

Freethought Today

Complimentary Copy
Join FFRF Now!

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May 2013

Freethought Hall to be 'born again'

To kick off the Freedom From Religion Foundation's 35th anniversary as a national group (formed in April 1978), FFRF has announced an ambitious building expansion. The city of Madison, Wis., gave final approval to the building plans April 8, and FFRF purchased the adjacent property for its expansion April 16. Groundbreaking is set for early fall on a four-story addition to be completed by late spring 2014.

A third-story library topped by a cupola, to be completed by summer 2014, will also be added to the existing building. A spiral staircase will lead visitors from the library to the cupola, providing a unique view of the Capitol and space for five or six people to meet or lunch in.

FFRF's modest two-story building, built in 1855 and purchased in 1990, is named Freethought Hall in honor of Wisconsin's proud secular tradition. Freethought Hall will get a face lift and be "born again" into an impressive multilevel office building. The project will more than quadruple office space (and, "hallelujah," more than triple the restrooms). There will be plenty of space to add much-needed new staffers.

The addition's fourth story will be a true hall — a full-story auditorium with a stage, high ceiling, catering kitchenette and audio-visual accoutrements.

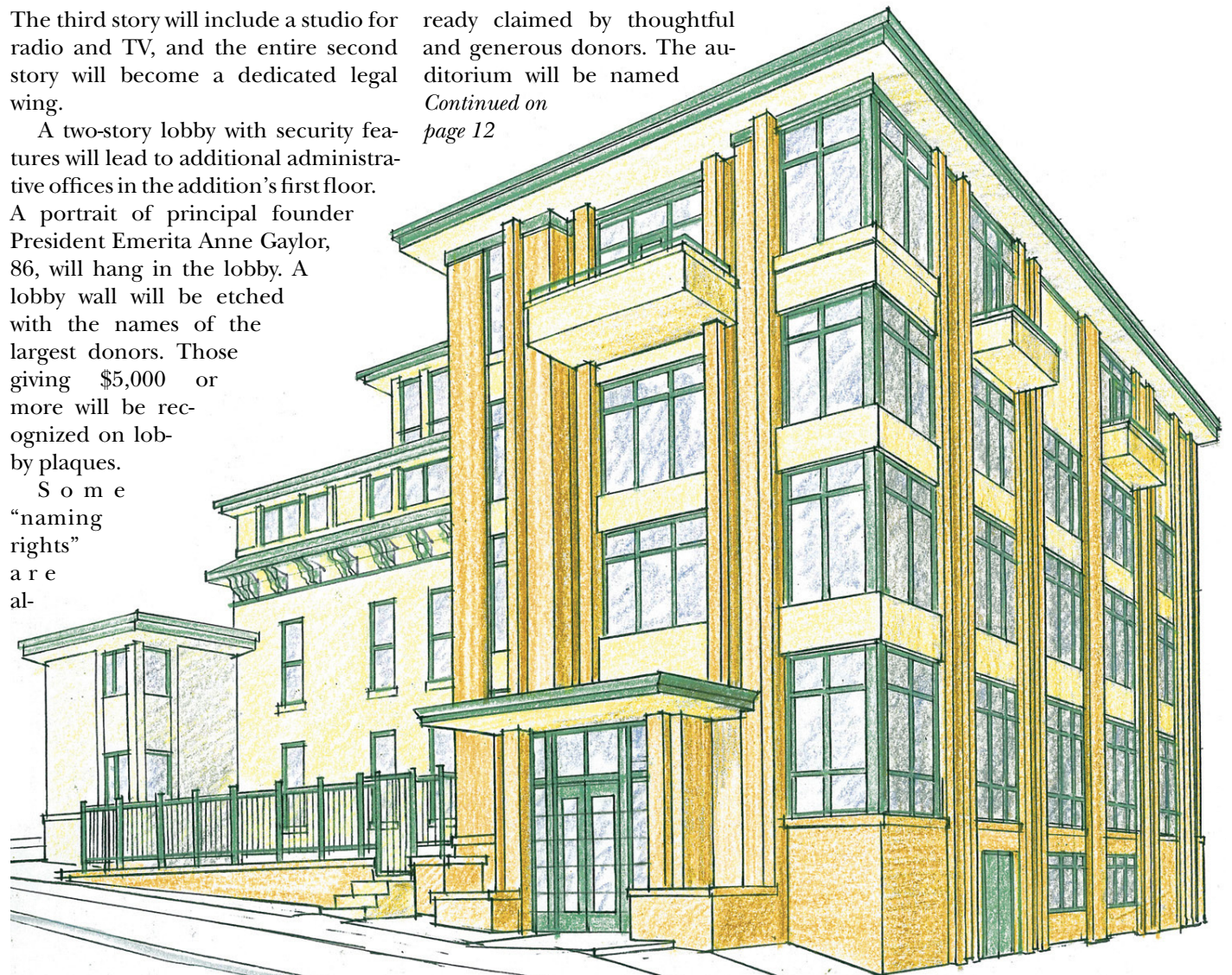
The third story will include a studio for radio and TV, and the entire second story will become a dedicated legal wing.

A two-story lobby with security features will lead to additional administrative offices in the addition's first floor. A portrait of principal founder President Emerita Anne Gaylor, 86, will hang in the lobby. A lobby wall will be etched with the names of the largest donors. Those giving \$5,000 or more will be recognized on lobby plaques.

