



# GRASPING THE NETTLE

With The God Question

NEWSLETTER—SPRING 2019

## Planning Ahead With GTN

The inspirational declaration “I have a dream” is forever associated with American civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King. Grasping the Nettle was also inspired by “a dream”. It is that the people of Scotland - and subsequently elsewhere in the world - would be presented with sufficient information about the case for Christianity to help them make a reasoned decision about whether to join the tide of Western World ‘exiteers’ from belief in God or understand and adopt the Christian worldview.

The GTN flag was raised for the first time in June 2014 at a gala dinner. It was followed by the landmark *In Concert with the Cosmos* the next evening in the Clyde Auditorium, Glasgow. Since then, enormous progress has been made but future plans are in place to take GTN to a more effective and visible place than hitherto. Although we look back with gratitude, this edition of



The first GTN Dinner held in the (then) Thistle Hotel, Glasgow

the GTN newsletter is about vision and forward plans. We are asking that you plan to join us as often as you can in the events featured in this newsletter.



US Astronaut Col. James Dutton was a guest at the introductory events

### Vision and Action

*“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time.”*

So said the remarkably perceptive futurologist Joel A Barker.

Thanks to the support of GTN by The John Templeton Foundation and the sponsorship of a Liaison Officer by the Association of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) the GTN vision is being galvanised into high profile action. GTN is thereby offering leadership to Christians across the nation in presenting evidence for the Christian worldview. We invite you to own the vision, to embrace the purpose and *grasp the nettle* as actively as you can. Read on to learn about opportunities in the months ahead.

## President of BioLogos to Visit Scotland as the Guest of GTN 5th-9th June 2019

Cosmologist Dr Deborah Haarsma, President of BioLogos in Michigan, USA, is scheduled to visit Scotland during 5th to 9th June and will participate in a range of GTN events.

The name BioLogos is of course a coinage. 'Bio' communicates a sense of the life force of the natural world while 'Logos' is Greek for 'Word', the term used in the first verse of John's Gospel to denote the role of Christ both in creation and as the ultimate communication from God to his creation. 'BioLogos' therefore stands for the harmony of science and Christian belief.



Dr Deborah Haarsma will shortly speak at a number of GTN events.



Dr Francis Collins

The organisation—which is one of the most influential communicators of faith and science ideas in the world—originated with Dr Francis Collins who famously, during the Bill Clinton Presidency, led a team of scientists in the ground-breaking process of reading the human genome for the very first time. In lay terms the genome is the 'instruction book for life'. It is responsible for taking every human embryo to a fully formed person. The 'text' has around 3 billion letters. The title of Francis Collins' best selling book, detailing his own perspective on science and God, is "The Language of God". Dr Collins is a key interviewee in Programme Two of The God Question series.

An experienced research scientist, **Deborah Haarsma** served as Professor and Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan before taking up her role as President of BioLogos. Using telescopes around the world she has studied galaxies and clusters of galaxies in the universe. She co-authored the book *Origins* with her husband Loren—about the history of life and the universe!! She is also a musician! *"We are both thrilled and honoured by the agreement of Dr Haarsma to participate in a range of GTN events,"* commented GTN Chairman Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison.



Searching for galaxy clusters in the universe using the Hubble telescope

During her visit to Scotland, Dr Haarsma will be the principal guest at the GTN annual dinner, she will speak at a schools conference on science and God, be featured at a Wonder-Full World event and give a lecture in the University of Glasgow Chapel, coincident with the Glasgow Science Festival.



**Announcing...**

**GTN Annual Dinner with Principal Guest Dr Deborah Haarsma**

**Wednesday 5th June 2019**

**Alona Hotel, Strathclyde Park, Motherwell**



Banqueting Room, Alona Hotel. Also the venue of the 2018 GTN annual dinner

**Theme: Do You See What I See?**

***Declaring the Glory of God***

**Join BioLogos President Dr Deborah Haarsma  
on her lightning and enlightening tour of the universe**

What is modern astronomy revealing about God? From extrasolar planets to baby stars and from galaxies to the mysteries of dark matter— all viewed through the lens of a Christian astronomer/cosmologist.

**Venue:** Alona Hotel, Strathclyde Park, Motherwell, ML1 3RT

**Time:** Drinks Reception from 6.30pm

**Dinner:** Served at 7pm

**Tickets:** £30 per person to include 3 course dinner  
(with a choice of main courses) and tea/coffee

Please book at [www.graspingthenettle.org/dinner](http://www.graspingthenettle.org/dinner)

The reduced ticket price for this event is made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

**Announcing...**  
**A Schools Conference**  
**on**  
**Introducing The God Question**  
**A Resource Specially Created for Secondary Schools in Scotland**



Williamwood High School, Glasgow

In a joint initiative between Grasping the Nettle and the Presbytery of Glasgow a half day conference will be held in **Williamwood High School** on Thursday 6th June with contributions from Dr Deborah Haarsma.

