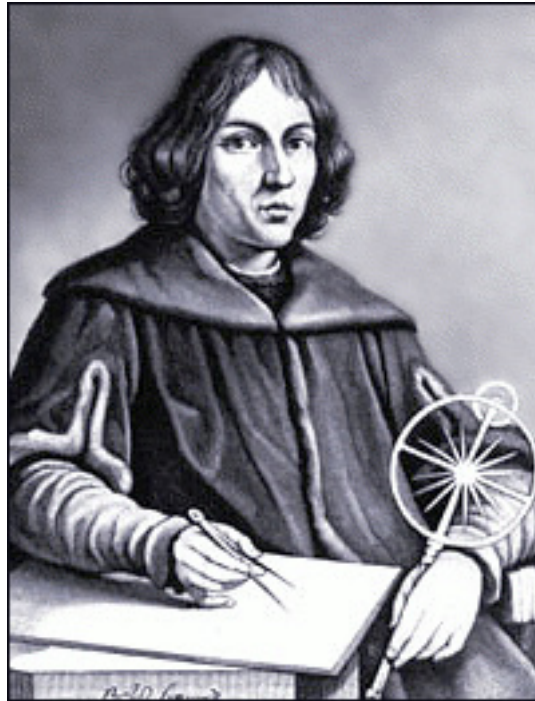


Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) and Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) Astronomers

Observed 23 May

Copernicus and Kepler have been tentatively added to the Episcopal calendar, as representatives of the many inquiring scientists who courageously explore the universe of God's creation, always seeking to broaden our understanding and appreciation.



Nicolaus Copernicus was a 'Renaissance Man' worthy of the title, a church functionary who was also a diplomat, mathematician, linguist, classicist, physician, and much more. He is famous for his proposition that the planets, including earth, rotate around the sun, in opposition to the accepted Ptolomaic model of the universe with earth at the center. This revolutionary concept is credited with beginning the Scientific Revolution, which paved the way for modern consciousness. His explorations occurred during a time when new explorations of ancient scholarship, the world's oceans and continents, artistic conventions, and biblical origins were overturning accepted worldviews. (Columbus' journeys and Luther's Theses both occurred during his lifetime.) Those charged with maintaining tradition found this a very difficult time in which to live and responded in many areas with rejection and rigidity. Copernicus' work became widespread and influential before it was condemned by church authorities as 'against Scripture' some 70 years after its publication.



Born a century after Copernicus, Johannes Kepler taught mathematics and pushed the boundaries of astronomy. Copernicus did not have the benefit of telescopes to support his conclusions. Kepler invented a refracting telescope which furthered the discoveries of Galileo and added to the observations of the universe. He moved beyond Copernicus' simple heliocentrism to develop theories to explain the movements of planets and moons, which significantly advanced understanding of the solar system. Kepler wrote eloquently of how God created the universe in an orderly, geometric manner, which could be explored and understood. He found great meaning and beauty in the orderliness of the physical world, seeing deep connections between the physical and the spiritual. Confidence in God's accessibility and loving desire to be known by his creatures animated much scientific exploration, which only makes sense if one believes in predictability and orderliness.

Lessons Genesis 1:14-19; Psalm 8; I Corinthians 2:6-12; Matthew 2:1-11a

Collect As the heavens declare your glory, O God, and the firmament shows your handiwork, we bless your Name for the gifts of knowledge and insight you bestowed upon Nicolaus Copernicus and Johannes Kepler; and we pray that you would continue to advance our understanding of your cosmos, for our good and for your glory; through Jesus Christ, the firstborn of all creation, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.