

THE GREAT
CONVERGENCE
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brew

What's
so Great?

Darkwood
Brew.org

Wherever You Are, We'll Meet You There

New to the role of facilitator? Here are a few tips to help you get started.

- First of all, a facilitator's job is to coordinate the flow of each session. View the video segment ahead of time and make your own notes and observations.
- Prepare the meeting place so that it is comfortable. Arrive early; help organize any refreshments and test your video player/computer.
- Getting to know one another helps the discussions flow. Welcome all, catch up and reflect a bit on last week's session in the first few minutes.
- You don't have to be the expert. You are not expected to provide answers to questions provided. So let the questions ignite the conversation and see where it takes the group.
- It's everyone's responsibility to make sure everyone else gets an equal amount of time to talk.
- Listen first; evaluate later. Make sure you understand a comment, then ask questions or pose other options.
- Encourage participants to bring a Bible or other resources.
- If you feel so moved, start, and/or end your session in prayer.

Leaders Guide

"The Great Convergence"

The Great Convergence is a term used to describe the coming together of refugees from Christian liberalism and conservatism in recent years. It's not a "meeting in the middle," but a meeting "out in the wilderness" where those who have felt alienated or estranged from their native traditions have been drawn out to find faith in a new way beyond liberalism and conservatism. In the wilderness, refugees from both traditions find they share more common ground than they realized was possible – and are actively building a movable "tabernacle" in which to meet God, each other, and the world, as they make their way to a land of Promise. In this new faith context, spirituality and justice ignite each other, faith and doubt are both treated as allies in the pursuit of truth, and the Holy Spirit is experienced as God's "still speaking" voice in our world.

Welcome to the Darkwood Brew journey!

We are glad you can join us. Our primary resources for small group study are condensed versions of Darkwood Brew's weekly one-hour episodes. These are called GUIDED EPISODES. Each Guided Episode is 25-30 minutes in length. There are pause points with questions provided for each Episode, intended for group discussion or individual reflection.

On the following page, you will find information on the Series Topic, Skype Guests, Scripture passage, and Questions posed during the episode.



Questions:

1. Are there situations in which you realize that you know very little? If so, what are they? How do they affect how you think and act?
2. What stood out for you from Exodus 36: 2-7? In your experience what happens when people bring their own gifts to share freely and abundantly?
3. What gifts from your own religious tradition do you feel are worth carrying forwards and sharing with others? What gifts do you suspect might be available to you from people of other traditions even those that may seem quite different from your own?
4. Why do you think Convergence is happening at this particular time? What factors and forces might be in play?
5. How important is Convergence? What is at stake? Are our best times ahead, or our worst? What can we do about it either way?

EPISODE TITLE: "Gifts of the Indigo Tent"

The Great Convergence, Episode 1

Featured Guest: Cameron Trimble

Rev. Cameron Trimble is the Executive Director of the Center for Progressive Renewal. She most recently served as an advisor to the Congregational Vitality and Discipleship Team of Local Church Ministries for the United Church of Christ and as Associate Conference Minister of Church Development in the Southeast Conference of the UCC. In her ministry in the national setting, Rev. Trimble was responsible for the development of national strategy for birthing new churches. In her conference setting, she directly oversaw the birthing of churches throughout the Southeast Conference. Each setting has given her a unique perspective on the challenges of cultivating leaders equipped to meet the needs of the future of mainline Protestantism.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Exodus 36: 2-7

2 Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab and everyone skilful to whom the Lord had given skill, everyone whose heart was stirred to come to do the work;³ and they received from Moses all the freewill-offerings that the Israelites had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill-offerings every morning,⁴ so that all the artisans who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task being performed,⁵ and said to Moses, 'The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.'⁶ So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp: 'No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.'⁷ So the people were restrained from bringing; for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work.

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Questions:

1. What part can we play in constructing a new Christianity that will be relevant for future generations? How do we create support structures for our faith that will be both flexible and durable?
2. What stood out for you from John 3: 1-10? What does it mean to you when Jesus says that we are required to be born again?
3. What changes if we begin to focus more on the birth of Jesus than on his death? How can birth be an ongoing energy in our own faith journeys?
4. What might happen if we being to focus less on differences in beliefs and more on the commonalities and goals of our practice?
5. What does it mean if God is like Jesus?

