

## ABOUT CSEE

The Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education supports the moral and spiritual development of young people through offering resources and educational opportunities to elementary, middle, and secondary schools. See more about our work at [www.csee.org](http://www.csee.org)

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## THE TALE OF THE EMPATHIC MOUSE

BY MICHAEL SCHULMAN

Mice with empathy? They've got to be kidding. But researcher Jeffrey Mogil and his colleagues at McGill University in Montreal were serious. In a recent article in *Science* they claimed to have found empathy in mice. Mice that saw another mouse writhing in pain became more sensitive to pain themselves, especially when the mouse they observed was a casemate rather than a stranger. When the observing mice were injected with the same noxious substance as their writhing casemates, their own writhing was markedly increased in comparison to mice that received the painful injection in isolation. The researchers' conclusion: mice perceive and are affected by the pain of other mice.

Now this may not be what we usually mean when we refer to empathy in humans. Did the mice care about their unfortunate

Empathy may be distributed “normally” in the population, meaning, roughly, that most people show a middling amount of it, while some have a great deal of it and others have little or none.... While empathy arises spontaneously in young children, it can definitely be nurtured and encouraged by parents and teachers.

casemates or want to help them? The researchers don't speculate about this. But perceiving and being affected by the pain of others are certainly components of empathy, and the fact that even such “simple” creatures as mice had these reactions indicates

that the roots of empathy are very deep in our animal natures (although the humans who were conducting the study don't seem to have had any empathy for the writhing mice).

When we talk about human empathy we are referring to the miraculous capacity we have to feel other people's feelings, to imagine ourselves in their place and experi-

ence their joys and sorrows. Empathy is one of the three major sources of moral motivation, the others being moral principles and moral affiliations such as good role models and family, religious, and community groups that stand for moral values. Empathy leads to altruism; it induces us to help others—to defend and comfort them, and bring them joy—and to refrain from doing them harm. And when we do harm to someone with whom we empathize, the pain we've inflicted rebounds back to us in the form of guilt.

And, interestingly, empathy doesn't have to be taught. Many children exhibit it spontaneously before they are two. For example, they will get sad if they see their parent sad, and often they'll offer some comfort (“Don't be sad, Mommy. I love you. Here's my blanky”).

Empathy, like many traits, may be distributed “normally” in the population, meaning, roughly, that most people show a middling amount of it, while some have a great deal of it and others have little or none. Parents usually notice these differences in their children, sometimes feeling that a particular child just came into the world with “a good heart.” And they often worry when they find that a child appears to “lack heart” in the sense that he or she doesn't seem to feel for others. Indeed, we consider empathy such an intrinsic part of human nature that we regard it as pathological when people seem to totally lack it and we label them sociopaths (or bad seeds or just plain evil).

But, as the mice study suggests, we aren't the only empathic creatures. While animals can't describe their feelings, many species act as if they feel empathy. Primatologists have reported lots of instances from our closest animal relatives, gorillas and chimpanzees. In an example that received a lot of media attention, a young boy at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago fell into the gorilla pen and was knocked unconscious. In front

of the horrified onlookers, a female gorilla named Binty approached the boy, then bent down and picked him up—and then cradled him in her lap. She then carried him to the caretaker’s door and gently put him down in front of it. The whole extraordinary episode was caught on videotape.

Ask a dog lover if her dog has empathy and you’re likely to hear an emphatic yes. Stories of dogs comforting and rescuing people and other animals, including cats, abound. Dolphins, too, have been observed aiding other dolphins, and for centuries sailors have reported dolphins saving them from drowning or shark attacks.

Even the lowly rat seems to care about others. Psychologists have found that hungry rats will give up pressing

Fostering empathy in children encourages them to treat others kindly for the best of reasons—not just to please some authority, or to gain some end or fulfill some principal—but simply because it feels good. That it really does feel good is supported by a recent study.

a lever for food if the lever press also produces a painful electric shock for another rat visible in an adjacent cage. Other researchers found that rats would press a lever when the only reward was alleviation of another rat’s suffering. The other

rat was hoisted in what, given its squeals, was obviously an uncomfortable and scary position. Pressing the lever lowered the rat to the ground.