Some "naming rights" are already

ready claimed by thoughtful and generous donors. The auditorium will be named

Continued on page 12



Jesus 'resurrected' for Day of Prayer

Inside This Issue



Meet legal interns
Page 2

'My
memorable
atheist mom'
Page 10



FFRF takes
National Day of
Prayer protest
to D.C.
Page 9

A "Head of Christ" painting was removed in early April from Jackson High School in Jackson, Ohio, after FFRF and the ACLU of Ohio sued in federal court.

It was the second move of the Jesus portrait since the lawsuit was filed in February. In March, the Jackson City School District moved the painting from the middle school, where it had reportedly hung since 1947, to the high school.

An offended high school student and a parent of a high school student fortunately stepped forward and were added to the amended complaint. After a closed hearing before U.S. District Judge Algenon Marbley, a Clinton appointee, the district voluntarily removed the painting from the high school. The Ohio ACLU and FFRF then voluntarily withdrew a motion for a restraining order to force the district to remove the painting.

"Our insurance company denied



Jesus had a place of honor May 2 at the city's National Day of Prayer event, held at the Memorial Building, which houses the mayor's office and other city offices. A local member tells FFRF, "I'm concerned that the Sallman print is now going to be trotted out as some sort of effigy every time there's a public event in Jackson."

Continued on page 17

Meet the Legal Interns

Meet a military veteran legal intern

Name: Travis Bohn.
When and where I was born: San Diego, Calif., 1983.
Family: Yes.
Education: B.A. in English, emphasis in publishing, from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. I expect to graduate from the UW Law School in 2014.
My religious upbringing was: Freethought.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: While on active duty in the U.S. Navy, I was subject to constant proselytizing from my superiors. Onboard a ship in the middle of the ocean, there was no place to which I could escape. There were prayers at most mandatory events, even during meals and fitness tests. Some specialist programs even mandated a chaplain's intervention before proceeding.

I was personally denied entrance into such a program on the recommendation of my command's Christian chaplain, who wasn't convinced of my moral fitness based on the fact that I did not belong to a faith group. It was uncomfortable and unconstitutional. There are no faith groups or chaplains for nonreligious, humanist service members, despite having more self-identified members than Jews, Muslims, Hindu and Buddhists. I want to prevent others from going through what I did, and FFRF allows me to help.

What I do here: I assist the staff attorneys on legal matters. I research new developments in the law and draft letters of complaint.

What I like best about it: This is so different from law school. I'm helping to achieve real change for real people. It's an extremely rewarding experience to make a difference in the lives of our members. They are not always in a position to help themselves and often face retribution.

Something funny that's happened at work: I recently learned about Wis. Stat. § 97.18, which makes it illegal for restaurants to substitute margarine for butter unless requested by a customer. The penalty: up to three months in jail for a first offense; up to a year for each subsequent offense.

My legal interests are: I want to help people. It's really that simple.

My legal heroes are: The always prosaic Justice Fergus O'Donnell, a Canadian jurist who writes with a sharpened wit that appeals to my sense of humor.

These three words sum me up: Awesome, awesome and awesome. Just kidding. Tenacious, ambitious and driven.

Things I like: Laughter, literature,



Travis Bohn (left) and Jarvis Idowu are interning with FFRF's legal staff.

intelligent conversation, cooking and swimming.

Things I smite: We live in an era with unprecedented access to information. If you get all your news from one source, you're doing it wrong.

My loftiest goal: To sit on the bench.

Fun fact: When I was about 10 years old, I wanted to be a Ninja Turtle when I grew up.

And a legal skeptic shall guide you

Name: Jarvis K. Idowu.
Where and when I was born: Brooklyn, N.Y., Sept. 25, 1985.
Family: Mother, Kathy; father, Bill; brother, John; and sister, Anna.

Education: Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., B.A. in philosophy; University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Law, J.D. candidate 2015.

My religious upbringing was: Nothing really. I went to a private Quaker school, and my dad was raised Jewish. We celebrated Christmas and Hanukkah, but there was never any question — our family was and remains nontheists, atheists, nonbelievers or what have you. But I do think the family has become more impassioned about secularism recently.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: Ever since my work on the Obama campaign in 2008, I've been passionate about secularism. I devoured everything I could find by Hitchens, Dawkins, the "Skeptics' Guide to the Universe," etc., I attended meet-up groups on atheism, joined Americans United, tried to create a layperson's guide to the bible, started a blog called the "Skeptics Guide to Korea" while I was working abroad and basically took every opportunity to en-

gage the topic.

I came to law school with the dual desire to pursue Establishment Clause and prosecutorial work. When I discovered that FFRF was based in Madison, it was a no-brainer. If I hadn't been hired, I would have volunteered in whatever capacity they would have had me.

What I do here: Address state/church complaints, mostly by letter. At times I have drafted memos on specific legal issues that require further research or contact complainants to get more information.

What I like best about it: Everything! Religious fanaticism is the call to arms, if you will, for my generation. Had I been born in the '60s, I would have been in dereliction of my moral duties as a human to idly observe the civil rights and anti-war movements. The same is true now in the face of religious fanaticism and its affronts to scientific and social progress.

