



Local Chapters Project First Year in Review

Arnold Sikkema
Past President, Project Leader

Mark McEwan
Project Development Officer
pdo@csc.ca
604-513-2121 x. 3259

Committed to growth in understanding between science and Christian faith



CSCA now has eleven local chapters across our country: Vancouver, **Calgary**, **Edmonton**, **Saskatchewan**, **Winnipeg**, **Waterloo**, **Hamilton**, **Toronto**, **Ottawa**, **Montréal**, and **Nova Scotia**. (new chapters in **bold**)

At this time last year, the CSCA had just launched our three-year Local Chapters Project, which seeks to answer this big question: *Given the unique challenges of the Canadian context, how can we foster and deepen people's understanding of the integrity of science and Christian faith through the activities of CSCA?*

New Local Chapters

From the beginning, our core effort in answering this question has been to plant new local chapters across the country and grow cohesion between them. One year into our project, CSCA membership has

increased by about 20%, and we have grown from three to eleven local chapters (two more than our project goal). We are truly coast-to-coast as we begin the second year of our project!

Each of these new chapters is headed up by at least one of our members on the ground, serving as CSCA Local Contact for the chapter. A number of chapters have already formed small teams that help with planning and running events. Our Project Development Officer, Mark McEwan, is also helping with these events from our project office at Trinity Western University. By the

csc.ca | fb.com/csc.ca | twitter.com/CanSciChr | csc.ca/youtube



TEMPLETON
World Charity Foundation, Inc.

This project/publication was made possible through the support of a grant from Templeton World Charity Foundation, Inc. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Templeton World Charity Foundation, Inc.

end of 2018, our goal is for each chapter to be self-sufficient, with enough committed people involved to sustain a local CSCA presence for years to come.

National Lecture Tour

In order to bring a measure of cohesion and unity to our chapters, CSCA Past President Arnold Sikkema travelled our nation in 2016 and gave twelve lectures on “**Quantum Physics and Christianity**” in ten different local chapters (he will soon visit the eleventh). This lecture tour was a big success by all accounts, often greatly exceeding local expectations for attendance and generating a great deal of interest from academics and laypersons alike.



Overflow seating at Ottawa's tour date (Aug. 30)

Probably our most surprising tour date was in Ottawa on August 30th: about 25 folks were expected, but over 100 showed up! In each location Arnold (who also serves as CSCA Local Contact for Vancouver) spent some time with local organizers in order to encourage and advise them on running their local chapter.

Great Events!

In addition to the tour, we held a number of well-received events at our local chapters. Some highlights included bringing in ASA's Executive Director, Leslie Wickman, for talks in Calgary, Edmonton, and Hamilton; a three-way panel discussion on genetic manipulation and “Playing God” at our Hamilton chapter; and a two-part lecture series on **Evolutionary Creation** (Dennis Venema) and **Intelligent Design** (Paul Brown) at our Vancouver chapter in which each proponent gave a lecture with a short response from the other, followed by discussion. This civil, charitable exchange between Christian scientists with differing views on creation was exemplary of CSCA's commitment to maintaining an open, respectful forum where there is honest disagreement between Christians.

By collaborating with other organizations interested in science and faith, we were also able to bring in several high-profile speakers for multiple events, such as Denis Alexander, Andrew Briggs, John Walton, and Tom McLeish.



Arnold Sikkema & Mark McEwan with John Walton in Langley, BC (July 20)

In total, we held a record 39 local chapter events in 2016 (including the tour, with some panel discussions and a workshop),

and several lecture videos have been posted on our [CSCA YouTube channel](#). If you would like to be notified of events at a local chapter near you, you can sign up either by emailing Mark (pdo@csc.ca) or by using [this form](#). We also maintain event listings at www.csc.ca and on our [Facebook page](#).

Student Mentoring Meals

In addition to focusing on new chapters and local events, our Local Chapters Project includes initiatives to promote student engagement in the CSCA. One way of connecting students with established CSCA membership (and science-faith scholars in general) is by sitting down and sharing a meal together. Our grant includes funding for this, and in 2016 we held our first four mentoring meals with Dennis Venema, Arnold Sikkema, Tom McLeish, and Dan Rudisill serving as hosts (Janet Warren has very recently hosted our fifth). This affords students an excellent opportunity to personally connect with someone who has successfully integrated Christian faith and rigorous academic work either directly in the sciences or reflecting upon them theologically/philosophically.