While we don’t know if the rats pressed the lever because they cared about the pain of their fellow rats or because they found their squealing and writhing annoying or frightening, our fellow humans are able to tell us about their empathic feelings. A powerful instance of empathy occurred in the recent tragic shooting of a teenage girl in a Colorado high school. A male student, 16-year-old Cassidy Grigg, described what happened. He said that the man walked into the classroom, fired

a shot at the floor, and ordered the students to line up. He then told some of the youngsters, including Cassidy, to leave; others, all girls, were told to stay. “You could tell that he wanted the females....I told him, ‘I don’t want to leave.’ He told me that if I didn’t go then he would pretty much kill me. I noticed that he wanted to keep the females in the class. That’s the main reason why I didn’t want to go, because I’m sure the girls would have felt more support if there would have been some males in the class with them.” Cassidy asked to stay in the room with this dangerous man because he felt for the girls. This was certainly a young man with heart.

While empathy arises spontaneously in young children, it can definitely be nurtured and encouraged by parents and teachers. We cultivate a child’s capacity for empathy when we ask, “How would you feel if someone did that to you?” or “Remember how you felt when you were treated that way?” Here are some things parents and teachers can do to foster empathy. They all involve conversation about feelings:

- Draw the child’s attention to people’s feelings. Ask him to imagine how he would feel in their place.
- Talk about the impact of her actions on the feelings of others, including you.
- Explain why people feel the way they do and that sometimes their feelings are similar to hers and sometimes they are different.
- Encourage him to discover what actions he can take that would show more consideration of others’ feelings and make them feel good.
- Let her know that you expect her to be considerate of people’s feelings, that it is important to you.
- Show him that you care about his feelings and want to understand them.
- Describe for her your own empathic feelings toward others.
- Help him resist the influence of those who discourage or ridicule his empathic feelings, and encourage him to consider a person’s capacity for empathy

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**THE LANGUAGE OF GOD** *Francis S. Collins*

NEW YORK: FREE PRESS, 2006

**EVOLUTION AND CHRISTIAN FAITH** *Joan Roughgarden*

WASHINGTON, D.C.: ISLAND PRESS, 2006

BY RICHARD BARBIERI

Ever since John Ruskin was driven to madness by the tapping of the geologists' hammers at the end of each verse of Scripture he read, the conflict between religion and science has raged intractably. Despite Etienne Gilson's claims that Aquinas reconciled reason and revelation, the reason of science has seemed dangerous to the tenets of faith, and the tenets of faith either irrelevant or ridiculous to the discoveries of science.

If anything, the situation today is worse than ever, as more and more scientists confidently assert their capacity to explain all that is, without recourse to, and often in outright opposition to, the claim of faith to any foothold in the human mind.

Yet as always, an extreme leads to a resurgence of its opposite. Among a number of recent books, Joan Roughgarden's *Evolution and Christian Faith: Reflections of an Evolutionary Biologist* and Francis Collins's *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* sound a note of reconciliation from the scientific side of the divide, taking the extreme materialism of their colleagues to task.

Both authors have impeccable scientific credentials. Roughgarden is a biological sciences professor at Stanford and director of a genetics laboratory, while Collins led the Human Genome Project to its successful conclusion in 2000. They set out their credos in similar terms, but in words that also suggest their differing approaches. Roughgarden: "what evolutionary biologists are finding through their research and thinking actually promotes a Christian view of nature and of our human place in it." Collins: "belief in God can be an entirely rational choice and...the principles of faith are, in fact, complementary with the principles of science."

Roughgarden's is a straightforward primer, explaining the fundamental concepts of evolutionary biology, from the single tree of life to the process of mutation, then exploring the specific claims of conflict between these principles and the tenets of religion, in order to dispel any apparent contradictions. Rejecting the concept of intelligent design as "a non-starter as science, and, more important...not helpful to Christianity," she challenges the "selfish gene" view of evolution as equally extreme, and points to newer research that finds far more cooperation in nature than had previously been noted. Her analysis of the various positions coming from Roman Catholic spokesmen in recent years would make her book particularly useful in that school context. Her peroration lifts us into the realm of prayer, as she examines the words of Genesis in the light of biology, and asserts that "for the life cycle of many animals to go around, the breath of God must continue to blow across the waters."