Something funny that's happened at work: Most of the complaints have an element of tragedy and comedy. The awkward contortions religious zealots go through to

indoctrinate children are amusing and terrifying at the same time.

My legal interests are: Fairly narrow — criminal prosecution and Establishment Clause.

My legal heroes are: Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great dissenter. And each of the staff attorneys at FFRF, who all work daily to make the world a more intelligent, educated and peaceful place.

These three words sum me up: Skeptical, curious, persistent.

Things I like: Reality TV, cheap sugar (calorie-dense, completely unhealthy snacks), awkward situations, whiskey-fueled political debates, vindication.

Things I smite: Reality TV (bipolar relationship here), proud ignorance, cowardice or acquiescence, truth told with bad intentions, vegetables, blandness.

My loftiest goal: To be a district attorney by age 35 and to somehow play a role in making the 19% ["nones"] into the 51%.



Photo: Dan Barker

Happy 91st, Joe!

Joe Chern turned 91 on April 22. Joe was born in 1922, and his wife, Joyce, who is 90, was born on April 19, 1923. Joe, who lives in the Madison area, has been a member of FFRF since 1979, only a year after FFRF became a national organization. He volunteered with the Peace Corps for many years, and stays active as landlord of several houses. He kindly dropped by the FFRF office in May to renew memberships for himself and other family members and friends.

A Note to Members

Your address label shows the expiration date of your membership in FFRF, which includes your subscription to Freethought Today and "Private Line." If it says May 2013 or earlier please renew! Your prompt renewal (\$40-single membership; \$50-household; \$100 sustaining; \$25-student) saves us time and postage, and is tax-deductible. Freethought Today is published 10 times a year, with combined issues in Jan/Feb and June/July. Send to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701, ffrf.org/donate

Notify Us of Your Address Change Promptly!

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Don't miss a single issue! If you move, notify us directly and promptly. **The Post Office does not forward third-class mail.** FFRF cannot be responsible for replacing back issues if we have not been notified prior to your move. Back issues, while they last, may be ordered for \$2 each.

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May 2013
The only freethought newspaper in the United States

To counter Florida school bible handouts

FFRF helps distribute secular lit; some censored



ABOVE: David Williamson (left) of the Central Florida Freethought Community, an FFRF chapter, and Jerry Jeffery, a semi-retired attorney who's helping FFRF, outside a school where the freethought literature was distributed.

RIGHT: Dan Barker, FFRF co-president, spoke Spanish in his interview with Univision, which the world's largest audience of Spanish-language viewers.

LEFT: Daniel Koster of the Secular Student Alliance was also interviewed.



FFRF and its new chapter, the Central Florida Freethought Community, passed out atheist and freethought literature to students in Orange County Public Schools on May 2 (the National Day of Prayer). About 18 freethinkers from various local groups volunteered to staff tables.

The distribution, coordinated by CFFC Director David Williamson, working with FFRF and other secular groups, was in response to bible distribution by World Changers in the public schools in February. Evangelists were permitted to set up tables in

about 11 schools to hawk bibles and promote religion.

After many delays and protracted negotiations by the chapter and FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, the school district finally approved distribution of some nonreligious literature. The district demanded the right to vet the freethought literature, announcing a last-minute decision to censor many submitted publications, including Sam Harris' book, *Letter to a Christian Nation* and an essay, "The Truth," by 19th-century freethinker Robert G. Ingersoll.

Also censored were *Jesus Is Dead*, a book by Robert Price, professor of philosophy and religion; *What on Earth Is an Atheist*, a book by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, *Why I Am Not a Muslim*, a book by Ibn Warraq, and several FFRF "nontracts," including "Dear Believer," "Why Jesus?" "What Does the Bible Say about Abortion?" and "An X-Rated Book."

Among the handouts approved were several nontracts published by FFRF, including "What's Wrong with the Ten Commandments?," "Ten Common Myths About Atheists," and "Why Women Need Freedom From Religion." A section from "The Age of

Reason," a classic critique of the bible by Thomas Paine, and the brochure "Why Atheism" are being distributed by other secular groups involved in the protest.

"The irony is that the bible, a best-seller that's rarely read, is X-rated, full of violence, obscenity and immoral conduct committed by or blessed by the biblical deity," commented Dan Barker, FFRF co-president, who traveled from Madison, Wis., to be present at several of the distributions.

"Yet the school district did not censor the bible, instead finding that innocuous comments by Sam Harris may 'cause a substantial disruption' to the school day," he added. "Predatory evangelical groups like World Changers and Liberty Counsel see public schools as a recruiting ground. Public schools exist to educate, not to proselytize. Schools don't need to allow these distributions, but as long as they do, we will distribute our own nonreligious materials."

Liberty Counsel, a Christian law firm, had first bullied Florida's Collier County Schools into opening high school campuses for World Changers of Florida to distribute Christian bibles during the school day. Unfortunately, the district, after being sued by World Changers, recently decided to settle out of court, and paid the evangelists \$20,000 in legal fees.

World Changers then approached Orange County Schools, which immediately agreed to let them in. World Changers had freely interacted with students at some schools during the February bible distribution.

