

Center for American Progress



PANEL OF EXPERTS:

“THE HARMONY OF FAITH AND SCIENCE”

MODERATOR:

**MELODY BARNES,
SENIOR FELLOW,
CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS**

FEATURING:

**MYRA CHRISTOPHER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR PRACTICAL BIOETHICS**

**JACK KREBS,
VICE PRESIDENT,
KANSAS CITIZENS FOR SCIENCE**

**RABBI MARK H. LEVIN,
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CAROLYN MACDONALD: Good evening. Welcome to All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church. I'm Carolyn McDonald, a member of All Souls and chair of our forum committee. The annual Unitarian Universalist General Assembly is meeting in Texas this week, and our minister, Jim Eller, as well as many other church leaders are there now, so I extend their greetings to you also, since they're not here.

All Souls is a church where people of different beliefs and diverse backgrounds come together for intellectual and spiritual inquiry. Since 1943, we have had a weekly Sunday morning forum, September through May, which provides a platform for the discussion of significant issues and some of you in this room have spoken at the forum at some time in the past.

Among our recent forum speakers have been William Neaves, who's president of the Stowers Institute for Medical Research, who is speaking on stem cell research; and two members of the Kansas Board of Education who are discussing the politics of evolution in Kansas. So we as a church are very interested in the topic of tonight's panel. In fact, I was checking out our pamphlets on the rack out there tonight as I came in, and here's one called *Science and Religion*.

All Souls has a strong commitment to social justice and environmental responsibility. We have a social responsibility board that helps encourage and facilitate various social justice activities in the church. Now, for a few mundane things – I'm always the one that seems to be giving announcements – restrooms: go out in the lobby and then make a U-turn, and there's a hallway right parallel to this wall, and there's a women's restroom, a wheelchair-accessible restroom, and then a men's room. Drinking fountains: go out in the lobby and keep going straight and you'll come to a drinking fountain. Parking: those of you who parked at the Marriott Hotel parking lot, when you go out, if you just tell them that you've been at an event at All Souls, you don't have to pay anything. And one more thing: it's okay to have water in here, but please no other beverages or food.

We're very pleased to have all of you here for tonight's panel, the Harmony of Faith and Science, which is sponsored by the Center for American Progress. The panel moderator is Melody Barnes, who's sitting in the center right there. She's senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. She focuses on issues that I think sound like exactly the kind of issues I'm interested in: religion and domestic policy issues, civil rights, women's health and gender equity issues, and the judicial confirmation process. She's had a number of positions before. She's been chief counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy on the Senate Judiciary Committee. She served as director of legislative affairs for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and a number of other kinds of things. She received her law degree from the University of Michigan and her bachelor's degree

in History from the University of North Carolina. So I'd like to welcome Melody and the Center for American Progress.

Thank you, Melody, for being here. (Applause.)

MELODY BARNES: Great. Thank you so much, Carolyn, for that warm welcome. We are so thrilled to be here in Kansas City and particularly to be here at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church this evening, and I want to thank you all for being here. Before we actually do one more thing, I specifically want to thank a few people who have been so kind to us, even before we arrived in Kansas City. I want to thank Jeff Mazore (ph) and Amy Jordan-Wooden (ph), who were really kind of boots on the ground for us here in Kansas City and handled so many important tasks. I want to thank Scott Burnett (sp) and Howard Balke (ph), Carol McKnight (ph) and Bruce Tyson (ph) of the Mainstream Coalition, Bob Hoffman and Vickie Walker (sp) of the Midwest Center. All of them have just been really terrific to us and helped get the word out about tonight's event and really, I think, are responsible for so many people being here, so thank you so much. (Applause.)

A number of you have come here tonight on faith, and what I mean by that is that you really don't know that much about the Center for American Progress, but you've come because you're interested in the topic, and because you're drawn to really hearing from these fabulous speakers. And I don't want to spend that much time talking about who we are. We've handed our packets of information, so you can read about us and go to our website if you're interested. I'll simply say that we are a relatively new think tank and research institution, and we're motivated by a belief in the common good to articulate a vision for America that is strong and just, and also one that meets the needs of families in every community across the country.

We also don't believe that we can advance our vision or really develop our vision in Washington, D.C. Anyone who thinks that every great idea has come from Washington probably hasn't spent that much time in Washington. (Laughter.) So instead we are going to cities and towns across the country to speak with people like you about the issues that are affecting your community and affecting the country as a whole. And since the doors for the Center opened almost two years ago, we've been engaging people of faith in that conversation.

While many like to draw a line that divides progressives from the religious community, we know differently. The progressive community has a proud history that includes prophetic religious leaders walking hand in hand with progressive men and women to change our society for the better. And today, many of us are often in our houses of worship and that experience, coupled with our study of the sacred texts, help define our religious life, our work, and our relationships with friends and neighbors.

Others in our community and around the country may not be religious believers, but certainly consult a deeply-held moral compass to make decisions about what's right and what's wrong. We are a country of complex people with varied experiences, and it's

important to draw upon that diversity when we're discussing who we are and what we wish to be.

This evening, we want to explore the issues that are important to you in your community around the issues of faith and science. As you know, tonight's topic is the harmony of faith and science. It's not a new conversation. Men and women have been discussing this for centuries, if not longer, but it's certainly a complex issue. The issues raised tap into our deepest beliefs and aspirations and shape who we are as individuals and as a country. They raise the question so many of us ask in meditative moments or in prayer or at work or of one another. Why are we here? How do our bodies and our universe work? What should we do with the vast knowledge that is available to us?

Tonight we want to engage our panel in a discussion regarding the interplay between faith and science, the questions they ask of one another, the manner in which they may – many believe they may strengthen and enhance one another, and a framework we can all use to address the complexity of the issues raised. We also hope to talk about the implications of the current debate on public policy in our communities. We're going to begin our program this evening with introductory remarks by the Reverend Dr. Myron McCoy. After Dr. McCoy speaks, I'm going to briefly introduce the panel. As you know, their full biographies are in the materials that we've distributed, and then we're going to engage in a conversation about the issues that I just outlined.

After about 35 minutes, we're going to take questions from you. And I hope you noticed before you sat down that there were cards and little pencils in your chairs, so we're going to ask you if you already have a question that's been burning, please write that question down or as you listen to the panel please write down your name and your question and staff is going to collect those cards. And I'm going to ask as many of those questions as I possibly can in about a 40-minute period. So we'll get a chance to hear the panelists thoughts about the questions that you have to pose. And then the questions that we don't get to ask we're going to take some of those – excuse me – back to Washington, D.C., and have people respond to them and put them on our web site. So now let's get to the program.

The recipient of numerous community service awards, Reverend Dr. Myron McCoy is currently the president of the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. Before assuming that position in 2003, he served as the senior pastor at St. Mark United Methodist Church. Dr. McCoy is a valued member of your community and we're so pleased that he's here with us this evening, so I'm going to ask you to welcome Dr. Myron McCoy. (Applause.)

DR. MYRON MCCOY: Good evening this warm evening. Like many of you, on yesterday I opened my *Kansas City Star* and as I looked at the opinion page, I ran into an interesting article from John Danforth, Episcopal minister, former Republican senator of Missouri and former ambassador to the United Nations. He was addressing himself to the question of the political right in his party and talking to the more moderates in terms of standing up for their beliefs, and recognizing that we're in an interfaith setting I want

to try to just change a few of his words so that we all might be able to hear some of what he was trying to say in his article.

It would be an oversimplification to say that America's culture wars are now between people of faith and nonbelievers. People of faith are not of one mind, whether on specific issues like stem cell research and government intervention in the case of Terry Schiavo or the more general issue of how religion relates to politics. In recent years, some persons of faith have presented themselves as representing the one authentic faith perspective on politics. And with due respect to our faith friends, equally devout persons of faith can come to different conclusions.