Collins's book is more personal and more ambitious. Describing his own journey "from atheism to belief," in which C. S. Lewis was his chief guide, he also takes us back beyond biology to the Big Bang, which he argues "cries out for a divine explanation," as does the fact that the existence of this universe "rests on a knife edge of improbability," given the number of conditions

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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BY PAUL G. GEISE

At our lower school closing in late May, I challenged this year's fifth graders moving on to the middle school with a specific question: "What difference will you be making in the years to come?" The question is important to each of us and certainly worth introducing to the adolescent mind. I maintain that this is a substantial measure of a human life—the manner in which you and I make a difference.

The psalmist says, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Sometimes life's lessons thrust themselves upon us. Too often loved ones pass on in unexpected ways and at unexpected times.

My father died during my second week of kindergarten, but it was not until age eight or nine that I began to understand his death in the larger context of my life. When I was ready to understand, those moments of awareness began to focus me on the intersections my life would pass through, and they awakened in me the difference—the impact—a human life has the potential to offer others. I remember, years later, wishing that I had had the opportunity to say "I love you" one more time to my dad, to say good-bye, and to say how much I was going to miss him. This was my inner conversation—my opportunity to better understand myself and become more fully human. Meeting with death, in my view, helps make us more fully human. We strive, and yearn, and stretch to become more fully human.

The stage manager in Oscar Wilde's *Our Town* opens Act 3 with some personal reflections from a New Hampshire hilltop beside a collection of graves. "We all know that something is eternal...everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal and that something has to do with human beings." This summer I traveled to a similar small town in New Hampshire for a memorial service, a celebration of the life of a great man as part of a wonderful family. Those who were closest to him were blessed with the opportunity to say thank you, and good-bye, and I love you. They could express everything that needed to be expressed, and

bring closure to those holes in their spirits that needed healing. They had the opportunity to cast aside those nagging issues that, when confronted with their own mortalities, were best buried to decompose and be re-worked into the soil. His loved ones were ready; he was ready. And a meaningful and substantial life—like every life that has a beginning and an end—became a cause for celebration.

All living things pass away; you and I have our beginnings and will have our endings in time. During the interim, we have opportunities to impact eternity, to strive toward becoming more fully human. The smiles and hugs, the tears and trials, labors and leisures of school children inspire me and energize me each day. Their strong minds and caring hearts nourish my spirit, and I, in turn strive to make a difference in their promising young lives. In my youth, I had not planned to be an educator. Yet here I am, and so fortunate to have followed this path. Yes indeed, education is a distinctly human enterprise, an opportunity to influence eternity with lives touching lives.

What we all have in common is our humanity, our good minds and our abundant hearts. Education is that enterprise in which we cultivate both, and thereby advance our civilization into the future. Rigorous intellectual pursuits and disciplined habits of mind are necessary for elevating leaders of tomorrow. But they only exercise a portion of our humanity. Our lasting mark is made by how each of us will elevate others. So what difference will you be making in the years to come?

On the far side of my yard is a vibrant umbrella pine that was planted in honor and memory of my mother who passed away in 2002. It is a lovely specimen, providing shade in just the right measure: a bit of protection from the elements, a nourishing aroma, and an understated beauty in the yard. The tree gives me pleasant memories of my mom; many thoughts of the torturous and tumultuous moments of her later life have been

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CULTIVATING DIFFERENCE

I first met Bernie when I was ten years old, but I just called him the rabbi. Initially, our paths rarely crossed. I would occasionally see him walking to synagogue on Saturday, or working in his yard on a Sunday afternoon. He was a good friend of my parents, and he and my father, who also had a garden, would often exchange tips on which vegetables to plant, the merits of peat moss versus hay, and the mysteries of manure. The rabbi was Jewish and I was Christian. He did different things on the weekend, he had different rituals, and he often spoke a different language. These were some of the facts of his difference. I noticed them and filed them away. But thankfully, my parents taught me how to respond to difference. They taught me that sameness brings stagnation, but difference brings depth to life.

