

RELIGION NEWS**Epworth services begin**

The summer season of worship services at Epworth Heights begins Sunday, May 24, with the Rev. Bill Collins speaking. A continental breakfast is served in the Marine Dining Room at 10 a.m. Worship follows at 10:30. Collins served as pastor at Community Church. This is his 11th year as Epworth chaplain. The community is invited.

Memorial Day service

Lighthouse Baptist Church, 1950 N. Jebavy Drive, celebrates "God and Country Day" Sunday, May 24. Speaker for the day is Dr. Joseph Fortna, executive vice president and college dean at Mid Western Baptist College, Pontiac, Mich. The 11 a.m. service includes a patriotic, multi-media musical and recognition of area veterans, military and public servants. Call 843-8532.

Crossan seminar

"Jesus and the Kingdom," a three-part seminar by John Dominic Crossan, co-founder of the Jesus Seminar, is hosted at the United Methodist Church of Ludington, 5810 Bryant Road, Friday, June 12 and Saturday, June 13. Topics include, "The World of Jesus," a multi-media presentation, Friday at 7 p.m., "The Life of Jesus," Saturday at 9 a.m., and "The Death of Jesus," Saturday at 11 a.m. There is no cost. Crossan is an emeritus professor of religious studies at DePaul University in Chicago. The Jesus Seminar was founded in 1985 by academics studying the "historical Jesus." For information call the Rev. Laurie McKinven-Copus at 843-8340. Sponsored by LIGHT: Ludington Interfaith Gathering Hope Together.

Res Life car show

Lakeshore Art On Wheels is held in the Resurrection Life Church parking lot at 5532 W. US-10 on Saturday, May 23, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Registration is from 9 - 11 a.m. and is \$7 per car to show. Trophies, door prizes and food. Proceeds go to the Res Life Youth Group. Call Len Larson at (231) 690-0996 or Paul Larson at (231) 425-8923.

Building dedication

HELP Ministry plans an open house celebration for its new Tinkham Avenue location on Sunday, May 31. Events include a 4 p.m. color guard, dedication, flag presentation, ribbon cutting, picnic and open house at 910 E. Tinkham Ave. A 6 p.m. Service of Celebration takes place at Cornerstone Baptist Church, 121 Nelson Road. A coffee and cake reception follows at 7 at the church.

Living Word speakers

Richard and Jane Garcia of Victoria, Texas, speak at Living Word Church, 316 N. Robert St., 7 p.m. Thursday, June 4. The Garcias trained at Mark Barclay's Supernatural Training Institute in Midland, Mich.

Bring your toys

The second annual Ride Your Toys To Church Sunday takes place 10:15 a.m. June 14 at Victory Baptist Church, 4353 N. Stiles Road. Doodlebugs, classic cars, horses, tractors, motor trucks, minis, motorcycles, bicycles all are welcome. Vehicles can be finished or a work in progress. There is space to display rides and even a spot to tie up horses. Call Darrell Stork at 843-9358.

The good news of EVOLUTION



FAITH Evolutionary Evangelists Connie Barlow, top photo, and the Rev. Michael Dowd come to Ludington on Sunday, May 31, to present what they call "The Great Story" at People's Church, 115 W. Loomis St. The husband and wife team travel the country presenting evolution in "a sacred and meaningful way. Barlow speaks at the 11 a.m. service. Dowd leads a workshop, "Thank God for Evolution," from 7 - 9 p.m.

Evangelists present evolution in a 'sacred way'

BY MARK STEIGENGA
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd live entirely on the road.

The husband and wife team has been on the road since 2002 when Barlow and Dowd launched a traveling life as "America's evolutionary evangelists."

"We don't have a home," Dowd, an ordained United Church of Christ minister, tells audiences. "We don't even have a storage bin. We live permanently on the generosity of people who open up their homes to us."

"My wife is an internationally acclaimed science writer. We came together as the marriage of science and religion to preach and teach on the road the marriage of science and religion for personal and planetary wellbeing."

The preaching and teaching road leads the evangelists to People's Church in Ludington on Sunday, May 31, where Connie preaches the 11 a.m. service and Michael leads a 7 - 9 p.m. workshop entitled "Thank God for Evolution." People's Church is at 115 W. Loomis St.

The Daily News made cell phone contact with Barlow and Dowd last week while the couple took part in a writing workshop in Maine.