The distribution of freethought materials took place during the school day

in 11 Orange County schools: Apopka High, Wekiva High, Boone High, Jones High, Colonial High, Winter Park 9th Grade Center, Edgewater High, Evans High, Timber Creek High, University High and Cypress Creek High. CFFC and other area groups staffed tables at these schools throughout the school day on May 2, after being given strict instructions not to interact with students.

A Boone High school senior repeatedly admitted to a TV reporter that she poured water on the secular literature. Setup was delayed an hour, with the principal insisting on escorting the volunteer, which was not done for the bible distribution. Secular materials were trashed in at least one other school.

A Secular Student Alliance group headed by Daniel Koster oversaw the distribution at Wekiva High. Even though as a student club it's not subject to the same passive distribution rules as outside groups, the students were warned by officials they couldn't interact.

Koster discussed the situation on Freethought Radio on May 11 (hear the podcast at: ffrf.org/radio/), noting that evangelists had interacted openly with him and other students in February.

Slips inviting students to an after-school pizza party put on by CFFC, FFRF and other secular groups were not distributed in many of the schools, even though World Changers was allowed to solicit students for an after-school event.

FFRF called the school district's censorship of some freethought publications illegal. Stay tuned!

Include FFRF In Your Estate Planning

Arrange a bequest in your will or trust, or make the Freedom From Religion Foundation the beneficiary of an insurance policy, bank account, or IRA. It's easy to do.

For related information (or to request a bequest brochure), please phone Annie Laurie Gaylor at (608) 256-8900.

FFRF
P.O. Box 750
Madison WI 53701

*Freedom Depends
on Freethinkers*



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • ffrf.org

What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

Founded in 1978 as a national organization of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., works to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists.

The Foundation's e-mail address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all e-mail correspondence.

Foundation members wishing to receive online news releases, "action alerts" and "Freethought of the Day" should contact info@ffrf.org.

What Is a Freethinker?



free-think-er
n. A person
who forms
opinions

about religion on the basis
of reason, independently
of tradition, authority, or
established belief.

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

Now that God is Dead

(to the tune of “It Ain’t Gonna Rain No More”)

Remember all the blood and gore
The pious people shed?
Well, no one’s bleeding any more,
Now that God is dead!

Christians don’t burn witches now
Or hang them by the head:
Christians are much kinder now,
Now that God is dead.

Muslims don’t bomb anyone,
Their neighbors haven’t bled:
No one’s swearing vengeance now,
Now that God is dead.

Buddhists, Hindus smile and bow,
Their kids can sleep in bed:
All the world is peaceful now —
now
that
God
is
dead!

© Philip Appleman

Freethought Today is honored to publish this new poem.



Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include *Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible* (2012), *Darwin’s Ark* (new 2009 edition) and *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie* (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used *Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, and the *Norton Critical Edition of Malthus’ Essay on Population*. His poetry and fiction have won many awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in *Harper’s Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Yale Review*.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both “Afterlife” Members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They recorded an excerpt of “Noah,” *New and Selected Poems*, which is available for sale from FFRF for \$23 ppd, *The Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, is \$22 ppd., *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie*, \$27 ppd., *Darwin’s Ark*, \$23 ppd., and *Perfidious Proverbs*, \$20 ppd. (ffrf.org/shop/).

YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

produced by the
Freedom From Religion
Foundation

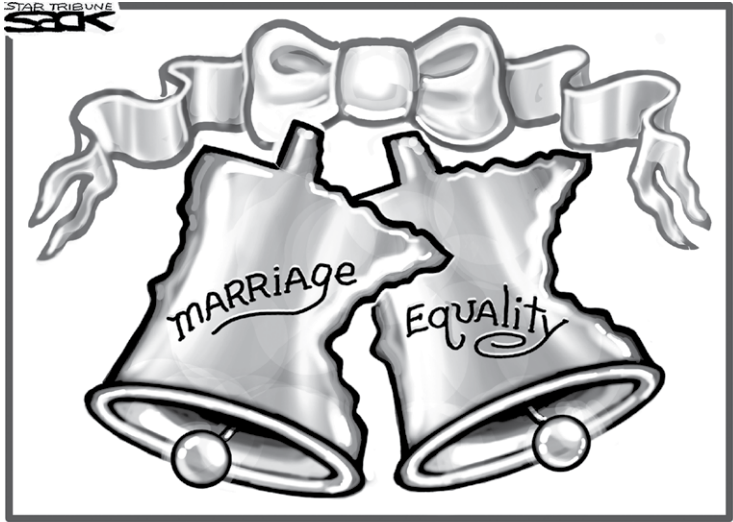


Hosted by Dan Barker and
Annie Laurie Gaylor

Broadcasts and streams Saturdays at 11 a.m. Central, Progressive Talk The Mic 92.1 FM, Madison, Wis., and over several other stations.

iTunes or podcasts archived at: ffrf.org/news/radio

Slightly irreverent views,
news, music & interviews



Overheard

I feel like you shouldn’t force your religion upon anybody. And a lot of people are saying if there are prayers at graduation, you don’t have to participate, you can sit there and not listen, close your ears. Well, one, it’s my graduation. I shouldn’t have to close my ears. This is a place for school, not a church. I feel like I’m graduating from Lincoln County High, not Lincoln County Church.

Atheist Bradley Chester, Stanford, Ky., one of six seniors who helped convince school officials to substitute a moment of silence for graduation prayer
Advocate-Messenger, 5-2-13

There’s simply no polite way to tell people they’ve dedicated their lives to an illusion.