Student mentoring meal with Tom McLeish (Nov. 3)

Scholarships

Another way that our project aims to bolster student connection is through offering scholarships to attend conferences dealing with science and religion. In 2016 we awarded nine scholarships (four more than expected) to student members of the CSCA.

Each student later submitted a written reflection on the experience (soon to be featured on our CSCA blog). A number of these winners are actively helping to plan or support events in their local CSCA chapters.



Victoria McKinnon with Alister McGrath

Several winners chose to attend conferences in the UK: Dean Dettloff (Toronto), Mark Novak (Toronto), and Victoria McKinnon (Waterloo) went to the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion's "A Post-secular Age?" conference in Oxford, and Kira Barwich (Calgary) attended the Faraday Institute's "Science and Religion: Conversations between Worldviews" conference in Cambridge. Summarizing the insights of Dr. Cara Wall-Scheffler, Barwich observed that "if science makes you question something in the Bible and you are forced to face and struggle with the issue, generally you come out on the other side with a greater depth of understanding which would never have been discovered if not for the initial contention."



Canadians at ASA 2016

Four of our winners chose the 75th annual meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation at Azusa Pacific University in California: Dayna Nelson (Waterloo), Andrew Reeves (Waterloo), Colborne Kemna (Edmonton), and Timothy Opperman (Vancouver). The experience challenged their communication on science-faith issues (Reeves), to think beyond Western-centric approaches (Nelson), and to seek Christian unity amidst scientific disagreement (Kemna). The opportunity to engage with scholars and fellow students was most welcome for all: "While many of us differed on the details; the lively conversations were always joyful and mutually affirming" (Opperman). For conferences in 2017, our [application](#) deadline is May 31st.

ASA 2016

Including our scholarship winners, around twenty CSCA members were present at ASA 2016. CSCA presenters included Alan Dickin (Hamilton, "[Why We Need to Re-examine the Day-Age Interpretation of Genesis 1](#)"), Mark McEwan (Vancouver, "[Christian Apologetics and Science: Is Faith](#)

[Intellectually Dishonest?](#)"), Arnold Sikkema (Vancouver, "[Feeling the Cosmos: An Introduction to the 2015 Gravitational Wave Observation](#)"), and Janet Warren (Hamilton, "[Watering Barren Ground: Metaphor in the Brain, Bible, and Science](#)"); Dayna Nelson (Waterloo) and [John Wood](#) (Edmonton) sat on discussion panels, and Heather Prior (Edmonton) offered Monday morning's [devotional](#). *[Click to listen to each talk, with visuals in most cases.]*

Of particular note was a presentation by William Sikkema (from Langley, BC, now at Rice U), entitled "[Carbon Nanotechnology, Neuronal Interfaces, and Self-perception](#)." He has since published his creation of a potentially life-changing nanomaterial for healing spinal cord injuries (C. Kim, W.K.A. Sikkema, I. Hwang, H. Oh, U.J. Kim, B.H. Lee, J.M. Tour, "Spinal cord fusion with PEG-GNRs (TexasPEG): Neurophysiological recovery in 24 hours in rats," *Surgical Neurology International* 7 [Sept. 13, 2016]). In December, William was [interviewed](#) on CBC Radio's *Quirks and Quarks* with Bob McDonald.



CSCA Student Member William Sikkema

Project Impact

Part of the goal of our Local Chapters Project is to see sustained changes in attitudes over time toward the compatibility of faith and science as measured in short questionnaires given after select CSCA events. Questionnaires filled out in 2016 have shown a modest but steady increase in this regard - although not every event deals explicitly with this matter.

Another intended outcome is to raise awareness of the CSCA. This year we implemented a streamlined method for getting event announcements to local church bulletins, campus ministries, post-secondary institutions, and other public event listings; this dramatically impacted event attendance and was very helpful for promoting our national lecture tour. Additionally, our project was featured in the September/October issue of *Faith Today*, Canada's Christian Magazine. While this has increased awareness of the CSCA in the Christian community, our further aim is that that when science and religion

related stories emerge, journalists will know that there is a group of Canadian Christians who also promote mainstream science.