People of faith have the right and perhaps the obligation to bring their values to bear in politics. Many persons of faith approach politics with a certainty that they know God's truth and they can advance their perception of God's cause, so they have developed a political agenda that they believe advances their perspective, one that includes efforts to put God back into the public square.

Other voices of faith are less certain about when and how our beliefs can be translated into statutory forms, not because of a lack of faith in God, but because of their healthy acknowledgement of the limitations of human beings. Like faith folk of certitude, these persons of faith attend houses of worship, read sacred holy books, and say prayers.

In my own United Methodist tradition, this is what we say about science and theology and what we call our social principles. We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation of God's natural world. We affirm the validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world, although we preclude science from making authoritative claims about theological issues. We recognize technology as a legitimate use of God's natural world when such use enhances human life and enables all God's children to develop their God-given creative potential without violating our ethical convictions about the relationship of humanity to the natural world.

In acknowledging the important roles of science and technology, however, we also believe that theological understandings of human experience are crucial to full understanding of the place of humanity in the universe. Science and theology are complementary rather than mutually incompatible. We therefore encourage dialogue between the scientific and theological communities and seek the kind of participation that will enable humanity to sustain life on Earth and by God's grace increase the quality of our common lives together.

Now hear from me. Like today, there were conflicts between secularizers and religious hardliners in Jesus' day. Both groups attacked Jesus: once when He had just (worsted?) the secularists, the religious saw as an opportunity to test His orthodoxy, "Teacher, which commandment is the law is the greatest," and Jesus' reply the Shema, the Jewish creedal statement, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." In so doing, He affirmed that there is one God,

one source of truth in the universe to be served with a total commitment of both heart and mind.

Today's separation of science and faith is symptomatic of divorce in our culture between these two elements: faith and reason. In fact, all genuine science or knowledge of the universe involves an element of faith. And all genuine theology or knowledge of God involves an element of reason. As Jesus recognized, real knowledge of God and the world involves loving God with our mind, as well as our heart and our soul. I am convinced that greater cooperation between faith and science would result in benefits for both disciplines. Science can help faith avoid irrationalism and provide evidences for faith. Scientific discoveries about the beginnings have provided the strongest evidence for theism. Science can help theology clarify which worldviews are true and which false, so helping present the true claims of all faith's messages to our increasingly pluralistic world.

Likewise, theology can point to areas of scientific research where natural processes are unable to account for complexity, quantum leaps in development or the interaction of transcended and imminent processes. Many elementary mistakes made by naturalistic science would have been avoided if scientists had shown more humility or demonstrated a greater willingness to learn from people of faith. Both the faith community and science can give glory to God, whomever they choose to call their god, by rediscovering the wonder of creation. Unbelieving science and unthinking faith communities rob God of honor as the Creator of the vast intricate and exquisitely-crafted universe. Yes, I believe a truly consummate artist has created our universe, our home, planet Earth, and human life upon it. Isn't there a way for science and faith communities to see their work being joined together?

Friends, I turn you over to our moderator and our panelists and let's talk about our faith and the science that confronts us. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Now I want to introduce the members of our panel. As I said, I'll do so very briefly so we can immediately engage in the conversation. Myra Christopher became president of the Center for Practical Bioethics in December, 1994, and continues to serve as its executive director. She is currently a member of numerous boards and is a highly regarded expert in her field. I know one of my colleagues at the Center for American Progress just sings Myra's praises, so we're really thrilled that you could be with us this evening.

Jack Krebs is a member of the Kansas State Science Standards Review Committee and the vice president of the Kansas Citizens for Science. Thank you so much for being here as well.

JACK KREBS: Thank you.

MS. BARNES: Mark H. Levin has been a rabbi at Congregation Beth Torah in Overland Park, Kansas, since 1988. He also founded and served as vice president of the

Mainstream Coalition, an organization dedicated to public education. Thank you, Rabbi Levin.

And John Tamilio III has been the senior minister of Colonial Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, since 2004. In October, 2003, he published his first book titled, *Blind Painting Poems*, which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in Letters. And though that isn't directly relevant, I thought it was such an amazing achievement, I had to mention it. (Laughter.)

JOHN TAMILIO: Thank you.

MS. BARNES: So thank you to all of our panelists and we appreciate your being here.

I want to start out by posing the first question to the panel, and as I said, we want this to be a conversation, so members of the panel will be speaking and engaging one another.

In our country and in this community, many rely on their religion and sacred texts or spirituality to provide answers to some of life's most important questions. Why are we here? What is our responsibility to one another? For those of us on a faith or spiritual journey it is a serious and life-defining experience. Our country also respects the sciences and turns to scientific research to consider and answer questions regarding the physical world. How does our universe work? How do our bodies work? As a result of asking those questions, we have access to information that has helped billions of people worldwide.

These two worlds are not strangers to one another. In fact, they often invite vibrant discourse among people with a range of points of view and experience. Can you tell us based on your experience how these two worlds often strengthen or enhance one another?

MR. KREBS: Oh, sure. Somebody needs to go first. One of the things I learned in a short media course that I took one time recently was that you don't actually have to answer the question that is asked of you.

MS. BARNES: That's very true. I took that same media course.

MR. KREBS: So what I'd like to do is very briefly explain why I'm here as member of the Science Standards Committee and a member of Kansas Citizens for Science and explain a little bit about – very briefly – how the intelligent design and evolution argument in Kansas relates to the question that you asked, and I will get around to answering the question and I promise to keep it brief.

The key issue that I think I want to bring to this forum is that the intelligent design movement, the people who are attacking the Kansas science standards, are really

outside of the mainstream of Christian theology; that throughout their writings it becomes clear that if you believe that God acts in nature in indiscernible ways, you are essentially as good as an atheist; that is, unless you believe that science must include God in its explanations, you are essentially excluding God as existing at all. And this, I think, is an extremely important issue that people need to be aware of, that the intelligent design attack on science is really also attack on theological viewpoints.

So I represent the majority on the Kansas Science Standards Committee, and our viewpoint is that science looks for natural causes and that there is nothing anti-God about that, even though Connie Morris (ph) in her recent newsletter called science anti-God. And as a member of the Science Standards Committee I can say that most of us on the committee firmly believe, as the Reverend just said, that when science explores the natural world it's exploring one aspect of God's creation, but that science doesn't disenfranchise God by not making God part of science. And I think this is an issue that is at stake in the battle in the Kansas Science Standards right now. So I think that indirectly answers your question. (Laughter.)

MS. BARNES: Does another member of the panel want to also address the question?

RABBI MARK LEVIN: Go ahead, John.

MR. TAMILIO: Yeah, I think that science and religion – although they complement one another, they're different disciplines and should be allowed the fullness of being different disciplines. The questions that scientists are seeking to answer are the how questions. Scientists are interested in processes, cause and effect, experimentation, observation, and theoretical explanations of natural phenomena. That's not – those are not the same questions that theology seeks to answer. Theology asks the why questions. Theologians are interested in the meaning of life, faith, spirituality, God, and theoretical explanations of supernatural phenomenon. They're two different disciplines, and I think they complement one another, because with the how and the why we get a fuller sense of humanity; not just our origins, but our purpose. And I think for one to try to supplant the other is both academically irresponsible and theologically irresponsible.

The Bible is not a scientific textbook. It wasn't written to be a scientific textbook. The writers of Genesis – first of all, in the Genesis account there are actually two creation stories. There isn't one; there's two of them. They both occur within the first couple chapters of Genesis, but different writers penned these stories for a different purpose.

Furthermore, the writers of Genesis were using the language of their time, which was the language of folklore, poetry, myth, saga, to try to explain as best they could their experience of God. They weren't sitting down to try to write a scientific textbook, and I think if they were here with us today they'd be laughing at us, because they would be saying this is not, you know, a biology book. This is Scripture. It's poetry. It's not meant to provide answers to scientific questions. We need science. I think to try to say that one should supplant the other or replace the other would be the same thing as saying,

well, our children should only learn math. They shouldn't learn English. We need both to give us a full sense of humanity and human problems and just rational thinking.