Daniel Dennett, FFRF Honorary Director, whose 16th book, *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking*, was just released
New York Times, 4-30-13

Freedom of expression and freedom of religion were in no way under attack in the Jackson City Schools. The First Amendment, as interpreted in case after case, is about protecting the right of all citizens to worship as they see fit. The sound doctrine of the separation of church and state is designed to prevent the state from promoting one particular faith over others. Many of the founders were, indeed, deeply religious. But they were determined not to let anyone, particularly the government, trample on their right to practice religion as they saw fit. Last week, the Jackson City Schools relearned that history.

Editorial, “History relearned,” supporting the FFRF/ACLU challenge to a Jesus portrait in Jackson, Ohio
Akron Beacon Journal, 4-6-13

I frankly am not comfortable with calling it the Mayors Prayer Breakfast, whether there’s an apostrophe on the “s” or not. It’s still indicating it’s something the mayor is behind, and in fact, it is not.

Santa Clarita, Calif., Mayor Bob Keller, who supports the National Day of Prayer and questions the conservative politics that always seem to accompany the local event
KHTS-AM, 4-24-13

I haven’t spent my post-Catholic decades in a sulk, wishing the church would come around on the issue of homosexuality so that I could start attending Mass again. I didn’t abandon my faith. I saw through it.

Columnist Dan Savage, co-founder of the “It Gets Better” project
New York Times, 4-11-13

BILL DUNN [reading a Toronto Star headline]: “The next pope should be a pastor with a deep and profound love of people.” SCOTT COLSON: “Peep-hole?”
FFRF editor and webmaster cubicle conversation, 2-25-13

I have seen the future of religion in America, and its name is “none.” Yet another survey just recently published and publicized is emphasizing what is now an undeniable trend on the American religious landscape: Increasing, if not historic, numbers of Americans are claiming no religious affiliation when asked to state their religious identity, and more and more are embracing “spirituality” as an alternative religious brand that is not tradition-specific, but is more in line with the democratic spirit of individual tastes.

Gary Laderman, chair of the Department of Religion, Emory University
Huffington Post, 3-20-13

He said I should kiss it because I’d be kissing the hand of God.

Testimony in the trial of retired Anglican priest Gordon Rideout, 73, by a woman alleging he wanted genital contact when she was 12 or 13
The Guardian, 4-9-13

Belief in a punitive God . . . facilitates threat assessments that the world is dangerous and even that God poses a threat of harm, thereby increasing psychiatric symptomology.

Finding in a study, “Beliefs About God and Mental Health Among American Adults,” by psychologists at Marymount Manhattan College
Real Clear Science, 4-16-13

First of all, I’m an atheist. The second thing is I know that name was a kind of joke and not a very good one. I think [physicist Leon Lederman] shouldn’t have done that as it’s so misleading.

Peter Higgs, British theoretical physicist and University of Edinburgh emeritus professor, on calling the Higgs boson “the god particle”
The Telegraph, 4-8-13

Unless Tim Tebow is willing to change positions, his next NFL job appears likely to be team chaplain.

News story on the lack of interest by NFL teams in evangelical quarterback Tim Tebow, who was released by the New York Jets
New York Post, 4-30-13

Young people also are the least religious (more than a quarter specify no religion when asked), and they are an increasingly diverse group of voters.

Columnist Charles M. Blow
New York Times, 4-6-13

Official school religion OK'd by Texas court

Christianity apparently is the official school religion in Kountze, Texas, after a misguided decision in early May by a state judge that lets public school cheerleaders display Christian bible verses and messages during high school football games.

So contends the Freedom From Religion Foundation, whose letter in September 2012 challenging the religious banners set off the legal controversy in the Kountze Independent School District.

In response to FFRF's letter, the district superintendent properly ordered cheerleaders to stop holding Christian prayer banners for football players to run through. The cheerleaders, represented by a Religious Right law firm, then sued the school district.

FFRF was not a party to the lawsuit, but filed a friend of the court brief. If students, faculty or parents subjected to future proselytizing come forward, FFRF would like to challenge the religious banners in federal court.

The four-paragraph decision by Judge Steven Thomas, 356th Judicial



Kountze cheerleaders wait for football players to run through their banner.

District, does not cite a single case, law or constitutional precedent.

"It's impossible to imagine a judge approving cheerleader messages saying, 'Atheists rule — God is dead' or 'Allah is supreme — pray to him for victory,'" said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

"Kountze High School is not a Christian high school, Kountze is not

a Christian city, Texas is not a Christian state, and the United States is not a Christian nation," Gaylor added.

Proselytizing messages by cheerleaders given a unique podium, representing the school, wearing the school uniform, at the official start of a public school football game, inevitably carry the appearance of school endorsement and favoritism, turning Christians into

insiders, and non-Christians and non-believers into outsiders. It's quite different than students who hold up signs from the bleachers.

"It's not only a violation of the law, it's a violation of good manners," Gaylor said.

"There was not even a bona fide case or controversy before the court concerning a violation under the Establishment Clause," commented FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott.

"Both parties — the school district and the cheerleaders' attorneys — asked the court to issue an order allowing the display of Christian banners to continue. The lawsuit ought to have been dismissed because there was no case or controversy; both parties sought to display the religious banners."

