online at: <http://thegreatstory.org/songs/cosmic-all-stars.html>). Connie is almost finished with a

powerpoint version for churches and other organizations to use, with the recorded songs embedded (in full or karaoke).

19. POWERPOINT FOR FREE DOWNLOAD: "River of Life" (participatory evolution program for kids and families)

High on Connie Barlow's To Do list

Two years ago, Connie developed an elaborate Apple powerpoint equivalent **digital slide** program, with accompanying **song** and **dramatic scripts** that she uses regularly in her guest religious education programs at UU churches and summer camps. It takes the participants on **an evolutionary journey back to the origin of life** and in such a way that we delight in discovering the order of relatedness we have to all the other groups of creatures alive on Earth today — from chimpanzees to bacteria. Dramatic scripts have long been available for download at this webpage: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/ancestors-tale.html>. But Connie's personalized delivery of it has yet to be made more accessible (see this page for how she presents her own version of it: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/kids-connie.html>.) You can listen to the song and download the lyrics at: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/songs/river-of-life-song.html>.

20. NETWORKING: "Evolutionary Parables"

Implementable by Connie Barlow

The existing script or story-form parables on The Great Story website (<http://thegreatstory.org/parables.html>) should be linked and publicized on sites that are promoting free educational resources for Darwin Days in future years. This would take relatively little time to research online to find which sites ought to know about these materials and then to communicate with them. They are also **ideal for intergenerational worship services** in which evolution is the theme (and have been used in that way already).

21. DVD: "Your Brain's Creation Story": for Teen Sex/Love/Drug Education in Churches

Underway by Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd

Liberal churches use the joint UCC/UU "Our Whole Lives" (OWL) program to shepherd teens into sex, love, and relationship knowledge and reflection in carefully structured programs, and with parent and teacher training. Although we haven't assessed the program ourselves, we have heard that it tends toward "blank slate" assumptions about human malleability. One of our top-of-the-list creative projects is to use the materials we have already gathered (some of which are in the central chapters of Michael's book, *Thank God for Evolution*) for Connie to create **a fun DVD to convey the insights of evolutionary psychology and evolutionary brain science, to offer up questions, provide real-world examples drawn from various media**, and overall create a package that can supplement the OWL program and also introduce vital understanding of **addictions and codependence**, too. Connie currently guest teaches this program to teens (and age-appropriate versions to elementary age kids). See her webpage for this, and scroll down to item #2: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/kids-connie.html>. Connie also provides guest sermons on this theme for UU congregations. See her sermon description for "Your Brain's Creation Story" at <http://www.thegreatstory.org/UU-program-list.html#Connie>.

22. RESEARCH AND WRITING: "Deepening Evolutionary Integrity"

Tom Atlee is already engaged in this; Michael Dowd has made preliminary steps to bring this idea (introduced in his book) to the attention of leaders in the men's movement. The two are collaborating. Tom seeks financial support and a community of interest in exploring this topic on a wiki or listserv. Michael is encouraging Tom

to begin a blog, or to contribute guest blogs to Michael's own blog at www.ThankGodforEvolution.com

While centered in one's individual character, the concept of integrity has been expanded by Michael Dowd's evolutionary thinking to include **aligning with reality as it actually is, and at multiple levels** — including the integrity of projects, corporate behavior, social systems, etc. This concept has been picked up for development by Tom Atlee of the Co-Intelligence Institute and Evolutionary Life. His explorations include (a) all the entities and activities to which evolutionary integrity applies; (b) the many dimensions of reality with which we can seek alignment, particularly (c) the histories (past) and positive possibilities (future) that reside in the present moment and (d) the nature of character, consciousness, activism (or "evolutionary citizenship"), spiritual practice, etc., implied by these understandings. One of the more intriguing outcomes of his exploration thus far is the possibility of our conscious participation in evolutionary Grace — **the tendency of evolution to use dissonance to move life towards new forms of wholeness** — and a whole new vision of **activism** that arises from that. His aim is to expand and deepen our sense of who we are or could be as **conscious evolutionary beings and communities, fully engaged with and manifesting the best of evolutionary energies in the world.**