RABBI LEVIN: Building maybe a little bit on what John had to say, and I largely agree with his theological perspective, although we come from different religious backgrounds. The purpose of science is not only to discover how to do things. It's also to tell something of the nature of the world. In my own theology, God creates through natural law. Unlike some, that are frequently written up in the papers Jack was talking about, who believe that God largely acts outside of natural law, my own faith is totally rationalistic in the sense that God would not act outside of natural law. Natural law is, in fact, a description of how God builds the universe, and there is no reason for God to act outside of the natural laws through which God creates. I consider those laws to be active both in the social sciences and in the hard sciences, so science has provided data for theology. It is not theology, but it provides the data by which we come to understand our place in creation.

They need to work hand in hand. I know of no places where science has contradicted theology; that theology has ultimately said, oh, we're right; you're wrong, and won out. Now, it may have taken several hundred years for everybody to admit that science was correct and theology had to adapt, but ultimately facts is facts, and people do come to recognize that, so we have to use the data available to us. God creates through what we discover as natural scientific law.

MYRA CHRISTOPHER: Melody, I would add perhaps a different perspective. I'm in a way an outsider here in that I'm not clergy or a theologian, nor am I a scientist. My work has been in ethics and health policy over the last 20-plus years. And when we talk about the how and the why questions, ethics is really looking at the ought question. You know, given what we know, given what we believe and hold near and dear, how do we behave? What ought we to do? And I think that ethics really can serve as a bridge between these, but when doing ethics, we always say good ethics start with good facts – to your point, Mark, that unless you really can find agreement among people who are trying to wrestle with these issues about what it is we can claim to know, then interjecting the issues about strongly held beliefs about religion or worldview or philosophy or whatever, you're really often just talking at cross-purposes.

So I would argue that we should be talking about not just science and religion, but also would try to interject ethics into the discourse as well and hope that it would be helpful. I mean, not just for the purpose of being self-serving, but it might actually be a tool we might use tonight, so –

RABBI LEVIN: May I comment on this?

MS. BARNES: Yes, please.

RABBI LEVIN: One of the terrible things that's happening in culture today is so often the people speak as if they're speaking to one another, when in fact they're

speaking past one another. And the reason that happens is because of the lack, I believe, of the use of logic in terms of being taught in the schools, and the terminology is very often misunderstood. And one of the things that I think we could work on and perhaps be successful at is getting people to understand what, in fact, they're talking about when they speak to one another.

One of the great cultural problems that we confront is that very often people of different religious backgrounds seemingly are speaking to one another, and in fact are not. And, therefore, all you get is yelling in the newspapers and yelling across cultural barriers, and it's a major error if we're to live in a pluralistic society.

MS. BARNES: Well – go ahead.

MR. KREBS: I'd like to speak to this pluralism issue; that one of the ways of thinking about the difference between science and faith is this: science has provided for over 500 years a way of narrowing our understanding of the world. And by "narrowing," I mean we have reached a lot of consensus. It makes no difference whether you're Chinese or Indian or African or American. Science is a method of moving to consensual knowledge about the physical world. And one of the reasons it works is because there's an agreement on the rules that limit the investigation. And one of those rules is that you pretty much – you don't bring in supernatural and metaphysical explanations.

The problem with, then, faith explanations is there is no comparable consensual method for narrowing our viewpoint about the metaphysics behind the physics. And so the Taoist and the Buddhist and the Christian and the Jew and all the other various relationships, we have different ideas of how the spiritual exists in the physical, and we do not have the kind of consensual tools to figure out who's right and who's wrong, the same way we do in science.

Therefore, in faith we have to come to a different kind of solution, which is to learn how to live with this diversity. So we really have two very different kinds of problems. Science has within it a way of building consensus, and faith doesn't have a way of building consensus. That's got to be a social concern and a social activity not to come to an agreement metaphysically, but to learn how to live with a wide diversity of opinions that can't be proven by science.

RABBI LEVIN: And I think that's why a lot of religious communities are trying, therefore, to make their faith a science, because if they can make it a science, it has a credibility beyond the metaphysical.

MR. KREBS: And this is the danger of the intelligent design movement and what is going on in Kansas is this particular group is trying to gain the upper hand that their particular theological view is right, and everybody else is wrong. So it's a threat. And the problem is that they're really attacking religious belief, but they are using science and the public education system as the vehicle in which to do that, because if they can get it

established as science and get it established in the science system, to some extent culturally they win, and then everybody else loses.

MS. BARNES: I want to pick up on some of the strands that have come up in the last couple of minutes. And in thinking about a pluralistic society and thinking about differences of opinion around the issues, for example, that are being heavily discussed and debated in Kansas and in Missouri – and, Myra, you talked about using ethics as a tool and introducing that into the conversation.

Mark, you talked about bringing people together around common language. And Jack, you talked a little about the tools within science to try and work on the same playing field so that people have a common sense of what they're talking about and get to common agreement, but when there are differences of opinion that also – that span across science and faith and thinking about what's happening here right now, what are some of the tools that we can use to address that question. More specifically, how should we go about resolving differences in a pluralistic society. And even how can government be of help in trying to resolve some of those questions?

MS. CHRISTOPHER: You know, my entry here is around early stem cell research. I mean, that's part of the area of concern for my organization, and though I'm a Kansan, I'm very concerned about the intelligent design argument, I know less about it.

But it seems to me that what we have too often done, and I think, Mark, to your point about not even being able to find agreement about language – you know, the terms we will use and how we will use language, that what we do – and one of my staff members is here who hates for me to say this, but we try to bifurcate these issues. We try to make them either this or that, because frankly, complex issues are hard for us to grapple with. And so if we can be reductionistic and kind of make them less than what they really are, then not only does it make it easier for us intellectually, but it also maps so nicely onto this political system that we have in this society.

Well, I think that one of the things that ethics can do is to resist that. One of my staff members says we are so good at complexifying issues. We really resist the idea that you're going to make it either this or that, because on these policy issues the continuum is very broad and there are many places where you have to find agreement about what it is we're talking about, as you said, Mark, but to think about how it impacts the lives of people who have strongly held views and how as a pluralistic society we can respect people, not trample over the beliefs of others, but not allow tyranny by any small singular group who just happens to be louder than everybody else.

RABBI LEVIN: Well, I don't actually agree with something that Jack was saying before, because I believe there is truth in religion. And the problem is, of course, that we disagree not with the logic of the argument, but disagree with the assumptions that underlie the argument. One of the things that's not happening, for instance, is somebody says, "Well, I believe the Bible version" and somebody – who stands up and says, "Well, wait a second. What about all the research that's been done undermining and the

credibility of the Bible over the last 200 years as divine authorship?” So you’re to believe in divine authorship, fine, but the rest of us don’t believe in divine authorship for the following series of reasons. But no one seems to, in our anti-intellectual atmosphere today – the culture we live in – sit down and say, “Okay, here’s the logic. Here’s the underlying assumptions. Now I want to deal with these underlying assumptions.”

That’s where I believe we need to begin to speak to one another between religions, to be able to say, look, here’s the way I think about the world as a Jew. Here’s the way I think about the world as a Christian. Oh, yeah, this is a matter of faith for you; this is a matter of faith for me. But then we discuss in terms of logic after that. And for instance, we have a great many common assumptions in terms of social justice. We have a great many common assumptions frankly with the evangelical community and the fundamentalist Christian community in terms of many social justice assumptions, but we don’t look at those things. We only argue without ever getting to the basis of what the argument is about or what the discussion is about.

So I believe one of the roles that the government can play, since this is the question you asked, Melody, is frankly to bring people together. More than that, the universities could begin to bring people together and have them discuss on a rational basis as we used to do – anybody here remember the ‘60s? (Laughter.)

MS. CHRISTOPHER: Such a rational time.