Other 2016 Developments

CSCA expresses our gratitude to James Peterson, who has now completed his service as CSCA Past President on our Executive Council. Arnold Sikkema is now Past President, and Janet Warren now serves as President of the CSCA. Finally, we welcome Patrick Franklin to the Executive Council as Vice President. Patrick serves as Book Review Editor for *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, and he is Associate Professor of Theology & Ethics at Providence Theological Seminary near Winnipeg, where he is our chapter contact.



CSCA's new Vice President, Patrick Franklin

Looking Ahead

As we begin the second year of our project, we are thinking of ways to increase both member involvement and benefits to our members. One way we have sought to do this is by creating a **CSCA Speakers List** in order to connect CSCA members with groups looking for speakers on science-faith topics - especially our local

chapters! We have also implemented a [section for books](#) relevant to science and faith that are written by CSCA members. Additionally, we are issuing a [call for blog submissions](#) by members for our website. As our website develops, we hope to feature regular, quality contributions by members (including students!) dealing with science and faith.

In other early 2017 developments, the CSCA congratulates Rebecca Dielschneider (Assistant Professor of Biology, Providence University College) of our Winnipeg chapter for winning the [Simon and Sarah Israel's Thesis Prize for her doctoral thesis](#), "Targeting Susceptible Signaling Pathways in Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia." We are also happy to announce the release of [Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science](#) at the end of January, co-authored by Dennis Venema (Professor of Biology, Trinity Western University) and well-known New Testament scholar Scot McKnight.

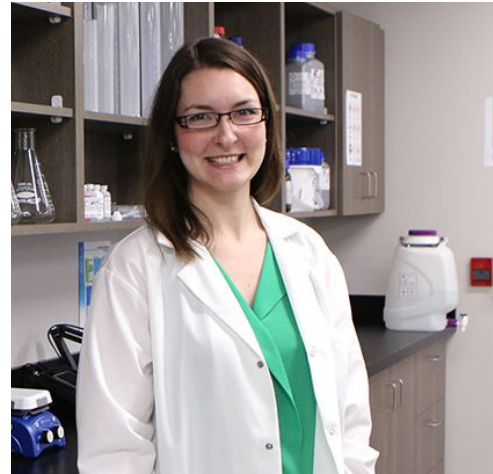
This year's ASA/CSCA annual meeting in Golden, Colorado (July 28-31) will focus on "[Exploring New Heights for Science and Stewardship](#)" (abstract deadline is Feb. 15). Keynote speakers will include former CSCA President James Peterson and Canadian climate-scientist Katharine Hayhoe. We encourage CSCA members to make the trip this year, and continue the strong Canadian engagement with the wider ASA community for which we are known!

2018 CSCA Conference

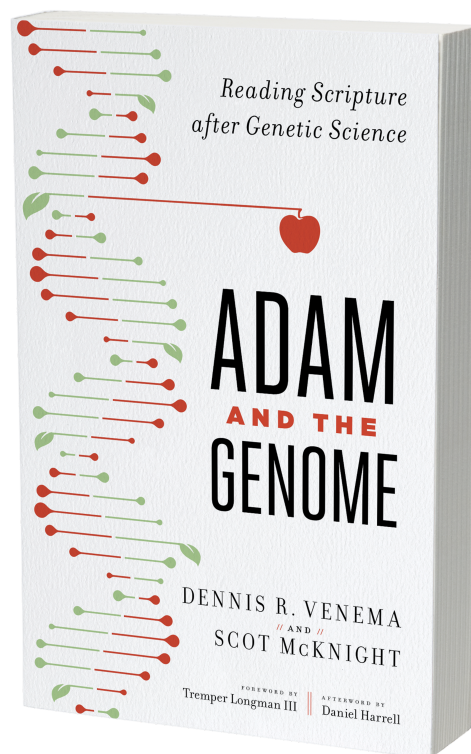
Finally, our project includes plans for our May 11-14 2018 conference at Trinity Western University, which will focus on science and religion in Canada. If you are interested in serving on our planning committee for this conference, please

contact Mark (living near Vancouver is not required).

We are very grateful for the Lord's blessings in the first year of our project, and we look forward to two more years of fruitful service with regard to Christianity and science in Canada. 🍁



CSCA Member Rebecca Dielschneider



Brazos Press, 2017