Presbytery representative and Convener of its Community Responsibility Committee, George Kelly said *"We are thrilled to be involved in this partnership with Grasping the Nettle and honoured to benefit from the visit to Scotland of Dr Haarsma. This is a ground-breaking event for us and we hope it will be the first of many."*

**Why Not in Your Area?**

If you are interested in finding out about the possibility of a conference on science and God being organised in your local secondary school as part of the formal curriculum please contact [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org).

Find out more about the curriculum related Introducing the God Question resources at [www.thegodquestion.tv/introduce](http://www.thegodquestion.tv/introduce).

**Announcing...**

## **What A Wonder-Full World!**

**An evening of music, drama, film and conversation with cosmologist**

**Dr Deborah Haarsma**

**In Kay Park Parish Church, Kilmarnock**

**Saturday 8th June**

**7pm**



Kay Park Parish Church



Kay Park Parish Church

The recently renovated Kay Park Church is the venue for this event with Dr Deborah Haarsma that combines an entertaining and informative experience with thought-provoking questions about the big purpose of life.

The music will feature a range of high quality local Kilmarnock talent, as well as that of tenor vocalist Alasdair Morris, film excerpts from The God Question TV series and the humour of the dramatic vignettes—Cosmic Cut and On Track. All will combine to provide a source of conversation topics with astronomer Deborah Haarsma.

Tickets at the subsidised price of £3 (including refreshments) are available from Rev George Lind, telephone 01560 428732 or via email [gklind@talktalk.net](mailto:gklind@talktalk.net).

The greatly reduced price of tickets for this event is made possible by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.



"On Track" One of two short dramas presented as part of the Wonder-Full World event.

It demonstrates what can happen when a Hair Stylist means an expert on the brain and mind!



**Announcing...**  
**A Special Event for Pentecost Sunday**  
**In Celebration of**  
***God the Creator and God the Holy Spirit***  
**in**  
**The University of Glasgow Memorial Chapel**  
**On Sunday 9th June**  
**from 3pm-4.30pm**  
**with**  
**The University Chapel Choir**  
**and**  
**BioLogos President Dr Deborah Haarsma**

**A GTN special event in association with the Presbytery of Glasgow**

Join us in the august surroundings of Glasgow University Chapel, be inspired by the creative beauty of its architecture, let your spirit be uplifted in praise and worship of God the ultimate creator and God the Holy Spirit who dwells not just with us but in us.

The Chapel Choir will celebrate Pentecost and creation.

Dr Haarsma will present an illustrated talk entitled  
*"And the Spirit of God Moved..."*.

This interdenominational public event is free of charge but please register your intention to attend at [www.graspingthenettle.org/pentecost](http://www.graspingthenettle.org/pentecost).

The event is made possible through financial contributions from the Presbytery of Glasgow, GTN and a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.



University of Glasgow Memorial Chapel.  
Photo Credit NickGeorge1993

**Announcing...**

## **Heads Above the Parapet**

**Creating Followers on Social Media—and Keeping Them Interested!**

***An Information and Training Seminar with Ronnie Convery,  
Director of Communications, Archdiocese of Glasgow***

**Venue: The Atrium, The Alona Hotel, Strathclyde Park, Motherwell**

**Date and Time: Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at 5.30 pm for 6.00 pm  
(concluding by, or before, 8.30 pm)**

*Ronnie Convery is a journalist, formerly with STV and is presently communications director for the Archdiocese of Glasgow. He has a passionate interest in social media, is skilled in using it and committed to engaging in the public square. He is author of 'Reclaiming the Piazza'.*

The session will:

- Distinguish between Instagram, Facebook and Twitter in terms of their audience profile, strengths and weaknesses and message characteristics.
- Advise on how GTN can build a profile within these disparate audiences.
- Demonstrate how social media can build bridges to other events and resources.
- Define the role of a social manager.
- Advise on how a team of social media contributors/respondents can work together as effectively as possible.
- Illustrate how social media is used effectively within Ronnie's own professional context.



Attendees will be given the opportunity to practise the process and improve their skills through reflection and discussion.

On arrival, hot filled rolls with tea/coffee will be served.

The event is free to attend but numbers are limited so entry will be by electronic ticket.

To book your place, visit [www.graspingthenettle.org/socialmedia](http://www.graspingthenettle.org/socialmedia)

## **Not Only... But Also... Announcing...**

### **What A Wonder-Full World Sampler at Heart and Soul**



Heart and Soul in Princess Street Gardens. Photo Credit Derek Braid

Join us at St Cuthbert's Church, Princes Street, Edinburgh on Sunday 19th May when, as part of the Heart and Soul event, GTN will present a 45 minute taster programme of What A Wonder-Full World with: tenor vocalist Alasdair Morris, actors Mhairi Maclean, Bill Craig and Sandra Craig, medical scientist Dr Chris Packard and excerpts from The God Question TV series. This is one of several events taking place in St Cuthbert's during Heart and Soul. The anticipated start time of the GTN event is 3pm.