Under a new school board policy, and in briefs to the court, Kountze ISD made clear that the banners are under district control and are "government speech." The district also expressed that it would like to see the religious banners continue to be displayed.

FFRF welcomes 37 'Lifers,' one 'After-Lifer'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is pleased to welcome 37 new Lifetime Members and two After-Life Members.

After-Life Members are: Susan Gibson and Steve Rade.

Lifetime Members are: Vince Boren-gasser, Mary Centa, JD Dunham, Harold Erickson, Marjorie Heins, Peter N. Heydon, Jeff Hill, Rodney Hinds, Penny Hubbard, Michael Jonas, Gregory Kahles, Sue A. Keller, Richard Kennelly, Thomas Kidd, Erika Kretzmer, Henry Lengel, Dr. Peter Lundman, Michael McKibben, Arthur Meunier, Caroline Miller, James Moore, Philip Parilla, Jack Pedigo, George Pedraja, Nicole Porcaro, Susan Rade, John Reiser, Thomas Scanlin, William Schaefer, John Shaw, Dr. John Steinberg, Larry Tanner, George Thomson, Michael Walker, Gordon Williams, Brian Williamson and the Berkson Walisever Charitable Foundation Inc.

Mary Centa received her Lifetime Membership as a gift from her daughter,

Dianne Centa, herself a Lifer.

William Schaefer, Gregory Kahles, Arthur Meunier and Thomas Kidd all kindly designated their Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) donations to FFRF and requested that they be applied to Lifetime Memberships.

States represented are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming and Overseas Military.

Lifetime Memberships of \$1,000 per individual are deductible for income-tax purposes as are After-Life Memberships of \$5,000. Both categories assure no more renewal notices. The After-Life Membership is for the very generous donor who does not believe in the supernatural, but does believe in the power of compound interest!

Thank you to all our generous new Lifetime and After-Life Members.

FFRF announces 'The Immortals'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation will be recognizing (only with explicit permission from the kind bequester) those who name FFRF as a beneficiary in a trust or include FFRF in other estate planning. This occasional column will recognize those who wish to be recognized, as a catalyst for others who may be thinking about including FFRF in their estate planning.

FFRF has received notification in the last month of such generous action from B. Babow and Mike Kirkland. They are FFRF Life Members and founding members of its new affiliate, the Greater Sacramento Chapter of

FFRF.

If you would like to receive a copy of FFRF's bequest brochure or have other questions, please contact Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor at 608-256-8900 or email Director of Operations Lisa Strand at lstrand@ffrf.org.

FFRF holds all such requests or notifications in strictest confidence but would be delighted to recognize any "Immortals" who would enjoy sharing their charitable arrangements.

Our warmest thanks to these two "bequesters" for furthering "FFRF Forever!"

State/Church Bulletin

Ohio coalition pushes prayer amendment

Efforts to amend the Ohio Constitution to give students the right to pray in school have been delayed.

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine rejected a petition May 2 for the proposed "Amendment to Return Prayer to Our Public Schools" due to technical flaws.

The amendment says, "The right of Ohio citizens to express their religious beliefs shall not be infringed" and "Schoolchildren have the right to pray and acknowledge God voluntarily in their schools."

Rev. Henry Johnson of Canal Winchester heads the Coalition to Return Prayer to Our Public Schools. "We're going to redo the petition format and make sure it meets the criteria of the attorney general, and we're going to get it done," he told the Columbus Dispatch.

The coalition would have to submit than 200,000 valid signatures by July 3 to qualify for the Nov. 5 ballot.

Under the proposed amendment, "The right of Ohio citizens to express their religious beliefs shall not be infringed" and "Schoolchildren have the right to pray and acknowledge God voluntarily in their schools." It also would require public schools to display the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution.

Atheists under attack in Muslim world

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pledged stern action April 1 against people found guilty of defaming Islam on the Internet, reported the Indian Express, as right-wing Islamic parties threatened to wage an intensified campaign against "atheist bloggers."

"As a Muslim, I have the responsibility to take action," Hasina said at a party meeting of the Awami League, which she heads.

Police arrested three atheist blog-

gers in the capital of Dhaka for defaming Islam, Agence France-Presse reported. The three were paraded in handcuffs at a press conference amid demands for the death penalty for them.

A fourth man, Asif Mohiuddin, 29, was arrested a day later for "hurting religious sentiment through his writings on blogs and Facebook," police spokesman Masudur Rahman said.

Hardline Islamists have submitted a list of 84 atheists they claim are spreading propaganda against Islam.

A Turkish court in Ankara convicted in absentia pianist and composer Fazil Say on April 15 of denigrating religion through comments he made on Twitter. He was given a suspended 10-month prison sentence.

Say, 43, who has played with the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Symphony and other premier orchestras, has strongly criticized Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a conservative Muslim.

The Associated Press reported Say tweeted about a call to prayer that he said lasted only 22 seconds: "Why such haste? Have you got a mistress waiting or a raki [alcoholic drink] on the table?"

Kentucky governor's veto overturned

The Kentucky General Assembly voted March 26 to overturn Democratic Gov. Steve Beshear's March 22 veto of the "religious freedom" bill, which was opposed by FFRF and many human and gay rights groups and leaders of some of Kentucky's biggest cities. The override passed the House 79-15 and the Senate 32-6.