RABBI LEVIN: Yeah, it was such a rational time. Thank you, Myra. (Laughter.) But I do remember some rational arguments about some of the major issues of the day, and we don’t seem to have that kind of intellectual atmosphere around anymore, and I think it’s a major error and the reason we’re always clashing, because no one discusses the underlying assumptions.

MS. BARNES: Jack, do you want to –

MR. KREBS: Well, I was going to –

MS. BARNES: Okay.

MR. KREBS: Mark, I was born in the ‘60s, so I don’t really remember. (Laughter.)

RABBI LEVIN: Sorry.

MR. KREBS: Although you probably have more hair than I do. (Laughter.) To answer the question how do we resolve these conflicts, the two things that come to my mind are education and dialogue. That’s how we resolve conflicts. However, my father has this saying, and it’s you can’t argue with someone who’s right. You just can’t do it. You’re not going to get anywhere. Dialogue requires vulnerability. It requires mutual respect and a willingness to listen to the other person, your dialogical partner.

The problem that I think is going on here is that the religious right, not to attack them – well, yeah, let’s attack them. (Laughter.) I don’t think – they don’t see the playing field that way. They don’t see it as a dialogue. They see it as an opportunity for conversion, because they are right. Their mission is not to enter a dialogue. Their mission is not to come to consensus. It’s to set everybody straight. It’s to save your souls. It’s to evangelize, proselytize, to make the kingdom of God as they define it a reality here and now. So they’re not interested in what you have to say about science, because they’re right.

MR. TAMILIO: I didn’t notice that. (Laughter.)

RABBI LEVIN: Well, before we go too far down that road, not everyone – we shouldn’t paint with such a broad brush. People should know that in this community there are a number of dialogues going on between the religious right and the religious left, and not everyone can be painted with those kinds of broad strokes. Some of those dialogues are, in fact, around the areas of agreement, rather than trying to focus on the areas of disagreement, and there are people who are very much open to speaking with one another who come from very different theological perspectives, which just shows – I mean, demonstrates the fact that it’s possible if, as you say, people don’t bring to the table “I’m entirely right, you’re entirely wrong,” but they bring the respect for the humanity of the other and a desire to live together in a culture.

MR. CHRISTOPHER: I also think that people have to come – you used the word “vulnerability,” but you have to come willing to change your position, to change your perspective and point of view if, in fact, you learn information or hear something that you’ve not contemplated before.

And one of the things that worries me, again if we want to say that the villain here is the fundamentalist Christian or whomever, when we do that, we’re not listening to them about what their real concerns are and we’re not – as you’re saying, Mark – trying to get behind that and saying, why is this so frightening to you? Why are you so alarmed about this? And how might we as a society address these things? So I’m always saying, I’m not very interested and I know no one at this table is either in pointing fingers unless it’s to say, come and let’s sit down and see if we can’t really talk about this.

I also worry, Mark, your concern about lack of willingness to look at logic and to be rigorous in our discussions and so forth. I think that we have as a society confused etiquette and civility and that very often if someone says, “Well, this is my religious belief,” we think somehow that it’s wrong to push on that, to say, “Well, I want to know more about that. I’d like to challenge that. I’d like to know the source of that. I’d like to tell you my perspective,” as you were saying, “and my view.” And I just think that we are really at risk if we’re not able to respectfully – as everyone has said – really challenge one another about fundamental assumptions and beliefs and why is your argument what it is, and be willing to listen, but also be willing to change your own positions.

MR. KREBS: I'd like to go back. One of the things, Mark, that you said earlier was that we sometimes talk past each other and I think I just talked past you a little bit ago, that you said – and I wish I could quote you, something about you disagreed with me that we couldn't find truth. And I don't think that's what I said. What I said was that there aren't methods, like there are in science, of reaching a consensus about metaphysical issues. There are methods as human beings that we can find commonality, but that's very different than the techniques that science has for winnowing out bad ideas and moving towards a consensus; that one of the ways I like to think about this – I was an anthropology major long, long ago and religion and comparative society was my interest. And I remember writing a paper where I wrote – I was thinking about rituals and culture. I wrote that science affirmed – no, science confirms facts and religion affirms facts. And so when all of our faith beliefs have a measure of affirmation, of choice behind them, that the choice itself is the fact. You can't reduce it down to something that science could see or question. You just stand up and say, "This is me."

And I think we have to share those affirmations with each other. I'm not sure that we have to be confrontive about those affirmations, but we have to learn to listen and understand that when people are talking about their religious beliefs, we can't expect them to back those up in the same way that we expect people to back up scientific beliefs. Again, this is the fatal flaw with the ID people is they're trying to establish things scientifically.

The last thing I want to say about this whole general issue is that one of the things that science teaches one to do is to live with uncertainty, to realize that your understandings are tentative and provisional and more information could change it. And to some extent, it's one of the reasons why scientists aren't as often dogmatic religiously, because they carry over some of that skepticism. One of my favorite scientists, and I know he's got flaws, is Richard Feynman (ph), but one of the things that he has said that I think is a great motto to live by is "I would rather live with uncertainty than believe things that are not true." And therefore, if we take that kind of humble attitude towards our affirmations of faith, we're going to be a very different kind of person than if we think that we really know that we're true and we're right and everybody else is wrong.

MR. TAMILIO: Well, and many religious communities hold that same view of their theology.

MR. KREBS: Yes.

MR. TAMILIO: Avery Dulles, the Catholic Cardinal, is famous for saying that theology begins in wonder and asking questions, and oftentimes it remains there. I mean, most of the beauty of faith is the mystery that surrounds it that can never be fully answered, let alone fully experienced.

And one other thing I wanted to mention as a follow-up to it – you were mentioning, Mark – is I don't mean by my comments to demonize the religious right. I would hold the same view of radical liberalism. I think that there are many issues that

people of faith, whether they're on the left, the right, or the center actually share in common. However, when any one side, whether it's the radical right or the radical left has a certain agenda that they want to see legislated, they often go about it without wanting to dialogue – with instilling this belief in the public sector. And I think that's extreme – not only is it offensive and irresponsible, it's extremely dangerous and I think (that's why we're here?).

RABBI LEVIN: And the fault lies, in my opinion, with the public. And I want to carry Jack's discussion a little further because I do think we disagree on this, Jack, and at least we haven't thoroughly explored it, because when I discuss theology there are certain faith commitments that I will make and I know that they are statements of faith. They're not backed up necessarily by fact. They're just fundamental assumptions.

When I talk about an interpretation of the Bible, however, I'm using philological arguments in terms of the best we know about that language, and the historical arguments about what we know about the language, so that there are certain statements that I can make that are, in fact, factual. And I think, John, the problem that we're having – the large problem we're having in society is that common folk will not say to people who are simply stating dogmatically, "Back that up. Is that a faith statement or are you building on an assumption? If so, what is your assumption? What's the assumption behind that? Where do we differ on this? You assume certain things theologically; I assume other things. Let's get down to how we're discussing this."

I don't know how to live with people if you can't, as Myra says, confront them in terms of how they're thinking. Are they thinking clearly? Maybe I'll be persuaded. Maybe I won't. Maybe I'll just choose to think that's a really interesting perspective from a different religious viewpoint and I've got to think about that, but also I have to respect this other human being because of the depth of the thinking that they've committed to this, and their own identity and their own faith statements.

But we can question people about how they arrived at certain conclusions and say, you know, I don't agree with your logic or I don't agree with your underlying assumptions and, therefore, I don't want to go along. Currently, I think we have a whole bunch of people screaming at one another. Whoever gets the newspaper or whoever gets elected to government wins.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: You know, one of our colleagues at the Center, Sister Rosemary Flanagan, says every group has its lunatic fringe. And I agree with you, Mark, that we the public really are at fault here, because we have allowed the lunatic fringe on the edges of both of these issues to dominate the conversation and to really put so much inordinate pressure on policymakers, not just legislators, educators and others who I think of policymakers. We must begin to challenge, speak out, and really understand what's at risk here in this public discourse.

