



Churches across England are being invited to apply for grants of up to £10,000 to fund innovative projects fostering a better understanding between science and faith.



Large or small-scale project proposals are being invited from Christian churches in all areas of the country for Scientists in Congregations, a scheme aimed at inspiring discussion and learning about the relationship between faith and science.

Projects will build on existing links between church leaders and science specialists in their congregations. The science professionals can have an expertise in areas from physics, chemistry and biology to medicine, psychology and social scientific approaches to questions of human nature, culture and theology.

The ecumenical programme is open to all mainstream Christian churches - including the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Baptist and Roman Catholic Churches, the United Reformed Church and Evangelical Alliance congregations.

Canon Professor David Wilkinson, Professor of Theology at Durham University and co-director of the Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science programme, said: "I've seen in my own experience the opportunities that flow out of collaboration between church leaders and scientists within their own congregation.

"This awards scheme is an encouragement to use the gifts and experience of scientists who are Christians for the benefit of local churches and local communities. Whether school teachers, engineers, medics or cutting edge researchers, these scientists have a huge amount to contribute to the church's theology, mission and ministry."

Rev Dr Kathryn Pritchard, Scientists in Congregations project leader, said: "This is an exciting opportunity for parishes both big and small to respond to questions and concerns that are relevant both for church goers and the local community about science and faith.

"There is a huge public appetite for discussion about the science-faith relationship and previous projects have attracted high levels of interest, not only from regular church members but also from the wider community.

"The Scientists in Congregations programme is designed to demonstrate that bringing science into conversation with theology and vice versa is vital for our understanding of contemporary life."

Scientists in Congregations programme builds on the success of similar programmes in the US, Canada and more recently Scotland, where the scheme has funded a range of projects including pilgrimage walking trails, a Nativity play where science and faith are considered and 'Dinosaur Sunday' services, along with other scientific issues.

The Scientists in Congregations programme is part of Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science, a three-year Durham University project run in partnership with the Church of England.

Notes to editors

The deadline for application is 5pm on May 3 2016. To read about Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science, of which Scientists in Congregations is a part, see: <http://community.dur.ac.uk/christianleadership.science/>

For more details on Scientists in Congregations and details of the criteria for bids see:

<http://community.dur.ac.uk/christianleadership.science/the-project/scientists-in-congregations/>

The Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science project, funded by Templeton World Charity Foundation, was launched last year. The co-directors are Prof David Wilkinson, Professor in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University and an astrophysicist, with Professor Tom McLeish, Professor of Physics at Durham University and the Bishop of Kingston, the Rt Rev Dr Richard Cheetham. Dr Kathryn Pritchard, based at Church House, Westminster, is project manager for the programme.

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