So when I was twelve I didn't say no when the rabbi offered me my first job. Each week I would cross the street to the rabbi's house. He would be waiting for me on the other side, standing near the garden. My job was to help prepare it at the beginning of the season, weed and tend it during the summer, and harvest and turn it over in the fall. It wasn't glamorous and it wasn't easy. I received my first real blisters at this job. There were other things I would have rather been doing on a Sunday afternoon than slinging cow manure into the soil. Yet once a week I talked with the rabbi about all sorts of things. In between picking zucchini and green beans, he told me about his life, his time spent in a concentration camp, how he met his wife, his joy at being a father, and then a grandfather, and his belief in God. Because of his difference he challenged me to think deeply about things. And because I wanted to know him in his difference, I learned that in so many ways we were the same.

And when I was a senior in high school, I didn't refuse when the rabbi offered me a scholarship to take some courses which he was teaching at the university. And when I was in college, I didn't hesitate to take classes in philosophy and religion. The rabbi was always there to support me. He paid for most of my school books in college. And when I was thinking about what I wanted

to do with my life, I remembered my old teacher and admired him in his happiness, his faith, and his intellectual intensity. I visited him in his retirement, talked with him before getting married, and updated him on the birth of my first child. I realized that he was one of my heroes, and that I wanted to follow his example. And so I didn't hesitate to enter divinity school and become a school chaplain. I am glad that I didn't let the fear of difference prevent us from learning from one another. I think my life would have taken a different turn if I hadn't crossed the street at the age of twelve to cultivate the rabbi's garden with him.

We are all too aware that many people die each day because they "dig in their heels" over difference. What matters most is how we respond. We have many challenges ahead: the challenge to find space and food to support our massive global population, the challenge to support those countries which are being crushed by their own economic or political instability or genocide or war, the task of discerning an appropriate environmental ethic to govern our often abusive use of the earth's natural resources, the daunting challenge to use and expand our technological advancements without letting them master us in the process, and the quest to maintain our centeredness and spirituality in the face of a post-Enlightenment intellectualism and twentieth-century nihilism which often deny their existence and relevance.

We can take the same approach [as the rabbi and I did] in our schools. Teachers, students, and staff all have a job tending the garden of the school. We hope that when harvest time comes at the end of the year, at graduation, and most importantly at the end of our lives, that we too will bear good fruit.

I have faith in the kaleidoscopic difference of the human community, in its power to transform the world. I had a little taste of that when I knelt in the dirt with my friend. The rabbi and I were cultivating more than vegetables. We were really cultivating difference, celebrating that

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## CSEE CONFERENCE BRIEFS

CSEE is pleased to announce an addition to the conference schedule (see “Programs & Services” on p. 10). “Emerging Best Practices: A Character Development Symposium” will be held at Kinkaid School in Houston, Texas, on Thursday and Friday, June 7-8, 2007. Featured speakers will include Peter Bachmann, Elizabeth Corrie, Ph.D., and David Streight.

Former CRIS Executive Director Daniel Heishman has engaged Sharon Deloz Parks to be guest lecturer at CSEE’s “Summer Ethics Institute for Adults” in July 2007 on Whidbey Island in Washington State’s Puget Sound. Parks is the author of *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World* and *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment*, and co-author of *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* and *Can Ethics Be Taught: Perspectives, Challenges, and Approaches at the Harvard Business School*. ❖

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## (LIFE LESSONS FROM SCHOOL FROM P. 4)

decomposed and reworked into the soil, allowing those energies to be better used for the health of new roots and shoots. The tree was a gift from Pine Point, and I think of the school’s generosity and my mother’s best spirits each time I wander over to the space. “No matter what might be happening in the world,” she would say, “gardens are for the living. You toil and then look back to see the difference and new life you have made to that little patch of earth.” I love my gardens, in part, for that reason. As with gardens, dying is for the living, providing opportunities to grow and to learn from those who made a difference in our lives. We are nourished to lead more meaningful lives. ❖

*Paul G. Geise is head of school at Pine Point School in Stonington, Connecticut.*

## (SPIRITUAL DIRECTIONS FROM P. 5)

difference, sharing our lives, planting some seeds, and watching them grow. We cared for that small piece of land together. We cared for it together because we were open to what the other had to offer. We planted the seeds and waited and hoped that what we planted and tended would bear good fruit.