MS. BARNES: Well, can I ask this question going to that issue? Thinking about the people in this room and beyond to the people that the audience will go home and say,

“Hey, I went to this panel tonight,” what can we do specifically to try and get discourse around these issues and related issues back to what we’ve been talking about so that it is a civil discourse that recognizes the importance of the issue, recognizes and respects the differences, but really hones in on what we’re talking about, you know, in a language that we can all understand. How can we go about doing that?

MS. CHRISTOPHER: I think we have to be informed the issues to begin with, and not that any of us – all of us have to become theologians or all of us have to become scientists, but recently I was at a hair styling salon in Florida and heard a person talking about the Schiavo case about they were killing this young woman. And when I pushed on that and said, “Talk to me about that,” and I’m in the shampoo bowl. (Laughter.) “Talk to me about this.”

MR. : Pardon me for laughing about that. (Laughter.)

MS. CHRISTOPHER: Talk to me about this. We really had a very good conversation, and I knew a lot about the Schiavo case, so I was able to bring that into the discussion. And she said, “Gosh, there’s so much stuff here I didn’t know.” But someone – I think it was you, Sandra (sp) – who said you were at the hair salon and someone said, “Well, this early stem cell research stuff is just about killing little babies.” Well, if you don’t know what we’re talking about if when we’re talking about blastocysts and embryos and adult stem cell, how do you refute that? You’re inclined to just sit there and go, “Oh, God, what can I do about this?” So I think the first step is you have to become informed, and you have to become engaged around these issues. Again, I think the stakes are enormous.

RABBI LEVIN: And you have to become activists. Jack, you know whose fault it is that you’re facing these problems in Kansas? It’s the voters. It’s not the people on the education committee. Somebody put them there, and the people who put them there are my neighbors and my congregants who didn’t bother to show up to the polling places to vote. That’s all. (Applause.)

MR. KREBS: Can I ask a question?

MS. BARNES: Sure.

MR. KREBS: This is going to be sort of an idealistic answer perhaps. One of the things that we’ve learned about the media and fighting these issues politically is that the media out there – listen to me – that they’ve got this commitment to always telling both sides equally and even if one side – our side – is right and the other side is wrong, that it doesn’t come across that way. And I mean, I know that’s partially a joke, but I also know that you can have mainstream science represented by 100,000 scientists, and you’ve got 200 other scientists who are pushing some other point of view, and the 200 are going to get equal time in the newspaper, so one of the things that’s happening is we are being driven by the shallowness of the media as a source for our news. (Applause.)

But then you have to ask, so what are the alternatives? And sort of switching gears in this statement, I really think that the whole country needs a good dose of psychotherapy because a lot of the problems that we have when we talk with each other, any competent psychologist would see as the signs of a dysfunctional family. And the issues of being willing to listen, not feeling like you're just cooking up your response the minute they talk, that we're all in the same boat, rather than against each other, we have to, on a step-by-step basis, start to change that way of dialoguing with people, among other things, to change that way of dialoguing with newspaper reporters. But it's hard, because if you're too nice of a guy, you won't get your quotes in the paper.

So my point here is that we've got a culture that pushes us into this dichotomous and divisive dialogue, and we don't have the mechanisms within our culture to have more humane conversations. Not an answer, but it's something we need to work towards. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: I want to do this at this point, because I want to make sure we have enough time to take questions from you. I want to ask you to write down your questions, and if you have a question to – as someone is doing already – hold up your hand with your card, and people will start collecting those cards and bringing them up to me, and we'll start fielding those questions. Oh, this is great. Lots of questions from people.

And while that's happening, I want to ask if anyone else on the panel wants to respond to what we were –

RABBI LEVIN: Yeah, I have one thing to say, and that is part of the problem – I'm happy to point the finger at the media and I believe the media goes to the people that are the easiest for them to go to, but there's another problem here and that is, some of the folks who are winning currently think these are – speak as if these are very simple issues. And I know a lot of people who drop out of the issues because they recognize that they're complex and they feel like they really don't know enough about them to be able to discuss them, but that's an easy out and in a democracy we don't have that luxury. So I don't know how people will organize. You know, I would suggest start talking to your friends about these issues. What do you know? What do you know? And get some sense of certainty.

The people who, let's say, oppose the positions that I'm interested in seeing adopted in stem cell research and intelligent design are very certain of themselves. They are very certain. They may be wrong, but they're very certain, and that certainty is driving out a lot of other people who are simply not keeping up on the issues or can't handle the complexity. And I'm not sure what to tell everybody – because I try to keep up with issues, I'm not sure what to tell everybody as to how to keep up with them, but I know that that's a problem that's got to be resolved.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: You know, I think about the media today, I think about the old Gary Larson *Far Side* cartoon with the deer in the woods and one of them has a

bull's eye painted on his belly and the other one says, "Bummer of a birthmark, dude."
(Laughter.)

The media is really an easy shot for us these days for a lot of reasons, and there have been a lot of public disappointments lately, I think, with major media sources. But I think we need to also recognize that the media can be – not they can be, they are a very powerful agent in the shaping of public policy and opinion in this society. And for many years I really resisted investing in communication strategies at the center, because I thought it was sort of superfluous. I wanted to be really doing the meaty research and writing. I didn't want to be jacking around with these reporters and so forth. And we have learned over the last few years that the media can be a very powerful ally and that when, in fact, you focus on relationships with the media where you're not always just trying to get your sound bite, as you said Jack, and get in the press, but you're really trying to make sure there's a good story there, that there are good sources there, and that people are given information about the complexity of the issue.

I think people do a pretty good job. And I would just say, Bill Tammeus for the *Star* I think has done such a fine job on the early stem cell research stuff. And we've been working with him a couple of years now on these issues, and his sophistication about this and being able to communicate in ways that really anyone can understand I just think is incredibly impressive. So I want us again to think about everybody as being a stakeholder in this, and people are here, I think, well intentioned. Sometimes they head down the wrong path, but we ought to think of them as an ally.

MR. KREBS: Yeah, I didn't mean to – I like reporters. And I know you guys – and it's just I think this issue of digging deeper is something that I'd like us to just have more in our media.

MR. TAMILIO: I think part of the problem with that, though – I agree, but I think part of the problem is that for a lot of people when it comes to matters of faith, they want black-and-white answers. They are very uncomfortable living in the grey.

MS. BARNES: In the grey.

MR. TAMILIO: Extremely uncomfortable. I had a – in the previous church that I served, I had a discussion one day with one of my parishioners who – a very intelligent man, professional, but he was – he held to more dogmatic fundamentalist views, and it just didn't fit everything else about him. His wife was also as liberal as he was conservative when it came to theology, so I had no idea how they worked together, let alone found this church, but I asked him one day. I said – we'll say his name is Jim – "Why are you a fundamentalist?" And he said, "Because nothing in my life is guaranteed. Nothing. I could lose my job tomorrow. I could get sick. My wife could die. My house could burn down. Anything could happen to me at any point in my life. I need one thing that's solid that I don't have to question, and if it's not going to be God, I don't know what it's going to be." So he made that conscious decision. I think a lot of people make that conscious decision.

Mark, you were talking earlier about the way that you interpret Scripture. I interpret it the same way. I think that when we approach Scripture, we need to use the responsible tools of historical, literary, anthropological, sociological, psychological, cultural research to understand what the writers meant in that context and how it applies to our current context. But the problem is, not everyone analyzes Scripture that way. For some people, the authority is the infallible, inerrant word of the Bible and that's it, so they don't need to back it up because God's already done it. And that's the danger, and that's what makes dialogue, I think, so difficult.

MS. BARNES: I want to start now taking some of the questions from the audience because we have lots of them, and lots of really great questions, so I want to make sure we have time to do that. And some of them – many of them touch on some of the things that we've been talking about.

