

# Science Week in Parishes 2019

## An outreach of Science Week at The Cathedral

*In an increasingly global and secular scientific culture, saturated with technology and the market, the science–faith conversation is at the cutting edge of Christian engagement.*

## Module #3: The Moon to Mars

### Hairdressers, students, science and God

Marion, an older member of the 8 am congregation at St Paul’s Cathedral recounts the story of chatting to her hairdresser about attending church. “God! I don’t believe any of that,” the young hairdresser exclaimed. “There is no evidence for God.” Marion felt awful and lost for words; she wanted to say something but could

*“I believe in science, so I couldn’t be religious.”*

*Years at church had not equipped Marion or David for such moments.*

think of nothing to say.

Meanwhile, David, a science student who is keen to share his Christian faith, is faced with the same predicament when his friends typically respond, “I believe in science so I couldn’t be religious.”

Despite their good intentions, years at church had not equipped Marion or David for such moments.

### Science Week in Parishes

Marion and David’s stories locate the science–faith conversation in everyday places. The stories also show the practical importance of introducing as many people as possible to this conversation.

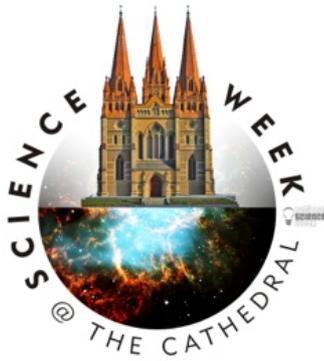
The material on the following pages is one of a number of ‘modules’ designed to promote helpful conversation in parishes about science and Christian faith.

- The modules are easy to use, designed for a minister or lay person to coordinate.
- We want this module to help people become more confident in answering your own questions about the science–faith conversation.
- The modules will help people be ready for moments such as Marion and David faced.

### Some ideas ...

- Do you have a lay person in your parish who could lead a small group using modules such as this one?
- Do you have a scientist in your congregation? Why not invite them to speak about their work and their faith?
- Would you like a visiting preacher or speaker or discussion facilitator? We can help.

**Science Week in Parishes** is an outreach of Science Week at the Cathedral, run every year around National Science Week in August. It offers ways for your parish to open this important conversation through activities at the Cathedral and by organising events, groups or speakers in the parish. **Further details:** Stephen Ames ([sames@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:sames@unimelb.edu.au)), Chris Mulherin ([ChrisMulherin@ISCAST.org](mailto:ChrisMulherin@ISCAST.org)), John Pilbrow ([jpilbrow@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jpilbrow@bigpond.net.au)).



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### The Moon to Mars



This year we celebrate fifty years since July 21<sup>st</sup> 1969 when Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon for the first time. Now, Aldrin is looking beyond the moon. He says “human migration to Mars must be next frontier for space travel.” Aldrin believes that “permanent migration to the red planet is within reach for humans alive now, but it starts with a unified next step in space.” He advocates returning to the moon as a stepping stone to going to Mars... and beyond!

Above: The 1969 Apollo 11 crew: Neil Armstrong, Mike Collins, and Buzz Aldrin (NASA)

#### *Aldrin’s reasons for urging going to Mars.*

“As matter of orbital mechanics, missions from Earth to Mars for migration are complex. That said, human nature – and potentially the ultimate survival of our species – demands humanity’s continued outward reach into the universe. Call it curiosity or calculation, strategic planning or destiny. Put simply: We explore, or we expire. That is why we must get on with it.”

Aldrin’s article can be found in the *Australian Financial Review*, May 2, 2019 at:

<http://bit.ly/AldrinMars>



#### *National Science Week 2019 Looking Ahead*

“Space programs are likely to evolve in the period from 2020 onwards, when new propulsion systems will make interplanetary travel more commonplace, and when we contemplate the colonisation of other planets. NASA plans to start building a Moon-orbiting space station called the Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway in 2020 for launch in 2022. This outpost will be a waypoint for future missions and more distant destinations.”

(From the National Science Week Resource Book of Ideas which can be found here: <http://bit.ly/32mM3l4>)

## *Physicist Stephen Hawking: We must go to other worlds*

In a 2010 interview with BigThink (at: <http://bit.ly/BigThinkHawking>) physicist Stephen Hawking said, "I believe that the long-term future of the human race must be in space. ... It will be difficult enough to avoid disaster on planet Earth in the next hundred years let alone the next thousand, or million. The human race shouldn't have all its eggs in one basket, or on one planet. Let's hope we can avoid dropping the basket until we have spread the load."

Hawking reiterated that sentiment more recently as well. For example, at a conference in Norway in June 2017, he said, "We are running out of space, and the only places to go to are other worlds. It is time to explore other solar systems. Spreading out may be the only thing that saves us from ourselves. I am convinced that humans need to leave Earth." (See here: <http://bit.ly/SpaceHawking>)

## *Faith–science connections*

Human beings have the knowledge and power to inhabit the Moon and Mars. One question faith asks is whether this exploration and migration to other planets is part of God's purpose for humankind. Here are some reasons why it might be:

- God has given extraordinary powers to humankind along with the freedom to use them responsibly (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8).
- The 'terrestrial' and 'celestial' realms are one, so we are not confined to planet Earth.
- God's purpose is to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ (Ephesians 3:11-12, 1:9-10).

However, there are also reasons to be cautious about such grand plans. We need to beware of idolatry – of worshipping the work of our own hands – as Psalm 115 warns. Given the above quotes from sources promoting this exploration, faith asks other questions

## *Question for discussion*

- The ultimate survival of our species is said to be dependent on our continued outreach into the universe? Check: will the human species expire if we don't explore?
- Who is this 'we' that is doing all this and will benefit? Everyone or a very select group?
- When Hawking speaks about it being the only thing that will save us from ourselves, what do you think he means? Is he correct?
- Can anyone be sure that we won't simply transport all our problems to another place? For example, will the proposed 'colonisation' of other planets be like the colonialism we have known on planet Earth?
- Is there a change of mind and hearts needed first – for those going to the Moon and Mars, and for us whom they inevitably represent?
- There are billions of people on planet earth that already suffer and die because we don't explore alternatives to the way we currently live on planet Earth. Should the solution of these problems 'at home' be a requirement for any legitimate interplanetary exploration?

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The latest details about Science Week at in Parishes and at St Paul's Cathedral will be posted on the Cathedral website here: <https://cathedral.org.au/resources/science-week/>