23. WEBSITE & BLOG: "Evolution Resources Clearinghouse"

Proposed by Duane Kuss; funding needed

Today on iTunes University you can find over 150 educational programs on Evolution and Darwin. This consists of over 100 hours of audio and video programming from some of the best Universities in the world. You Tube has 26,600 videos that tag Darwin. Duane would like to see a blog created using a domain such as, "TheBestOfDarwin" or "TheBestOfEvolution". **The purpose of this blog would be to help sift through (clearinghouse) all of this content and repackage it into more bite-size pieces for more general use and sampling.** In addition, similar to Ray Kurzweil's Daily Newsletter (KurzweilAI.net), the goal would be to publish a weekly newsletter highlighting some of the latest developments in the world of evolutionary programs, discoveries, concepts, and stories.

24. GATHERING online and face-time: "Intergenerational Wake-up"

Proposed in partnership by Evolutionary Life (Tom Atlee) and Generation Waking Up (Joshua Gorman). They seek financial and organizing support.

All too often elders and youth are in tension, with **elders representing the knowledge, experience, and ways of the past, and youth representing novelty and breaks with the bondage of the past.** Evolution, on the other hand, embodies — through the survival and reproduction dynamics that produce both preservation and creativity — a generative relationship between the past and the future. In human society the creative biological transfer of genes to children through sexual reproduction is accompanied by the passing of **cultural memes** (ideas, practices, institutions, etc.), which the new generation preserves and/or alters as it sees fit. Such **"cultural evolution"** unfolds — that is, society evolves — through such institutions as the family, education, and rites of passage, as well as through research, activism, and economic and cultural activity.

As conscious evolutionaries, **we are called to bring increasing consciousness and social-evolutionary potential into the relationship between elder-energies and youth-energies.** This calling can be clarified and nurtured by gatherings and a participatory online space. **The first gathering**, to be held during 2009 — the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of his THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES — will involve 30 to 60 evolutionary luminaries, elders, activists and youth leaders guided by social and evolutionary awareness. It will seek to clarify (a) **a vision of evolutionary activism**, (b)

appropriate evolutionary **rites of passage** for individuals, collectives, and society, and (c) a curriculum of wisdom and know-how for engaging in conscious evolutionary agency, as well as developing (d) **lasting relationships and networks for mentoring**, inspiration, story-sharing and action. Success would be the launching of an intergeneration movement to further evolutionary activism. In convening such a gathering, we understand that many older people carry breakthrough creative energy and many younger people carry wisdom and vital know-how (notably in the creative use of technology and cultural innovation). We are looking for synergies of all forms between the generations.

25. MEDIA INSIDER ADVOCACY: Rebroadcast Evolution Specials

Proposed by Jon Cleland-Host

In the past decade, at least **two TV specials** have been broadcast which helped bring a greater understanding of evolution to millions of people. With the double anniversary year of 2009, it would be appropriate to rebroadcast both: **"Evolution" (PBS 2001)** and **"Walking with Monsters" (BBC i2005)**. Both are excellent, stunning works which deserve to be seen again simply based on their merits, even without the double anniversary of 2009. In addition, there are undoubtedly other such series that could also be found. To make this project a reality, all that is needed is **someone with connections to broadcasters** to present this idea very soon, being that programming schedules are planned months in advance of when they are broadcast.

26. MATERIALS PREPARATION , PROMOTION, AND DISTRIBUTION: Evolution Anniversary Kits for Gradeschools, Middleschools, and High Schools

Proposed by Jon Cleland-Host

In the busy daily schedule of most schools, few resources beyond those needed to present the basic lesson are available. Thus, it is likely that in many schools, anniversaries of momentous events such as 2009 (which is both the 200th birth year of Charles Darwin as well as the 150th anniversary of the publication of the Origin of Species) pass with little if any mention by an overwhelmed science teacher. Thus donors could provide a tremendous boost to the education of millions of school students. **Packets composed of pictures, displays, and lesson ideas could be provided to science teachers** across the grades to make the teaching opportunity of this once in a lifetime anniversary easy and fun to respond to. Such a pack need not cost more than a few dozen dollars each, being that the potential number needed is very large — though some high schools may be selected to receive replicas of the Berlin Archaeopteryx specimen as well. The first step would be to survey online whether any organization is already doing this, e.g., the National Center for Science Education, or the National Science Teachers Association.