We can take the same approach in our schools. Our social, racial, sexual, and religious differences add to the variety of our communities. The differences enable us to learn from one another and grow. Teachers, students, and staff all have a job in tending the garden of the school. We hope that when harvest time comes at the end of the year, at graduation, and most importantly at the end of our lives, that we too will bear good fruit.

What is true locally rings true globally. The salvation of the human community lies in our ability to learn from one another, to recognize our differences and respond to them in peace. Shoring up the defenses of a fundamentalist perspective in the face of modernity will not make us stronger or safer in the end. It certainly won’t allow us to truly hear each other in our profound difference, let alone work together in the shared soil of humanity. We need to begin with our own plots of land. Voltaire’s wisdom in *Candide* rings true: “tend your garden.” The transformation of global community must begin with the transformation of our personal community. Will we allow the weeds to grow, or will we choose to do the hard work together and bring forth abundance? What we do, we do together. The Sufi poet Rumi said, “You think because you understand one, you must also understand two, because one and one make two. But you must also understand *and*.” The power of transformation lies in the connection.

I heard last year that my old friend the rabbi had died. I thought about those summers shared in the dirt, and I look forward to the day when I can cross the street and see him again in the garden on the other side. ❖

*Michael E. C. Spencer is chaplain, head of the Humanities Department, and head coach for girls varsity crew at the Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut. He is an ordained Episcopal priest.*

# RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS & OBSERVANCES

FEBRUARY 2007

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

See additional details at [www.csee.org](http://www.csee.org)



## February 2 Candlemas (Christianity)

Under Mosaic law, after giving birth to Jesus, Mary was obligated to go to the temple with an offering and have the priest pray for her, so that she would be ritually cleansed. This event thus marked the first solemn “presentation of Jesus” in the temple. Since the fourth century, when Jesus’ birth was set at December 25, this “presentation day” and “feast of the purification of Mary” has been set on February 2. In Catholic tradition, beeswax candles were blessed on this day and then distributed to the clergy and the laity, after which there was a procession. Such processions with candles take place even today, with the priest leading, stopping occasionally to chant “the light of Christ,” which is then intoned by the people.

## February 4 Four Chaplains Sunday (Interfaith)

In January and February of 1943, the *USAT Dorchester* was transporting troops to European battlefields with over 900 soldiers aboard when the ship was hit by a torpedo off the coast of Greenland. The 230 soldiers who survived the icy ocean waters recounted how the ship’s four chaplains—a Catholic priest, two Protestant ministers, and a Jewish rabbi—helped the men into their life jackets and onto the lifeboats. When life jackets ran out, the four, who had been friends since chaplaincy school, took off their own jackets and gave them to others. From accounts, the four were last seen with their arms linked and praying aloud as the *Dorchester* sank, killing over 600 soldiers. The four chaplains are remembered today with a number of interfaith services.

## February 8 Nirvana Day (Buddhism)

This day commemorates the day of the Buddha’s death, when he achieved Nirvana. Nirvana is reached at that

point when we put an end to all of our wanting, and thus to all the suffering that craving brings about in us. Buddhists who observe Nirvana Day often do so by examining their lives, in order to make those changes needed to help them achieve the perfect peace that Nirvana is supposed to bring. Observances sometimes take place in monasteries, where people read the *Paranibbana Sutta*, one of the Buddhist texts that describe the Buddha’s final days.

## February 14 St. Valentine’s Day (Christianity)

This is celebrated in the West through the exchange of cards and gifts between romantic friends and spouses. The day commemorates the death of Saint Valentine, who, according to tradition, was martyred c. 270 CE. Legend holds that Valentine sent a note to a young girl with whom he had fallen in love, signing the note “From your Valentine.” Pope Gelasius assigned February 14 as Saint Valentine’s Day c. 498 CE.

## February 16 Maha Shivaratri (Hinduism)

Unlike most Hindu festivals, Maha Shivaratri is celebrated at night. From sundown to sunrise the following day, Hindus fast and pray to Lord Shiva. There are ceremonies throughout the night; the celebration concludes with a large festive meal.