In his veto message, Beshear cited "significant concerns that this bill will cause serious unintentional consequences that could threaten public safety, health care and individuals' civil rights. As written, the bill will undoubtedly lead to costly litigation."

FFRF complaint removes commandments in Kentucky

Numerous framed postings of the Ten Commandments have come down in Breathitt County Schools in Jackson, Ky. Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote a complaint letter April 5 to Larry Hammond, manager for the school system, about the flagrant violations of the Establishment Clause in the high school, middle school and several elementary schools.

FFRF requested that all principals be directed to remove the Ten Commandments. “The Supreme Court ruled on this very issue over 30 years

ago. It is unacceptable that a public school system would willfully violate the Constitution in this manner in 2013,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

The Supreme Court ruled in *Stone v. Graham* in 1980 that posting the Ten Commandments in Kentucky schools was motivated by a religious purpose and is unconstitutional.

A Breathitt student informed FFRF on April 11 that many of the displays had been removed.

Hammond was appointed by the

Kentucky Department of Education to oversee the troubled school system. It was reported that the department issued a statement agreeing that the displays violated the Constitution.

WYMT-TV later confirmed that school officials said they had complied with FFRF’s request, which made former restaurant owner Mary Campbell unhappy. “I am totally against it. I think that we need the Ten Commandments in the schools. I think all kids should learn it.”



Framed Ten Commandments like this are gone from Breathitt County Schools.

FFRF Legal Victories

School: No prayer, no graduation

The Riverside School District Board in Lake City, Ark., voted May 6 to cancel its May 23 sixth-grade graduation ceremonies at two elementary schools after FFRF challenged the tradition of prayers at the ceremonies.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott complained to the district April 15 on behalf of a concerned parent: “It makes no difference how many families want prayer or wouldn’t be offended by prayer,” Elliott wrote. “The Supreme Court has settled this matter — school graduations must be secular to protect the freedom of conscience of all students.”

Parent Kelly Adams, whose son would have graduated, told KAIT-TV, “We serve a God. And we should have the right to serve that God anywhere.” Her daughter closed last year’s ceremony with a prayer. Parents are organizing a ceremony instead at a church, she said. “We want everyone to be a part of it. We’re not trying to be pushy or ugly to anybody. We just want them to know that there is a God who loves them.”

Rev. Arthur Hunt Jr. of Hunt Memorial Cathedral of Faith appeared on a Fox Radio show to promote the myth that the Constitution “allows us to see our purpose in this nation of being under God.” Hunt asked, “Do we want to wait for another bomb or a mass shooting before the assembly and prays again?”

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker likened the cancellation to people “taking their ball and going home because they don’t like playing by the rules set out by numerous courts over the years. The word God is not mentioned in our entirely secular Constitution.”

Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor added, “Maybe in the 19th century it was a big deal to ‘graduate’ from sixth grade, but in today’s educational world, such a ceremony hardly seems relevant.”

Dinosaur ‘truth’ was mammoth mistake

Blackhurst Elementary School, St. Charles, Mo., will no longer allow guest speakers to indoctrinate students with misinformation about science, history and reality.

A concerned parent reached out to FFRF after students as young as 5 attended a school assembly in early April featuring a speaker with ties to the Creation Truth Foundation based in Noble, Okla. The speaker passed out fliers encouraging students to attend “Creation Truth Weekend” at Harvest Christian Church. The foundation promotes “research” that claims Americans’ only hope is to blindly follow the literal truth of the bible.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott asked Superintendent Jeff Marion in an April 15 letter to investigate the incident. “We are aware that some Christian proselytizers insinuate themselves into public schools through camouflaging their purposes and by professing to be experts in a secular field,” Elliott said. “It is incumbent that public officials do ‘due diligence’ when approached by outside groups with vested interests in pitching their messages to a captive audience of public school students.”

Marion responded April 16, agreeing that parts of the assembly were inappropriate. He said he contacted the principal to reinforce “the importance of verifying the specific nature of any and all presentations held at school.”

He also said he reminded the principal about district policies on distribution of nonschool-sponsored materials.

Letters stop Georgia religious graduations

It took nearly a year, but FFRF complaint letters about Georgia public school employees injecting religion into graduation ceremonies have paid off. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote a letter to Houston County Schools Superintendent Robin Hines on June 4, 2012, on behalf of a local complainant, who noted that Hines gave a religious speech resembling a sermon at the May 2012 ceremony at Veterans High School in Kathleen.

The ceremony also featured the audience being led in prayer and performance of the Christian worship song “Find Your Wings.”

Seidel sent a follow-up letter June 5 after learning that prayer and praise music also were featured at the 2012 graduation at Perry High School, which is included in the district. Several complainants told FFRF that two prayers were included along with two religious songs. One, sung by a former

cheerleader coach, was “How Great Is Our God.”

While the district never responded formally, in a May 2 story in the Macon Telegraph, Hines said there will be no school-sanctioned prayers, hymns or religious references this year at graduation due to FFRF’s litigation threat. The school system doesn’t have a choice, he said, because the law is clear.

