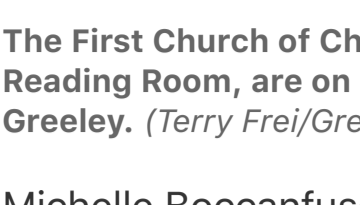


## Christian Science figure to speak in Fort Collins

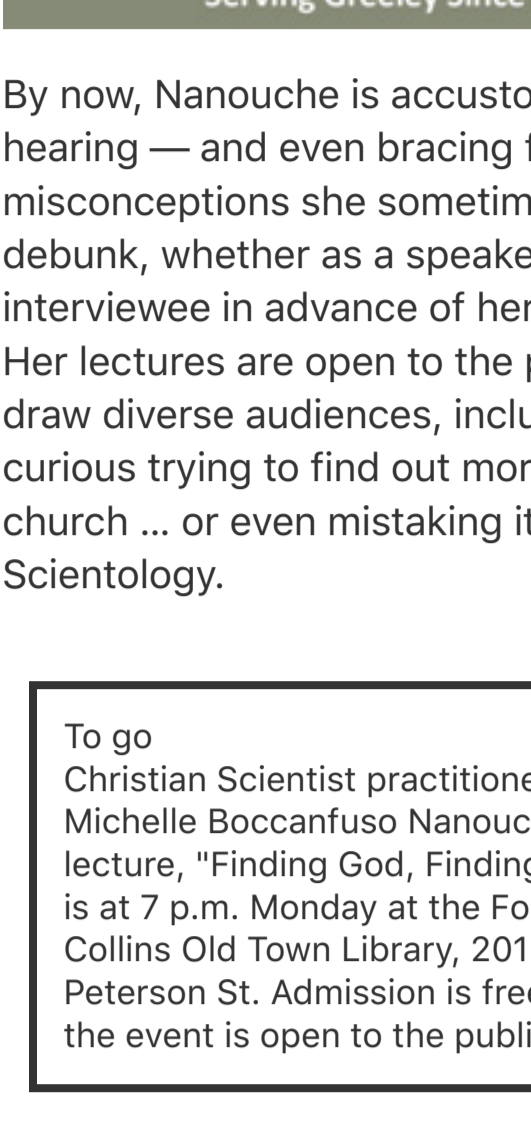
**Terry Frei** / [tfrei@greeleytribune.com](mailto:tfrei@greeleytribune.com)

May 5, 2018



The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and its Reading Room, are on 9th Street in downtown Greeley. *(Terry Frei/Greeley Tribune)*

Michelle Boccanfuso Nanouche was speaking from her home office in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, about 20 miles from Paris.



Nanouche

Soon after the conversation, she left France for her native United States and will be in Fort Collins on Monday, lecturing at the Old Town Library on "Finding God, Finding Health" at 7 p.m. on behalf of the local First Church of Christ, Scientist.

A car-pooling contingent from the Greeley First Church of Christ, Scientist, at 826 9th Street, also will attend Nanouche's lecture.

The appearance is part of a 13-stop tour for Nanouche, 55, a Christian Science practitioner and member of the church's board of lectureship, essentially its international speakers bureau.

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By now, Nanouche is accustomed to hearing — and even bracing for — the misconceptions she sometimes has to debunk, whether as a speaker or as an interviewee in advance of her appearances. Her lectures are open to the public and draw diverse audiences, including the curious trying to find out more about the church ... or even mistaking it for Scientology.

For

To go

Christian Scientist practitioner Michelle Boccanfuso Nanouche's lecture, "Finding God, Finding Faith," is at 7 p.m. Monday at the Fort Collins Old Town Library, 201 Peterson St. Admission is free and the event is open to the public.

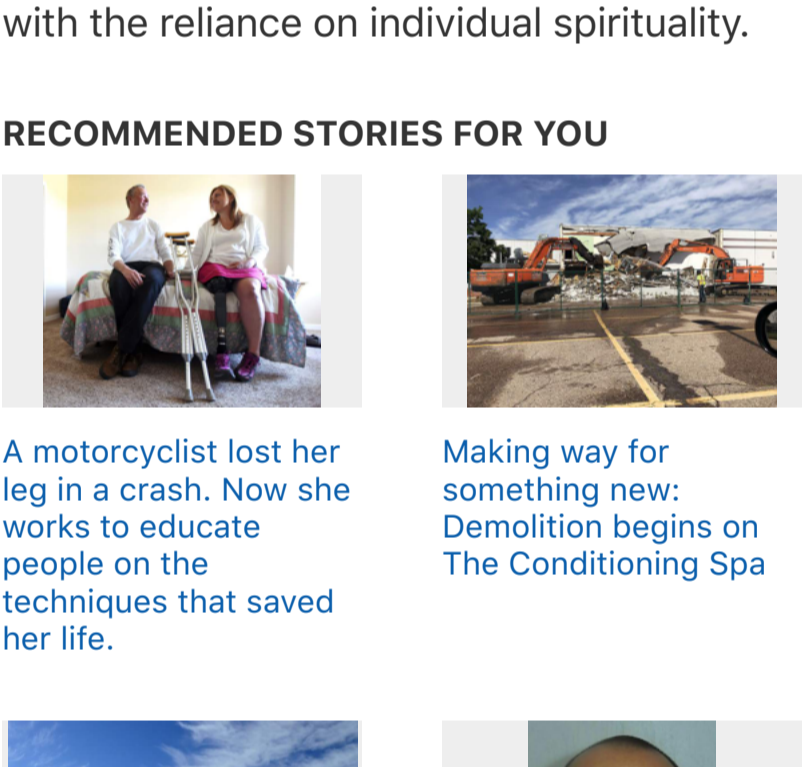
example: Don't Christian Scientists refuse medical treatment, whether for themselves or their children, because of the emphasis on healing through prayer?