This is a question from Lee Cockle (ph), and Myra, I'm going to direct this one to you. I think others might want to jump in as well. And the question is, "How do we control the ethics of stem cell use or DNA exploration? I believe in stem cell research, et cetera. I'm just tired of the far right yelling back that those who believe in stem cell research will somehow run amok and we will need the religious right to save us." So I think, in essence, it's about the ethics of stem cell use and how do we control that.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: Well, again, I think we've looked for several solutions and what we've thought is if we really got our state-level legislators riled up enough they'd pass some laws and get this all tacked down. Well, I think that's a very, very bad strategy. And I really think that we can look to other countries for some guidance around these issues. I think transparency and public involvement is really important. And again, building relationships between the stakeholders that we don't have the scientists over here doing whatever it is they're going to do, and the philosophers and theologians and ethicists and policymakers and other of them doing their thing in isolation, one from the other.

So I believe that we need a lot of public education. That's been mentioned earlier today. I think government does have a very strong role in that, and yes, I do remember the '60s, Mark. I remember them all too well. And in that Jack Danforth's name has been evoked earlier this evening, there are a lot of politicians who believe in the role of government in being a public educator.

But I don't think that laws are always the best ways for forming public policy. I think that very often having high-level commissions, having citizens advisory groups – if you look at how this has been handled in the UK, I think it's a very interesting model where communities are really very engaged with the research institutions that are doing these things, and I think we have a lot to learn from others.

MS. BARNES: Great. I'll ask another question, unless someone wants to say anything to that one.

This one is from Reenie Carmack (ph). It says, “The term ‘intelligent design’ is a very clever bit of semantics. I see the universe as intelligently designed, but I fear the religious right is only using it to further the ‘old man in the sky’ theory, while borrowing a term from science.” Comments?

MR. KREBS: A lot of people don’t really understand intelligent design. Let me put it this way. The idea behind intelligent design and any intelligent designists here are going to say that I’m misrepresenting their view, I imagine, but I think I (know them?), is that God has intervened at specific moments in time to design things that natural processes themselves could not accomplish. And so intelligent design is in conflict with mainstream theology, I believe, because mainstream theology believes that God is present in all natural processes. And so intelligent design sort of takes the view – in fact, I and other people sometimes call intelligent design a “theology of punctuated deism” that God set up the world and it runs for a while and things evolve within species, but when it’s time for a new species, God’s got to step in and make it jump over the hurdle to get the new species.

So just sort of in a theological nutshell, I think this is what intelligent design is about is about a periodic, interventionist God, and I think it’s one of the reasons why a lot of mainstream Christian theologians do not agree with intelligent design and see it as a threat.

The fact of the matter is – there’s another issue lurking here that I’d like to bring up that has to do with the difference between fact and faith, that the intelligent design people – and this came out in the Kansas hearings strongly – do not accept common descent. And they definitely do not just accept common descent between prehomnids in human beings. And this is a scientific issue. This is a factual issue that the vast majority of the world’s scientists have looked at the facts and common descent seems like a reasonable, solidly verified conclusion.

And so we have a conflict here between a theological belief about God as a periodic interventionist, which – well, and a scientifically verifiable fact, that the facts are against the ID people. But they refuse to see the facts in order to stay attached to their particular view of God, which is that God has to step in every once in a while to make things happen.

MS. BARNES: Great. I have another question. This is from Ron Pine (sp). He says, “The theists among you seem to be saying, although not in so many words, that science and atheism are incompatible. Please respond.”

RABBI LEVIN: That we said that science and –

MS. BARNES: And “you seem to be saying, although not in so many words, that science and atheism are incompatible.” I guess in our conversation we’ve talked about the harmony between faith and science is there. Does that in –

RABBI LEVIN: Well, people who are atheists believe in science. I mean, just like people of faith do. I don't think we're saying in any way that they're incompatible.

MR. KREBS: Yeah, I guess I'd like to speak very quickly to that one, that one of the issues that came out in the Kansas science hearings was that the ID people think that anybody that accepts science is an atheist.

RABBI LEVIN: Right.

MR. KREBS: And that's definitely wrong. People who don't believe in any kind of spiritual reality accept science and the material, physical world is all there is. Most religious people accept that there's a physical world and more, so I don't see that science does anything – says anything negatively against atheism any more than it says something negatively against mainstream Christianity. Science is neutral in respect to the existence or nonexistence of a spiritual reality. It's certainly not against atheism.

MS. BARNES: And this question, I think Myra, I know this is an area of particular expertise for you. This is from Linda Angel. It says, "As a 14-year veteran of ICU nursing, I found that the language of end-of-life issues for the layperson is not present. How can the conversation be addressed to the layperson regarding medical language surrounding end-of-life and health care be addressed?"

MS. CHRISTOPHER: Well, again, I think we're so often sloppy with language. And I often say – Linda, you may have heard me say that with regard to end of life I hear a lot of discussion about the "right to die." I don't have a clue what that means. I do know what it means to support people to live their lives as they choose to live their lives until they draw their last breath, and I've spent a lot of my life working towards trying to make that happen for people.

I was going to ask, and not to jump over the question, the way we use language is so interesting to me. I recently went to a Christian bioethics conference, because I was really very interested in what that might be. And instead of talking about in that setting early embryo research – you know, which I even sort of reject that because I want us to talk about blastocystic stem cell research, about embryonic stem cell research, and adult stem cell research to be accurate. They were talking about young embryo research. The connotation – that very subtle shift is a very powerful thing.

And, Jack, I was going to ask you after the program, but I would ask you now: when did we move from creationism to intelligent design and how did that happen and why did we let that happen? (Laughter.)

MR. KREBS: Well, part of the reason – creationism really developed in the latter part of the 19th Century, early part of the 20th Century, and it's really culminated in the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925 and as a result of that it slowly started to lose credibility. And by World War II, fundamentalism was just – people would just laugh at it. And

what's happening now is that creationism has – pardon the pun, but evolved into becoming – (laughter) – intelligent design, because it's a term that's a lot easier for people who aren't fundamentalists to agree with.

You could say in a sense that I believe in intelligent design. I believe in God, and I believe there's a God behind all that happens. I don't think God dictates at all, but I think that God's will is unfolding in the delicate cycles of evolution. I don't see that as being sort of contradictory in any way.

The question is about – and my issue with intelligent design is where should that be taught? It's not a science, and so it should be kept out of the science classrooms and science textbooks. That's the issue. (Applause.)

MR. TAMILIO: I would like to add a little bit to your answer about where it came from. I mean, this is, I think, important. Creationism in the sense of young earth creationism was pretty much ruled out as an educational issue in the trials in the 1980s, and the intelligent design people, Philip Johnson (sp) in particular, and he's been quite explicit about this, they developed the intelligent design movement to get away from the religious issues, make things look more like science, and with the very explicit goal of trying to get something that would pass constitutional muster. And I think that Kansas may, in fact, become the case that finally maybe puts that to the test. It remains to be seen.

The second – the other big issue here is that a lot of the intelligent design people are old earth creationists, and one of the things that they have done is they've created what they call the “big tent strategy” where the younger – they've agreed to not fight the young earth/old earth battle out in the open, but they have sort of joined forces against evolution as the source of all moral decay, and have – and seriously, they have said, let's leave the age of the earth as an issue that we will take up later once we have established scientifically that a creator exists and that this godless evolutionary theory is no longer in sway. Then, in a more friendly environment, we'll work out the age of the earth.

MS. BARNES: Mark?

RABBI LEVIN: On the issue of language and ICU, one of the things that I've learned over my career in the clergy is that these are never medical issues. And all too often, unfortunately physicians handle them as strictly medical issues. They are largely spiritual issues, and as soon as someone gets the sense that their life may be threatened or some grievous illness and a lot of pain is down the road, my experience is largely that they need to have a whole bunch of issues addressed. This is where a religious community comes in. This is where having a clergyperson with whom you can dialogue and trust, this is where having a faith community – people simply to be there to support you. I can't tell you the number of times I've been in a room and a doctor's explained something, and they turned to me afterwards and said, “What did he say?”