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### **Debates, Differences and Respectful Dialogue**

Opinions abound when the relationship between science and theology or science and the Bible emerge on the agenda. Perceiving the topic to be as toxic as politics or religion some prefer to body-swerve it. However its sheer importance for public discourse between the church and society prevents avoidance being an option. At 10am on Friday 7th June, Deborah Haarsma will meet with the GTN Steering Board and other leaders not only to discuss effective public strategy in relation to science and God but also to consider how best to be as inclusive as possible in exploring a subject that can so easily cause division. Although the number of attendees that can be accommodated is very limited, if you would like to attend please contact [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org).



**And There's More...**

**Announcing... The Visit to Scotland of the Vatican's Astronomer  
Dr Guy Consolmagno**

**30th October—2nd November**

GTN is delighted that Dr Consolmagno has agreed to spend a significant part of a week participating in a series of GTN related events. More detailed information will emerge soon but in the meantime please note the following plans for the period.



Dr Guy Consolmagno. Photo credit: Robert Macke

Wednesday 30th October AM—A Glasgow schools conference, likely to be in association with the Presbytery of Glasgow.  
Venue TBA

Wednesday 30th October 7.30pm— Address to the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow in the John Anderson Lecture Theatre, Strathclyde University.

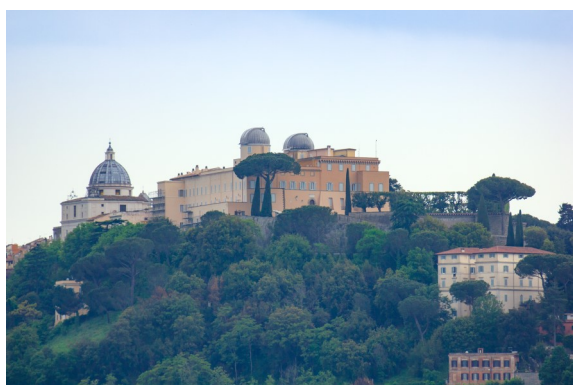
Thursday 31st October AM—Participation in a schools conference in the St Brides Hall, Motherwell. This is organised in partnership with the Scottish Catholic Education Service.

Thursday 31st October PM— Address organised by the Institute of Physics at Glasgow University.

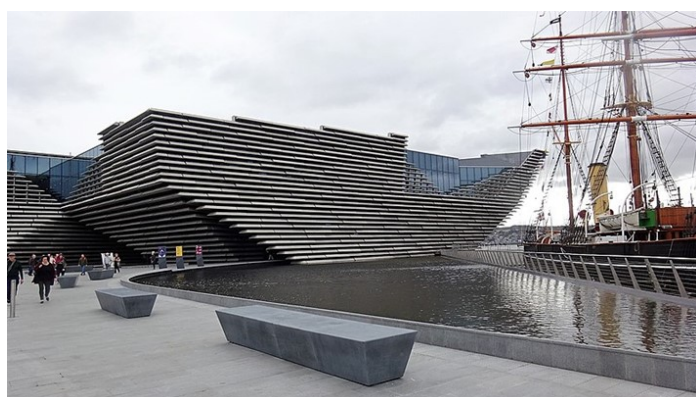
Friday 1st November AM —Participation in a schools conference (provisionally in Angus) organised in association with Christian Values in Education.

Friday 1st November 7.30pm—Illustrated talk at the V&A Museum, Dundee (venue TBC).

Saturday 2nd November 10am-4pm—Participation in the GTN annual conference at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. See also separate notice.



The Vatican Observatory. Photo credit H. Raab



The newly opened V&A Museum Dundee. An event is provisionally planned here with Dr Consolmagno on Friday 1st November.  
Photo credit Rosser1954

**Announcing...**  
**GTN National Conference**  
**Theme: *All is One***  
***Science, God and Purpose in Creation***

**Saturday 2nd November 2019**  
**Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh**  
**10am—4pm**



Heriot-Watt University

**With:**



**Dr Guy Consolmagno,**  
The Vatican's Senior Astronomer  
**Topic:** Is there purpose in the  
Cosmos?



**Dr Denis Alexander,**  
Emeritus Director of the  
Faraday Institute, Cambridge  
**Topic:** Is there purpose in  
Biology?

**Tickets:** £30 (including lunch and morning and afternoon refreshments)

Please book at [www.graspingthenettle.org/conference](http://www.graspingthenettle.org/conference)

The cost of tickets for this event is subsidised by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.