EPISODE TITLE: "Christ of the Convergence"

The Great Convergence, Episode 2

Featured Guest: Carol Howard Merritt

Carol Howard Merritt is a writer, conference speaker, and the cohost of God Complex Radio. A minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), she formerly served as a pastor of Western Presbyterian Church, an intergenerational congregation in Washington, D.C. Carol's the author of Reframing Hope: Vital Ministry in a New Generation (The Alban Institute, August 2010) and Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation, (The Alban Institute, September 2007). Carol is also the co-host of the Internet Radio Show, The God Complex, with Bruce Reyes-Chow, and she blogs for the Huffington Post.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: John 3: 1-10

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' ⁹Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?'

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from Ephesians 4: 1- 7 and 11-13? Why do you think Paul makes distinctions among the followers of Jesus regarding their callings to vocations?

2. Bruce said, “Spirit doesn’t break our free will or strong-arm us. We are in creation that we didn’t choose and are constantly influenced by it.” What does that mean to you? Why would God allow suffering instead of forcing our actions?

3. What is the difference between “preaching Jesus” and treating people like they are Jesus? What meaning do you take from Eric’s and Bruce’s story of Simba’s Auto?

4. Have you received a calling to a specific vocation? What was the call? How did you respond?

5. Eric suggests that a calling never come without empowerment? Has that been your experience? If so, what was the form of that empowerment?

EPISODE TITLE: “Vocatio”

The Great Convergence, Episode 3

Featured Guest: Bruce Van Blair

Bruce’s interests keep him going in several different directions including the startup of a new house church (now streamed live from our Countryside Chapel), and most recently joining the Countryside community to begin our new ministry “Converging Paths;” a partnership venture with the BTS Center in Bangor Maine, exploring our vocational callings in our everyday workplaces, and our leadership in faith communities. Bruce has written a wide collection of sermons as well as several books, including *The Believer’s Road*, and *In A Nutshell*.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Ephesians 4: 1-7, 11-13

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from John 14: 1-9? How have your ideas about this familiar passage changed over time?

2. Do you think that convergence is pointing as a single, unifying concept or something more complex? Bruce said, "It's not about picking teams." What does that mean for Christians and for the church?

3. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? If so, what is it like? How does it differ from what people familiar with the popular use of that phrase might expect?

4. In what ways is our relationship with Jesus communal? In what ways is it personal? How are the two necessary to a deeper spirituality?

EPISODE TITLE: "What the Hell Are You Doing In Church?"

The Great Convergence, Episode 4

Featured Guest: Bruce Reyes-Chow

Most of his adult life, Bruce was a congregational pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA). In 2008 he was elected Moderator of the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the highest elected office of the 2 million member denomination. Now Bruce is a blogger, author, event speaker, church consultant and leadership coach. He has written two books: *The Definitive-ish Guide for Using Social Media in the Church* (Shookfoil Books, 2012) and *But I Don't See You as Asian: Curating Conversations about Race* (Kickstarter, 2013). He believes that society and the church are strengthened by talking about such issues as: denominationalism and the future church; faith and technology; race and politics, parenting, urban living, etc.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: John 14: 1-9a

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

⁸ Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' ⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?'

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from John 20: 19-25?
2. Who or what do you think the Holy Spirit is? Is it possible we may be entering a new age of the Holy Spirit? If so, what do you think that might mean?
3. What are some of the biggest challenges facing humanity in the coming years? How might a shift to the energy and guidance of the Holy Spirit help us to meet those challenges?
4. How do you discern the work of the Holy Spirit in your life opposed to other influences? When are you sure it is the Holy Spirit, what provides that confidence?
5. Phyllis suggests we are in an important time, on the edge of a new spirituality. Do you think there is an intentional order the historic shifts in the Christian thought? Why do you think our ideas about God change over time?

EPISODE TITLE: "Was It The Holy Spirit or the Pizza?"

The Great Convergence, Episode 5

Featured Guest: Phyllis Tickle

Phyllis Tickle is Contributing Editor in Religion for Publishers Weekly, the international journal of the book industry. Frequently quoted in sources like Newsweek, Time, Life, The New York Times, USA Today, CNN, C-SPAN, PBS, BBC, VOA, etc., Tickle is an authority on religion in America and a much sought after lecturer on the subject. In addition to lectures and numerous essays, articles, and interviews, Tickle is the author of some two dozen books, most of them in religion and spirituality. The *Divine Hours: Prayers for Summertime*, the first in a three-volume contemporary manual of prayer, was released by Doubleday in March 2000, followed by *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime* in September 2000. In October 2001, the series was completed with the release of *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Spring*.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: John 20: 19-25

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.²¹ Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from these verses in Psalm 148?
2. Why do you think scientists and theologians, along with Christians, people of other faiths, agnostics and atheists are finding common ground for discussion about the sciences at this particular time?
3. Michael suggests finding a way of doing science and religion that avoids militant atheism and dogmatic creationism. What do you think that way might be like? What tools do we need to make it happen?
4. What part do awe and wonder play in our exploration of science and spirituality? Are awe and wonder experienced similarly in both disciplines? How has the internet changed the nature of our conversations about faith and science?
5. Do you believe in miracles? If so, do the miracles you believe in operate within, or outside of natural laws? What might be an example of a modern miracle?