Well, if you were not involved in that case, you knew what he said, but given that it was your loved one or you yourself, you didn't get it because all of the issues were not addressed, the spiritual issues of life and pain were not addressed, and the purpose of life, and why do these things happen to me. So I think those things really require a spiritual community. Unfortunately, very often in our culture people want that community when they want it. And if you don't support a community when you don't need it and other people do, you're not likely to find it when you need it and other people don't.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: You know, Melody, I want to go back to your very first question this evening in thinking about the relationship of science and theology or science and religion and spirituality. There is clearly such a connection here, and I think there is a growing consensus among serious theologians and serious scientists that we need to do more work with that interface, and we need to be learning from one another.

But an example that comes from the ICU of how the theological or the religious world can positively impact decision-making in health policy – in 1957 the American bishops wrote to Pope Pius XII and asked him were Catholics obligated to accept all life-sustaining treatment. Now, I'm not Catholic, so I'm not trying to promulgate a particular theological view, but Pope Pius wrote back and used language where he said no. And he talked about ordinary versus extraordinary, and he said Catholics are expected – because they value life, and Jews, I say, often kind of got this easier than everybody else because of your belief in the preciousness of life, and also that life begins at birth, so I think it's easier for you guys sometimes, but anyway. (Laughter.)

RABBI LEVIN: Something should be. (Laughter.)

MS. CHRISTOPHER: It's true. It's true. But actually Pius got the language so right. I mean, he just got the whole thing so right that that language was embraced in the clinical world and doctors and nurses adopted the language. They would ask in ethics committee meetings, well, is this ordinary or is it extraordinary? So these are not – these realms of our experience and what we value are not mutually exclusive. And I think we just have to continue to push to look at where are those interfaces and where can there be benefit from one to the other. And yes, it should – a few things should be easier.

MS. BARNES: I have a question from Carolyn MacDonald. It says, "It is important for progressive faith communities to work together. How can persons be educated about the need to use more inclusive language? Some active faith communities, such as All Souls, include many members who are not theists, deists." The question is about inclusive language and progressive faith communities working together.

MR. TAMILIO: There's a group of us that includes Mark, myself, and a few others in Kansas who are starting an organization called Mainstream Voices of Faith: Ecumenical Neighbors United for Faith and Freedom. If you kind of take the letters, it says ENUFF, you know. We just can't spell it right. (Laughter.) And what we're trying to do is to do exactly that: to try to be a center for progressive ecumenical and interfaith thought around these issues and a sundry of other issues. So you'll – that's really in the

embryo stage at this point, and you'll be hearing more about that in the time to come, so keep posted about that.

The issue about inclusive language I see it as a related, though different, question. Inclusive language is something that churches have been dealing with for quite some time, and the way that I deal with it is I don't see God as male or female. God is neither father nor mother. God is parent. I don't see God as engendered. When I preach, when I teach, I use gender-neutral language and allow other people to envision God whichever way they want. If God is father to you, great. If God is mother to you, that's great. And I think it's up to the individual to come to those terms.

RABBI LEVIN: I think the question was addressing something different.

MS. BARNES: Well, the question, excuse me, was going to the ability – or the necessity, the importance of progressive faith communities to work together and the use of more inclusive language, I guess to try and knit together the community's –

RABBI LEVIN: Was it gender inclusive or was it theological? I took it as being theological.

MS. BARNES: Yes.

RABBI LEVIN: I've argued in the *Star*, obviously ineffectively since the world hasn't changed – (laughter) – that – and this comes out of being a minority. You all know the Jews are a minority? (Laughter.) Being a minority religion that when you argue in the public square, we must argue in philosophical terms and not in the nomenclature that is familiar.

When I publish in the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, it is different than my writing in the *Kansas City Star* because I can't use the same terminology or, in fact, the same arguments. And I think we have to be aware of our audience. I certainly don't think it's wrong for me to be arguing theologically when I'm in an interfaith community, and I heard this as being across theistic, non-theistic lines, so there you'd have to go for philosophical language.

My argument is that when these arguments come into the public square, they ought to be framed exclusively in philosophical terms, and that the Christian community has, in fact, a responsibility to the rest of us to be aware of that because when you argue in Christian terms, we all go, very interesting, but how do I join the debate? And if we're going to be multicultural in this society, then we have to argue in a vocabulary that everybody can find effective in their lives.

I would say the same thing about theistic concerns. It's just that – I mean, I am a rabbi, and I probably got chosen up here not for my good looks, but because I am a rabbi, and – my good looks. Thank you, Melody. (Laughter.)

My children are sitting here. They really appreciate it. (Laughter.) And now I'm going to blush. Anyway, and it's hard for me to argue in other than theistic terms, but certainly we ought to recognize sometimes we come together and that's a requirement.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: And I would argue that when you say philosophical, I would use the language of ethics because it is the talk about what we ought to be doing, and that's a sub-branch of philosophy.

RABBI LEVIN: Absolutely.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: Yeah.

MR. TAMILIO: But in terms of the interfaith conversation, there is a common theistic language that we can use and, as you said, use a more philosophical language when we engage those who are not theistic.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: John, you know, though, some years ago we had a wonderful project here in Kansas City before your arrival that we called compassion sabbath, and there were more than 500 faith communities that participated with us and more than 900 and something clergy over the period of that project, but I learned along the way that there were people in faith communities who rejected wholesale notions of ecumenical activity or interfaith activity because they saw it as an attempt to homogenize their worldview or their theology. And we ultimately decided that we would talk about multi-faith, that we would recognize that there were deep disagreements that would never ever be reconciled, but there was common ground. This was about caring for the dying, but there was common ground in all the religious views of people, and so we were able to stay focused on that. So I've been very attracted to this notion of trying to do multi-faith work and saying, yes, we disagree and that's okay.

MR. KREBS: I guess I want to pitch in here, and I thought that I had a little while ago when we were talking about what can we do as a culture, and I said, well, we – maybe psychotherapy would be good. But one of the things you learn to do in psychotherapy is to put needs out on the table, not necessarily solutions, but you express your needs, and you don't necessarily keep referring to all your past motivations. You try to stay focused in the present, so to speak.

And I think the way this ties in here is that if we accept that all people or virtually all people have spiritual aspirations and that those spiritual aspirations take many, many, many different paths, and that the many religions of the world are all different ways that people have tried to embody the unembodiable, so to speak, with rituals and metaphors and beliefs – and so instead of focusing on the trappings, so to speak, and I don't mean that in a negative sense – the trappings of any one religious viewpoint, and instead concentrate on the sort of spiritual unity that we may have as human beings, we might get someplace.

And so what people need and I think people need education in comparative religion, and they need more confidence that they can live with their own faith and not be threatened by the fact that somebody else has got a different viewpoint – cultural, personal, whatever the case may be – and realize that our religions are embedded in our cultures. They're anthropological entities, so to speak. And we often confuse the religion with the spirituality, and maybe understanding the difference between those two would help us converse with each other better.

RABBI LEVIN: It brings up another topic that I actually – we actually talked before this conversation and talked about a few things and one of the things that came up at that time that hasn't come up tonight, Jack, to me you just touched on it, and that is, those of us in the minority religious community are beginning to see the rise of faith-based – I hate to call it hatred, but faith-based exclusivity or exclusiveness or – and it's particularly in the schools. And it happened around Mel Gibson's famous movie, but more than that, it happening around the preaching of salvation is exclusive to a particular religious group. So we have had kids in Johnson County be told, "I don't want to play with you anymore. You're not saved."

And you all need to be aware of this, if you're not, because it's something that has the potential to really create the kind of atmosphere in this country that is going to put people in fear of one another, and it's beginning to happen, and I believe it's beginning to happen, and it's very small right now. This is not a cry of alarm, and for God's sake, if the *Star* is here, don't say, "Levin said," you know, "pogrom's tomorrow." That's not the case.

