



The Evolutionary Evangelist

Rev. Michael Dowd shared a message of a new vision of faith and spirituality at Prairiewoods recently. Appearing on August 14, he presented a multifaceted message full of insight and hope. Dowd is widely recognized for his book, *Thank God for Evolution*. Known as the “Evolutionary Evangelist,” he is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Rev. Dowd shared his belief in incorporating the insights of evolution into faith, in understanding God as reality, and in taking climate change seriously. Since he spoke for well over two hours, you will understand, Gentle Reader, this one page can pass on only highlights, not a complete summary of his thought. We encourage you to learn more at <http://www.MichaelDowd.org> and <http://thegreatstory.org>.

Dowd emphatically states there is no inherent conflict between science and religion, or between contemporary understandings of evolution and the Christian and Jewish scriptures. He laments that so many individuals in our nation feel a strong antagonism toward biological evolution, a public attitude which is almost unique in the world. In fact, up until very recent years, most scientists in the West felt that by understanding the world better, they gained a deeper understanding of God.

Looking at Jewish and Christian scriptures, he reviewed some basic passages and the meaning these held for their original audiences. For the first readers, faith in God included wisdom, found in those passages which we call the “wisdom literature.” This early wisdom meant being in right alignment with reality. Dowd maintains that similarly, our faith today must be touch with reality – taking into account our best understanding of the nature of the world around us.

Finally, Michael shared the scientific opinion that the climate of our planet is changing. Not only that, but the overwhelming scientific consensus is that this change is in great part due to humanity's burning of fossil fuels. His statements here are based, not on media pundits or politicians, but on hundreds of peer reviewed articles in the science journals published by the American Association for the Advancement of

Science [<http://www.aaas.org/science-journals>]. Dowd believes the impact of climate change will lead to tremendous suffering for future generations. Therefore, this is a great moral challenge of our day, and we are called to change our actions which contribute to the problem. The Evolutionary Evangelist rekindles some old-time revival fire, fervently preaching for commitment to change!

Dowd's message highlights the many understandings of God held by humanity. Witness to this diversity of understanding is evident in a contemporary searcher's response to this evolutionary message, "At last, a God I can respect." Dowd calls us all, as children of God, to respect the world in which we live. He likewise calls us to respect the impact for good we can make *if* we reduce humanity's reliance on fossil fuels.

As the ancient wisdom writers might express it, the path of wisdom is to live in right alignment with the reality of our world – including the reality of climate change. What are practical steps for living wisely in our reality? Dowd noted three websites where we can take action: <http://www.CarbonTax.org>,

<http://www.CitizensClimateLobby.org>,

<http://www.EnergyandEnterprise.com>.

He also suggested many books. A couple of these are *eaarth* by Bill McKibben and *Storms of My Grandchildren* by James Hansen. Authors referenced include Erik M. Conway, John M. Greer, James Hansen, Bill McKibben, Naomi Oreskes, and others.

We invite you to investigate and act in wisdom.

– Pastor Michael Metz of Kenwood Park United Methodist Church

– Jen Yukl from Cedar Rapids Zen Center



From <http://www.michaeldowd.org/about/>

Religious, Educational & Professional Background

Michael Dowd grew up Roman Catholic and attended Catholic school for eight years. At the age of 20, while serving in the U.S. Army in Berlin, Germany, he had a 'born-again' experience and began attending an Assemblies of God church. After leaving the military in 1981, he attended **Evangel University** in Springfield, Missouri (affiliated with the Assemblies of God), where he received a B.A. in biblical studies and philosophy, graduating with highest honors. He also graduated with honors in 1987 from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (now **Palmer Seminary**) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (affiliated with the American Baptist Church), where he earned a Master of Divinity degree. From 1987 through 1995 Rev. Dowd served as a United Church of Christ minister, pastoring churches in Massachusetts, Ohio, and Michigan. His first book, **EarthSpirit: A Handbook for Nurturing an Ecological Christianity** (Twenty-Third Publications: 1991), inspired by the work of Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and Miriam MacGillis, was one of the first attempts to look appreciatively at traditional, biblical Christianity from the perspective of a modern cosmology.

In 1995 Rev. Dowd began working with Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Unitarian Universalist leaders across America on social and environmental issues that were coming up for a vote in Congress, as Religious Organizer for the Washington D.C.-based National Environmental Trust. From 1997 to 2000 he headed the first government-funded program designed to produce large-scale voluntary citizen behavior change along stewardship lines in the United States: The **Portland Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign**, in Portland, Oregon. In 2000 and 2001 he served as Campaign Manager of **Global Action Plan** (now **The Empowerment Institute's EcoTeam**) and **Livable Neighborhood** programs in Rockland County, New York.

Rev. Dowd has served on the boards of the **North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology**; the Ohio Conference United Church of Christ (UCC) Integrity of Creation, Justice, and Peace task force; and the **Hudson Valley Sustainable Communities Network**. He has also served on the steering committees of the **Network of Biblical Storytellers International** and the UCC Network for Environmental and Economic Responsibility. Michael's great joy in life is telling the history of everyone and everything in ways that inspire and empower people of all ages and theological orientations to know real freedom, to live in integrity, and to fulfill their evolutionary mission, or "calling".