

Grace Covenant Church Community Forum IV: *The Religious Life of Charles Darwin*

Grace Covenant Church's fourth Community Forum on Sunday afternoon, June 8, 2008, viewed and discussed the documentary film *Paradise Lost: The Religious Life of Charles Darwin*. Northeast State biology professor David Wollert, originator of the film, was present to lead the discussion following the viewing.

Premiered at Northeast State in June 2007, the film was shown at last year's Tennessee Science Teachers Association conference in Nashville. It was named a 2007 "Editor's Pick" by *Library Journal*, the official journal of the American Library Association—an honor usually reserved for books

According to Wollert, "The film has been very well received. Charles Darwin is a fascinating, but often misrepresented figure in history. I suspect few people know that he once trained for the ministry." The cross-disciplinary film traces Darwin's personal and professional life as it documents his transition from theism, to deism, to agnosticism. "Certainly, as a professor of biology I would consider myself an evolutionist. But I am very comfortable integrating modern science with my religious faith."

In February of 2008 the Clergy Letter Project selected the film as a premier resource for its annual Evolution Weekend when congregations across the country host special events designed to increase public awareness and understanding of the positive relationship between science and religion.

Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, David Wollert received a B.A. in biology from the University of Louisville. Following completion of a M.S. in cellular and molecular biology at the University of Tennessee, he worked in the Health Sciences Division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory where he performed human health risk assessments associated with exposures to environmental waste at several DOE sites. A strong interest in education led him back into teaching and a faculty position at Black Hawk College in Moline, IL. He returned to East Tennessee and faculty positions at Northeast State University in 2000 and Chattanooga State University in 2008.

Grace Covenant is appreciative of David Wollert's efforts to promote civility in the dialogue of science and religion and was particularly pleased with the open and enthusiastic reception our community extended to the Wollert family on their visit with us in June.