## February 18 Chinese New Year (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism)

This is a 15-day celebration with each day having special significance. For example, on the first day, many people abstain from meat and the day is recognized as the time to welcome the gods of heaven and earth. Sons-in-law pay respect to their spouses’ parents on the third and fourth days. On the fifth day, people remain

in the home to welcome the god of wealth, while during the sixth through the tenth days relatives and friends are visited. The fifteenth day ends with the Lantern Festival. Traditionally, trays of oranges, tangerines, and candy, as well as vases of flowers, are displayed.

## February 18

### Transfiguration Sunday (Christian)

Celebrated the last Sunday before the beginning of Lent, Transfiguration Sunday recalls the day that Jesus was “transfigured” on the mountain. His appearance became dazzling, and he was joined by both Moses and Elijah. The disciples who were with him saw him in this dazzling glory, and they heard a voice from heaven that said, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.”

## February 18

### Cheesefare Sunday (Orthodox Christian)

Cheesefare Sunday might also be called the “Sunday of Our Expulsion from Paradise.” On this day, Orthodox Christians commemorate the expulsion from Paradise of Adam and Eve, since if Adam and Eve had not been expelled from Paradise there would be no Lent.

## February 19

### Clean Monday (Orthodox Christianity)

For Orthodox Christians, Lent begins on Clean Monday, the seventh Monday before Easter, using the Eastern Church’s date for Easter. Lent recalls Jesus’ 40-day withdrawal into the wilderness.

## February 20

### Shrove Tuesday (Christian)

In Old English, the word “shrove” referred to giving advice. Shrove Tuesday is the last day before the beginning of Lent; Christians examine their consciences, confess their sins, and receive advice on mending their ways during the time of purification that Lent represents. The French term *Mardi Gras*, which means Fat Tuesday, came from the custom French homemakers had of using up all the fats they had around for cooking, since the food during Lent’s time of “fast and abstinence” would entail leaner cuisine. Often, what was cooked ended up being a pancake of sorts—thus the custom still observed in some parts of the West of eating pancakes, or of having pancake races on the day before

Lent. In many places it is a time for a final “celebration” before the 40 days of purification that precede Easter.

## February 21

### Ash Wednesday (Christianity)

In the Western church, Lent commences with Ash Wednesday. Many Christians attend church, where, during the liturgy, their foreheads are marked with ashes in the form of the cross, as the priest says, “Remember that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.” The ashes used are made from burning remains of palms blessed on Palm Sunday of the previous year. (In Orthodox Christianity, Lent begins the seventh Monday before Easter.)

## February 25

### Feast of the Sunday of Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian)

The Feast of the Sunday of Orthodoxy was instituted in 843 CE to celebrate the restoration of the icons. The Iconoclastic Controversy began in 726 during the reign of Leo the Isaurian and raged for over a century. In 787 CE, the Seventh Ecumenical Synod in Nicea proclaimed the restoration of the icons, and attempted to put an end to the iconoclasm which had started in 726, during the reign of Leo the Isaurian. But iconoclasm was revived, and so another synod took place in Constantinople in 842, and this synod confirmed the Seventh Ecumenical Synod. In time, the meaning of the Feast of the Sunday of Orthodoxy came to be extended in two directions: backwards in time to a defense of the Orthodox doctrine of the two natures, the human and the divine, of Christ, and forwards to a defense, in the context of the Hesychast Controversy of the fourteenth century, of the Orthodox doctrine of divinization (theosis).

## February 26-March 1

### Intercalary Days (Baha’i)

The Intercalary Days, or “Days of Ha,” occur between the eighteenth and nineteenth months of the Baha’i calendar (February 26 to March 1 inclusive), and end one day before the Baha’i fast begins. There are four Intercalary Days in ordinary years and five in leap years. These are days of preparation for the fast—days of hospitality, charity, ministering to the poor and sick, the giving of presents, and so on. ❁

**(FEATURE ARTICLE  
FROM P. 2)**

when selecting friends.

- Point out examples of those who are empathic and those who are not, and communicate your admiration for the kindhearted people.
- Encourage empathy toward others who seem, on the surface, to be very different from the child, such as people from other cultures or racial heritages, or with different sexual orientations.
- Stress the good feelings that come from caring about other people.

