2014 Spring Meeting Announcement
The Marvel and Mystery of Göbekli Tepe

May 10, 2014 - 9:30 a.m.
Meet the Speaker buffet lunch, 12:30 p.m.

Göbekli Tepe is an exciting and significant archaeological dig currently under way in southeastern Turkey. Twice as old as Stonehenge or the Pyramids, the site was built by a group of hunter-gatherers striving to convey a symbolic message in enduring stone. At the top of a hill they constructed a monumental site with strange architecture and stranger art. On giant T-shaped stones they carved snakes and other dangerous, wild animals. Predating the invention of pottery or writing, it is the oldest exclusively ritual center yet found, dated to 8,000 BC. Without permanent homes of their own, the builders created an enormous complex that would have drawn various groups together in a common sacred space. Yet, shortly after the complex was built, it was intentionally buried and rebuilt.

“There’s more time between Göbekli Tepe and the Sumerian clay tablets [etched in 3300 B.C.] than from Sumer to today. And trying to pick out symbolism from prehistoric context is an exercise in futility,” says Gary Rollefson, an archaeologist at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. Still, archaeologists have their theories—evidence, perhaps, of the irresistible human urge to explain the unexplainable.

Monique Vincent will help to unravel the Marvel and Mystery of Göbekli Tepe. She brings rich academic and field experience in Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology. From this background, she will explain how archaeologists arrive at the various conclusions they have for an ancient site (for example, the study of the animal bone remains has been integral for the archaeologists' interpretations of Göbekli Tepe). She will explore why Göbekli Tepe has been designated “the first temple.”
Questions to ponder:

1. What might be the significance for Göbekli Tepe’s monumental art and who was the art intended to impress?
2. Why were the massive buildings constructed, and then buried?
3. What does this discovery add to our understanding of religious experience in the ancient world?

Monique Denise Vincent received a B.A., (History) Walla Walla University, 2007, an M.A., (Near Eastern Languages and Civilization), University of Chicago, 2009, and is a 2015 Ph.D. candidate (Near Eastern Languages and Civilization), University of Chicago. She has been very active during the last nine years engaged in archaeological field work with the Madaba Plains Project at Tall'al-Umayri, Jordan, the Balua Regional Archaeological Project at Khirbat al-Balua, Jordan, and with The Neubauer Expedition to Zincirli, Turkey. Her dissertation research focuses on Iron Age households and communities in Jordan. Monique currently resides in San Diego with her husband, Matt Vincent, who is also a PhD student in archaeology at the University of California, San Diego.

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