EPISODE TITLE: "Faith, Science and our Creator"

The Great Convergence, Episode 6

Featured Guest: Michael Camp

Michael Camp is a former Baptist missionary and aid worker for evangelical organizations. Off and on for seven years, he lived and worked in Somalia, Kenya, and Malawi. He has also traveled in Asia extensively representing missions and development organizations. He studied missions at William Carey International University and Fuller Seminary, earned a Master of Science degree at Eastern University in global economic development, and was a senior writer for World Vision. After more than a quarter of a century of involvement in the evangelical movement, including as a missionary, pro-life activist, and lay leader, Michael walked out of the church and conservative religion. Today, as a progressive Christian writer, one of his passions is to help people see they can leave religious legalism behind without losing their faith in God.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Psalm 148: 1-10

- ¹ Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!
- ² Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!
- ³ Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!
- ⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!
- ⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.
- ⁶ He established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.
- ⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
- ⁸ fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!
- ⁹ Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
- ¹⁰ Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from Philippians 4:4-9?
2. How might using our mythological imagination change the way we read scripture? What could be some benefits?
3. What do you think Melvin is trying to tell us regarding the messages we receive about scripture when he asserts that there is no neutral telling? If that is the case, what should we do with that information?
4. What is your own interpretive tradition? How does it expand your understanding? How is it limiting?
5. When Melvin suggests approaching scripture with a sense of humility, what do you think he wants us to understand? What does it mean to you when you hear about moving away from being people of certainty and toward being people of faith?

EPISODE TITLE: “The Mythological Imagination”

The Great Convergence, Episode 7

Featured Guest: Melvin Bray

Born and raised in inner-city Washington, DC, by a strong single mother, I grew up in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-class faith community that gave me opportunities to live beyond the ordinary limitations of my socio-economic circumstance. My church was my first experience of the beauty that can arise when we transcend boundaries of difference, and I have lived my adult life helping others imagine even greater possibilities.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Philippians 4: 4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from this familiar passage from Genesis 3:1-9? What does it suggest to you about the relationship between God and humans?
2. Rabbi Azriel suggests that there may be convergences happening outside of Christianity. Do you think Convergence might be occurring on a larger scale? If so, what have you seen to make you think that may be the case?
3. How is the work of Muslims for Progressive Values that Ani discusses mirrored in Christian and other faith traditions in America and around the world today?
4. How might the spirit of openness and comfort that Rabbi Azriel suggests lay some of the social groundwork for intrafaith and interfaith Convergence? What factors may be contributing to that happening at this time?
5. We may find that solutions we seek are held by those we consider to be our enemies or within things that seem to be impediments to our path. If struggle is a natural part of our faith journey, how might we rethink our way forward to increased understanding and acceptance?

EPISODE TITLE: "The Gifts of Eden"

The Great Convergence, Episode 8

Featured Guest: Aryeh Azriel

Rabbi Aryeh Azriel has been the Senior Rabbi at Temple Israel since 1988. Born and raised in Tel Aviv, he was invited to be a counselor at OSRUI, a Reform Jewish summer camp in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, in 1973. Rabbi Azriel received his ordination and Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters in 1983 from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. He served as an Associate Rabbi at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in Baltimore, Maryland, until 1988.

Featured Guest: Ani Zonneveld

Zuriani "Ani" Zonneveld is a songwriter, producer, singer, speaker and an educator. She is the Executive Director for the Progressive Muslim Union and an Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace sponsor. Born in Malaysia, Ani spent a good portion of her formative years being raised in Germany, Egypt and India. This had an obvious influence on her outlook of life, politics, religion and culture. As a songwriter and producer she has worked with many different artists with releases in Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Germany, the UK, Japan, and the US. Her work in Malaysia resulted in an Album of the Year award at the AIMM, which is the Malaysian equivalent of the Grammy.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Genesis 3: 1-9

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?'² The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;³ but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die;⁵ for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.⁸ They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'

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