Connie Barlow began the conversation. "For both of us, evolution has not only become our fundamental world view and how we view the universe but also the source of comfort and solace and inspiration and hope — all of the kinds of things that traditionally come from religion."

"My coming from the science side and having never really embraced any sort of

religious perspective, for me it's just become a wonderful way to have all the benefits of religion in my life.

"For Michael it is a way to hold on to the core concepts of his Christian understanding while not having to wait for some other world or some future in order to get the benefits. It's all right here now."

"So the two of us got together, got married, got on the road together and have been living on the road ever since presenting in religious and secular settings all across the United States."

Barlow calls the basis for her message "The Great Story — humanity's common 14-billion-year-old evolutionary science-based sacred story of cosmic genesis."

To Barlow, the message is good news.

"It is a way to come home to who we are in the universe and feel good about where we've been, who our ancestors are and our perspective journey for the future."

"The Great Story is religious in nature because it puts us in accord with the universe. It's a way of helping us have an understanding, a way to answer the basic questions that our children ask us."

Much of Barlow's work as an evolutionary evangelist is with children.

"Children are concrete literalists — they don't appre-

ciate myth and metaphor in quite the way that adults do. When children ask how it all began, they want to know. They want the concrete answer without the metaphors put on there."

"We Are Made of Stardust" is the name Barlow has chosen for her 8- to 12-week evolutionary curriculum for primary school age groups.

"Literally we are all made of stardust," says Barlow.

"The story of the stars is important for children to understand the role that death plays in the universe. Without the death of stars there would be no planets and no life. Without the death of ancestor stars and the recycling of their elements all there would be would be great clouds of hydrogen gas and helium gas and you can't make life and you can't make planets from that."

"We are the first people to have an explanation for how death came into the world and we say, 'Hallelujah.' There is nothing wrong here. Without the death of stars there could be no planets."

"We are not just related to monkeys. We are related to the stars and I have yet to find any children who don't find that to be inspirational."

For Barlow, a humanist, preaching the Great Story alongside her husband, a theologian, has expanded her own vision of God.

The Rev. Michael Dowd
United Church of Christ minister
Evolutionary Evangelist

"The old vision of God is trivial compared to the new version we come to when we understand how vast the universe is, how old the universe is and how creative the universe has been throughout its entire 14-billion-year story."

To Michael Dowd, the Great Story of evolution is sacred and meaningful in a way that can draw together people from a variety of backgrounds.

"People in different cultures use different stories and metaphors to speak about reality."

"What science offers is a collective intelligence that tries to determine the nature of reality irrespective of our beliefs."

"Regardless of if you are a Jew or a Buddhist or a Muslim or a Christian, we all go around the big, bright ball in the sky. So, what is it that is fundamentally true, fundamentally 'Reality' regardless of whatever a person's beliefs?"

"There is such a thing as reality with a capital 'R' and everything we attempt to say about that reality will necessarily be metaphorical in one way or another."

"God is always a personification of 'Reality.'"

"From that viewpoint, we are offering a way of thinking about the history of the universe from a place of deep inspiration."

GOING TO HEAR

CONNIE BARLOW AND MICHAEL DOWD

WHERE - People's Church, 115 W. Loomis St., Sunday, May 31, free admission, all are invited

CONNIE BARLOW - Preaches at the 11 a.m. service, Connie is a humanist, scientist, and internationally acclaimed author of books on evolution

MICHAEL DOWD - leads a 7 - 9 p.m. workshop on "Thank God for Evolution," his book by the same name is endorsed by five Nobel Prize recipients, in April he spoke at the United Nations Values Caucus in New York City, he is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ

To Dowd, evolution complements his own Christianity.

"Without an evolutionary world view it is very difficult to live in Christ, that is, to live in deepest integrity."

"You would not understand, for instance, why you are tempted by certain things, why you fall to certain things, why your temper flares in certain ways."

"These sorts of things become very clear and obvious when you have an evolutionary understanding of our life."

"If you think it's all about some ancestor who ate an apple, you are not going to have the tools to know how to live a really driving life."

"Evolution offers a practical insight to the place where the rubber meets the road."

"This is a cool story," says Connie Barlow. "It is my story. It makes me feel good to be alive here on earth and to be a part of this amazing universe."