Fostering empathy in children encourages them to treat others kindly for the best of reasons—not just to please you or some authority, or to gain some end or fulfill some principle—but simply because it feels good. That it really does feel good is supported by a recent study, reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, that found that when people engaged in kind acts (donating money) the parts of the brain that lit up on MRIs were the mesolimbic “reward” pathway (which is the same pathway that is activated by “food, sex, drugs, and money”) and those parts of the orbitofrontal cortex that play a role in parental bonding and other social attachments. The researchers suggest that they may have found the neurological roots of the “warm glow” that accompanies our experience of the “joy of giving.” ✨

*Michael Schulman, Ph.D., is the author of Bringing Up a Moral Child: A New Approach for Teaching Your Child to Be Kind, Just, and Responsible (Doubleday Books, 1994), and The Passionate Mind: Bringing Up an Intelligent and Creative Child (Free Press, 1991), which was a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection. Readers are referred to his earlier articles in the February and March 2006 issues of Connections. He will present a two-day workshop on Activities for Moral Growth for CSEE schools in April.*

**(LITERATURE IN REVIEW  
FROM P. 4)**

that, had they been only minutely different, would have made life, or even stable matter, impossible. These arguments, however, are only to clear the way for the possibility of faith, not to base faith on today’s scientific knowledge, for as he asserts, “Faith that places God in the gaps of current understanding about the natural world may be headed for crisis if advances in science subsequently fill those gaps.”

Through the rest of the book, Collins explores not two cultures, but five: atheism, agnosticism, creationism, intelligent design, and what he calls “BioLogos: Science and Faith in Harmony.” Well-read in both the Book of Nature and the books of religion’s champions and detractors, his is a work for deeper exploration by those whose faith, like Anselm’s, seeks understanding. ✨

*Richard Barbieri, CSEE’s veteran book reviewer, is Interim Head of School at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda, Maryland.*

**LAST CALL: 2006-07 COMMUNITY  
SERVICE AWARDS APPLICATION  
DEADLINE FEBRUARY 25**

The 2006-07 Community Service Awards will recognize schools that have done an exemplary job integrating service with academic work. Schools will be asked to describe how this integration takes place, how service projects fit with the needs of the larger community, and how student reflection on their service is facilitated.

Applications are requested from elementary, middle, and high schools. Results will be announced in the May issue of *Connections*. For further details and application materials, visit the CSEE Web site at [www.csee.org/events/ServAwdApp.pdf](http://www.csee.org/events/ServAwdApp.pdf). ✨

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### APRIL 2007

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### MAY 2007

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### JUNE 2007

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## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

### Chaplains

(A conference to enrich and renew those working as chaplains and spiritual directors in schools; co-sponsored by CSEE and National Association of Episcopal Schools. Note: this event is not for Episcopal chaplains only; it is designed for a wide audience of those working as chaplains in schools.)

With Rev. Robert Thompson, Phillips Exeter Academy  
Austin, Texas  
February 9-11, 2007

### Advisors and Advisory Systems

With Barb Dixon Ackerman and LouAnne Smith  
Greenhill School  
Addison (Dallas), Texas  
March 30-31, 2007

### Resources for Spiritual Development

(For chaplains, religion teachers, spiritual directors, all grades)

With Thomas Coburn, Ph.D., and colleagues at  
Naropa Institute  
Boulder, Colorado  
April 16-17, 2007

### Community Service/Service Learning

With Mary Pashley and Ann Saylor  
Washington, D.C.  
April 21-22, 2007

### How We Become Moral, and Activities for Moral Growth

(For school staff, grades K-12)

With Michael Schulman, Ph.D.  
The Garrison Institute, New York, NY  
April 21-22, 2007

### 2007 Institute on Teaching the World's Religions

(For teachers of world religions and history.)