But we haven't seen it, as far as I'm concerned, in quite some time in this community, and it's beginning to rear its ugly head. And it is theologically based and we're going to have to watch out for it and try to do something about it.

MR. TAMILIO: Mark, that relates to exactly what we're talking about in another way as well. And that is, I have this sneaking suspicion that this current debate over intelligent design and evolution and stem cell research issue really has nothing at all to do with evolution nor stem cell research, just like the marriage amendment debates we were having a few months back had absolutely nothing to do with "protecting marriage," whatever that means. (Applause.)

I think we need to point to the elephant in the room, and the elephant is that some people want to eradicate the line between church and state and instill a theocracy that's predicated solely on their exclusivist beliefs. That's really what this is about. (Applause.)

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. TAMILIO: What was that?

MR. KREBS: And I guess as long as we –

Q: Gary Johnson.

MR. KREBS: Is he here? (Laughter.) As long as we're taking a little bit of an alarmist turn here –

MR. TAMILIO: I didn't mean to alarm you. (Laughter.)

MR. KREBS: – but I think we can look at public education, and I think that it's a known fact that there are people in the conservative fundamentalist community around the United States that would like to see public education come to an end.

And that it's – as an educator, and not because of the science or because of the theology, but as an educator, this use of the public education system as the vehicle to get this intelligent design in is to me very, very threatening because the intelligent design people have made it very clear that once they established that science has a theistic basis, they want to expand that out into government, literature, law, and to have a school system, then, which reflects a particular theistic viewpoint is, I think, one of the goals of a scary number of people that are maybe in our legislature right now.

So the public education system is the foundation of our democracy, and the secular education system is the foundation – and the word “secular” is, in fact, the bogey man for a lot of the people that we are working against, that secular humanists are the enemy and that is really what has come out in these discussions about intelligent design and evolution. So I think we need to be very, very aware that the education system is at risk and that it's – that we're seeing one little skirmish when we're looking at the intelligent design and evolution issue.

RABBI LEVIN: And this is exactly where people of faith and people who do not hold religious beliefs can work together to remind the public sector that this country was founded to be a pluralistic nation. It wasn't founded to be a Christian nation. It was founded for religious freedom, which included freedom from religion.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: Exactly.

RABBI LEVIN: And that we can work together to allow all religions the right to speak and people of no religion the right to speak, and the idea is not to let any one religion dictate the public realm, be it politics, education, social services, what have you.

MR. KREBS: Scientific knowledge.

RABBI LEVIN: Or scientific knowledge, absolutely.

Q: I'm a member of this church and I'm a lesbian and I'm really scared.

MS. BARNES: Well, I don't know if any other members of the panel want to speak to that, but we're – it's about two or three minutes of 8:00, and we promised that we would end the program on time, so I do want to allow members of the panel if they want to say anything generally to tonight's issue or their work before we close.

RABBI LEVIN: I do.

MS. BARNES: Great.

MR. TAMILIO: I want to say something.

MS. BARNES: Go ahead.

MR. TAMILIO: I believe that what's happening is a battle for the soul of the country, and a long time ago – 25 years ago – I started giving sermons around it's a wonderful country and some of us are having so good a time that we're going to give it to other people.

MR. KREBS: That was back in the '60s, right?

MR. TAMILIO: No, actually, this was 1980. I can't remember the '60s.
(Laughter.)

MR. KREBS: I remember the '80s quite well. (Laughter.)

MR. TAMILIO: I'm much younger than I look. Anyway. No. And folks, some of us believe that what is at risk is the country that we believed that we had built. And it's nice to have fun, but at what price? If we don't speak up, if we don't speak in the newspapers, if we don't get media attention, if we don't demand of the media that they report the truth, instead of who happens to have the best media facility built into his church, who gets the best PR people and who has built up those relationships – if we don't do that, then we stand to lose the culture that we believe we're part of. That's what's happening, and that's what's at risk. And we're in the throes of it – and this is just a small discussion, but we are in the throes of that battle and, by God, our children will inherit the wind.

MS. CHRISTOPHER: I would just say that I think we all are the beneficiaries of living in this society we call a pluralistic society. And we've talked about tonight being respectful of people who are Jewish or Buddhists or Hindu or whatever. I think we have to be respectful also of the fundamentalist Christian that I think in large part we've tried to make the enemy tonight. And I think that there are a lot of real concerns that I hear among fundamentalist Christians. You know, are we not able to teach our children values? Does character no longer count anymore? What about integrity? We need to address those issues.

I'm not trying to be an apologist for the fundamentalist Christian, but I want to live in a society where their views can be heard and respected in the same way that the Jew or the Buddhist or the Catholic or whomever can express their views.

I think our real challenge is around areas where we will never have consensus – we will never find consensus: how we hold onto a civil society, what kinds of compromises we can make, what kind of concessions we can make in order to respect the diversity that we all benefit from.

MR. KREBS: And I want to second some of that. This has been fun in such a friendly environment to my particular perspective. (Laughter.) And so we have bashed a little bit, but I think that the words that I would say is, what can we do here? People need to get engaged, but we need to get engaged in the ways – we need to role model the ways we think this needs to be done. And if we go out and do the same kind of divisive or we're-right-and-you're-wrong type of things, we're going to lose even if we win. And so I think it's our job to take to heart this idea of truly living with diversity, including the diversity of the people that we disagree with strongly.

So my feeling is, there's got to be action. You know, everybody's got to become an activist in some way or another, but you've got to be a good activist, a role model as an activist. And that's hard because our culture pushes us into these dichotomous divisive roles and we have to find some ways to not fall into that easy way out.

MR. TAMILIO: The issue for me is not preventing conservatives or fundamentalists – whatever name we're going to use – to having a voice and allowing them to express what I believe are their deep concerns. That's not the issue. The issue is preventing them from defining all the terms.

The last election we heard time and time again, well, the conservatives went out and voted their values. I voted my values, too. I just think that giving people of the same – allowing gays and lesbians, for example, the right to be in love is a value that other people don't hold. It's the defining of the terms.

If the accent hasn't given me away, I'm from Boston and I've only lived in the Midwest for about a year, and one of the things that I've noticed in moving here, people have asked me, "How is it different?" Well, aside from the seafood – (laughter) – aside from that, one of the things I have noticed everywhere in the church and in society and the newspaper and – well, I don't go to the hair salon, but I'd probably hear it there if I did – is that those who hold more progressive views have an unbelievable defeatist attitude. You hear it all the time, "I'm not going to vote. It's not going to make a difference anyway." Then you're to blame. I mean, Mark, you pointed that out earlier that whose fault is it? It's the voters.

And you hear things like, "I won't speak because it might offend my conservative friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member or whatever." Since when did that – I don't know if this has always been a Midwestern thing or if it's just something that's recently

happened maybe across the country – maybe it’s happening in Boston right now and I just don’t know it, but I think that what we need to do is you need to vote, and you need to get involved and you need to make your voice heard, and you don’t have to accept ideology that you don’t agree with. And I think if, you know, if you do that – (applause).

Which isn’t to say don’t let the other side speak. That’s not what I’m saying at all. What I’m saying is, don’t let the other side define all the terms and don’t let the other side speak for you. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Thank you so much. First, let’s give a big hand to our panel. (Applause.) And I want to also thank Reverend McCoy for being here and starting this evening off with his wonderful remarks. (Applause.) And finally, I want to thank you. The work that we’re doing at the Center – and we started out in Denver, and we’re here in Kansas City, and we’ll be going to other places through the rest of the year – is important to us because it’s a conversation with you and we learn so much from you through your questions, through the people that we meet, through the help and assistance that we get, making new friends, and creating new networks and learning more that we can also take back to Washington that will enhance our work. So thank you for being here. We appreciate it, and I hope to see you again very soon.

Thank you.

MR. : And thanks to Melody and the Center for American Progress.

(Applause.)

(END)