It's not that simple.

"There's no tenet of Christian Science that requires anyone to abstain from a certain type of care or to accept a certain kind of care," Nanouche said. "Every Christian Scientist is on an individual journey."

Yes, some Christian Scientists reject conventional and aggressive modern medical treatment, if that's the decision prayer leads them to ... and those instances draw the most attention.

One notorious case was in Massachusetts in 1990, when a Christian Scientist couple was convicted of manslaughter and neglect after their 2-year-old son died of a bowel obstruction that could have been cured. Both were sentenced to 10 years of probation and ordered to take their three other children in for regular medical examinations. The Massachusetts Supreme Court overturned the conviction in 1993.



This is on the sidewalk in downtown Greeley when the Christian Science Reading Room is open. *(TerryFrei/Greeley Tribune)*

The Christian Science church's website says a practitioner "is an experienced Christian Scientist who devotes himself/herself full time to helping others find healing through turning to God, as Christ Jesus did. ... Practitioners are not employed by the Church, but by the individuals they assist, and so charge modest fees for their work."

As a Christian Science practitioner in a church without pastors, Nanouche's role is to be available to aid those seeking help through prayer, including those exploring the linkage between faith and health.

"Christian Scientists are just as concerned about the health and well-being of their kids as anyone else," Nanouche said. "Our children are our first priority. Faith doesn't come before the care of our children. ... As a practitioner, I would never counsel a parent on the kind of care they provide for their children. They have a responsibility to ensure their child is properly cared for, that a condition is properly addressed, and to the best of their ability, that healing occurs.

"You will have Christian Scientists who will take their child immediately to a doctor. The majority of Christian Scientists will be praying to be led to know the best care they can give for their child. With prayer eliminating the fear, they needn't be afraid if they decide to take that child to the doctor. They'll continue to pray step by step."

Nanouche previously was a Christian Science nurse in New Jersey for 10 years before additional training led to her being accredited as a practitioner. She has lived in France since traveling there to learn the language and marrying a Frenchman in 2005, but periodically returns to the U.S for lecture tours.

In addition to the church emphasizing the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount, a textbook is founder Mary Baker Eddy's "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," first published in 1875. Eddy argued that prayer alone could lead to healing, and that's still the Christian Science emphasis.

"Can people be healed through prayer?" Nanouche asked. "Bottom line, I have to say yes because that's my area of expertise, and it's been my experience."

In her appearances, Nanouche outlines examples of those she believes were healed through faith, and she mentions that in 2001 she was diagnosed with a breast tumor. She said Christian Science teachings didn't rule out her seeking a doctor's treatment, and she was a single mother of a 14-year-old daughter at the time.

"The thought I had was, 'This will be healed, I'm not leaving her alone,'" Nanouche said. "So I was very motivated to make sure I was giving myself the best possible care, the most rapid route to healing ...

"But as I engaged day to day in prayer, the insights that I had met each one of the symptoms as they arose until the tumor completely disappeared. I was praying each day, and it was guiding my care. Issues were resolved before I went to the doctor."

But Nanouche said that if prayer leads Christian Scientists to accept conventional medical treatment, that's acceptably in line with the reliance on individual spirituality.

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"I think it's often looked at as its own side category, that it's our health that controls our life, that it's our health that controls our spirituality," Nanouche said. "In fact, it's our spirituality that's the determining factor in our health. In my talk, I discuss that link between spirituality and health."

Nanouche noted that her daughter was raised in the Christian Science faith. "She had many quick healings of children's stuff that came up ... and had a couple of quick healings of broken bones," Nanouche said. "Another time I took her to have a bone set by a surgeon. My prayer led me to that was the right answer under those circumstances."

Retired schoolteacher Terry Andrews is among the members of the Greeley church planning to attend Nanouche's lecture. "The Christian Science church is what I guess you would call a lay church," she said. "I have served in numerous positions, currently as treasurer and substitute reader, and I do anything else that needs to be done."

Andrews said the Greeley church has sponsored guest lecturers in the past as well, and that several members also attended the recent appearance of board of lectureship member Melanie Wahlberg in Loveland.

"The messages given at these lectures are the ones we really want to hear," Andrews said.

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