San Francisco, California  
With Jeffrey Brodd, Ph.D., Martin VerHoeven, Ph.D.,  
Linda Hess, Ph.D.  
June 23-28, 2007

### Summer Ethics Institute for Adults

(For school administrators, trustees, and staff: opportunity to discuss significant pieces of literature and to discuss ethical cases that have faced independent schools—all in a beautiful and relaxed setting) With Daniel Heischman and Sharon Daloz Parks  
Whidbey Island, Washington, in the Puget Sound  
July 14-20, 2007 ☸

## SUMMER OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS

Have students looking for a growth experience this summer? Over the years, CSEE schools have sent rising seniors to the Youth Theological Initiative for a three-week ecumenical experience. Later comments have never included anything but the highest praise.

YTI's overall goal is fostering theological reflection among adolescents. Through YTI's Summer Academy, under the guidance of a staff largely from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, students learn to become "public theologians," bringing faith to action in the tradition of Dorothy Day, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bernice Johnson Reagon.

Participants engage in intellectually challenging explorations of Christian theological traditions and serve the city of Atlanta through collaboration with local service agencies. Past academies have included creative and provocative theological leaders such as Robert Franklin, Luke Timothy Johnson, Eboo Patel, Emily Saliers, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Although YTI's focus is intentionally and ecumenically Christian, students from all faiths are invited to participate. The cost for the Summer Academy is \$500, which covers room, board, books, and travel around Atlanta. Students are responsible for their own travel to and from Atlanta. Some scholarship assistance is available.

Teachers or administrators who wish more information for their students may find it at <http://www.candler.emory.edu/YTI>, or at 404.712.9160. ☸

## DECREASING HARASSMENT TO IMPROVE MORAL CLIMATE

This past fall researchers at Harris Interactive published the results of a large-scale study on harassment and bullying in middle and high schools. Carried out during the 2005-06 school year, the study involved a national sample of 3,450 students (ages 13-18) and over a thousand teachers.

Despite our increased sensitivity as a culture in the past few decades, the unfortunate results tell us that half of the teachers in this study considered bullying and harassment to be not just a problem, but a serious problem in their schools. (The numbers were lower in private schools, but they were still numbers, and still significant.)

Over 60 per cent of students reported experiencing either verbal or physical harassment at school last year because of their physical appearance, race/ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender expression. (That number jumps to 90 per cent for students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.) One-third of the teens reported that their peers at school are frequently harassed because they are perceived to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Significant in the study was the link between the existence of school anti-harassment policies—better said, not their “existence,” but that such policies were “known”—and the level of harassment. The students from schools with such policies reported less harassment, fewer negative remarks, and feeling safer at school. Moreover, students whose schools had such policies tended to skip class less often because of feeling unsafe.

Two aspects of research like this are especially cause for sadness. The first is the overt fact of the continual existence of cruelty to those who share the school halls with us. We are not doing enough to establish home and school climates where harassment is less likely to appear. The second entails the mention of students in schools with harassment policies skipping class less often because of not feeling safe.

Those of us (a diminishing number, we hope) who discount harassment, as either harmless or character-building, cannot deny the established link between academic performance and a learning environment that is perceived to be safe. Even if our students are in the classroom, what level of concentration can they devote to academics if they are worried about what might happen on the way home, or in the dorm that evening? Outside the classroom, how much homework energy is wasted worrying about peer relationships? How much creative energy is sapped away by worry? How much energy do the fearful have to devote to demonstrating respect and responsibility, or kindness and compassion?

Steps can be taken to diminish the level of harassment at school, and to increase the level of safety. Having a policy is the first step. Reviewing, possibly revising, a policy already in place is a second. Announcing the policy, publicizing it, discussing it at school—and with parents to the extent possible—is a third. Upholding the policy is an important fourth. Beyond these steps, there is great benefit in having adults and students review the school’s general climate, including a look at the extent to which, and the ways in which, adults at school model positive peer relationships for a student body that is constantly observing. Such reviews always include a positive attitude toward the issue: not “what’s going wrong?” but “how can we be better?”

These steps toward safety and respect are also, of course, part and parcel to key components of a good character education program at school. Indeed, not engaging in processes like these from time to time could be a significant impediment to a climate that nurtures the development of ethical leaders.

Finally, let us pay special attention to include sexual orientation and gender identity issues in our policies. Students from schools whose policies do not refer to such issues report a markedly higher rate of serious harassment problems (44 per cent versus 33 per cent). ❁

David Streight