Hines added, “If the valedictorians want to thank their parents, grandparents and God, that’s freedom of speech. We can’t stop that. As long as it’s not lewd, they can say whatever they want.”

The Telegraph praised the school’s “prudent” decision in an editorial, saying it’s wise not to incur legal expenses. “We are a pluralistic society with many faiths and beliefs. Parents want their children indoctrinated in their family’s faith. That faith is not always Christianity. After all, it’s a parent’s job to teach their children in their religious tradition, not the school’s.”

FFRF halts math teacher’s proselytizing

A math teacher at Harmony Grove High School in Benton, Ark., will no longer promote religion in class. FFRF was informed that the teacher regu-

larly proselytized and made students listen to Christian radio and frequently held discussions in class time about her church and church groups and a TV show about the bible. She placed religious displays in the classroom, including bible quotes on ceiling tiles.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote Superintendent Daniel Henley on April 11. “Public school students are a captive audience and should not have to view materials promoting religious messages or listen to their math teacher expound on her private religious beliefs.”

Henley responded April 15 that the teacher had been instructed to remove the religious displays and to not discuss her religion.

Cross off school’s ‘rock of ages’

A depiction of a Latin cross on a large boulder near the football field was painted over at Dawson High School, Dawsonville, Ga., after a Feb. 15 complaint from Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott.

In April, the concerned parent notified FFRF that the cross was painted over.

This is not Dawson High School’s first state-church separation problem.

School apologizes for ‘shaming’ assembly

A student at Chelsea High School in Chelsea, Ala., contacted FFRF about a school assembly speaker named Siran Stacy manipulating and shaming students. At an April 5 assembly, Stacy preached that students should not have sex before marriage and denigrated the use of condoms and a woman’s right to have an abortion. He reportedly told young women their self-worth comes from God and said that only men are capable of being leaders.

Stacy told a story about his family members dying, allegedly killed by a gay drunk driver with AIDS. He also quoted the bible throughout his sermon.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent an April 8 letter to Alan Miller, Haleyville City Schools president, requesting that he cancel Stacy’s upcoming speaking engagements at

Haleyville Middle School. “What possible connection do homosexuality, abortion, premarital sex and converting to Christianity have to do with drunk driving?” Seidel asked. “None. This was not a secular program but a religious sermon.”

Miller responded April 9 to inform FFRF that Stacy’s speaking engagements at the school had been canceled.

On April 17, Superintendent Randy Fuller told FFRF that the principal apologized to all students for the claims Stacy made.

In a letter to Stacy, Fuller stated students were offended by how he injected his faith into his presentation and disparaged homosexuals. He reminded Stacy about the need to respect different viewpoints and the Constitution.

In October 2012, a concerned student alerted FFRF that the school was planning on giving students academic credit for attending bible study classes at a local bible “school.”

The classes were scheduled to begin in January 2013. In an Oct. letter to supporters, the bible school claimed that classes were accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

After Elliott informed the district that the bible program was unaccredited, the school backed off on granting credit. No such classes are currently being offered.

FFRF letter makes anti-bullying secular

A concerned parent of a student at Mire Elementary, Crowley, La., contacted FFRF after a play with an anti-bullying message included a Christian song.

Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell wrote Superintendent John Bourque in a Feb. 28 letter: “While we applaud the efforts of your school district to prevent bullying, it is wholly inappropriate for a public school to teach songs with blatantly Christian and religious messages in a public school setting,” Cavell said.

Bourque responded March 21 that similar violations would not occur in the future.

School learns ID is not so smart

A science teacher at Northwood Middle School in Mead, Wash., showed his seventh-grade class an “intelligent design” video titled “Unlocking the Mystery of Life.” At the end, he reportedly told students that Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution breaks down if one part of a bacterial flagellum’s “machinery” were to occur out of order or not at all.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel informed Superintendent Tom Rockefeller in a March 20 letter that the video, which is endorsed by Campus Crusade for Christ, does a great disservice to students’ scientific literacy.

“Evolution, like gravity, is a scientific fact,” Seidel wrote. “Teaching that there is a scientific controversy about the validity of evolution is akin to teaching astronomy with astrology or alchemy beside chemistry.”

Rockefeller responded April 8 that the district reviewed the incident and the video will not be shown anymore.

Wendy’s ends church bulletin bargain

Florida atheists and non-Christians will now get the same discount in the future at a Tallahassee Wendy’s as the burger chain’s churchgoing patrons. Restaurant staff had denied an atheist a 20% discount available on Sundays to patrons with a church bulletin.

In response to the discrimination, Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell contacted the store owner Feb. 21. The restaurant’s legal counsel replied by letter April 8 that the marketing promotion was ended.

Jesus fish caught, freed from court

A Jesus fish display was removed from the Municipal Court Office in



An FFRF letter got a Jesus fish removed from a public area of City Hall in Rolla, Mo.

City Hall in Rolla, Mo., after a local resident asked FFRF to complain. Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell contacted city officials April 4 about the symbol visible to all citizens required to visit the court office.

City Administrator John Butz responded in an email the same day to report the Jesus fish had been relocated to a private location.

German Fest agrees discount verboten

Sunday worship discounts for German Fest at the Summerfest grounds in Milwaukee have gone the way of those for Irish Fest and Mexican Fiesta after FFRF complaints. Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott asked organizers in a Feb. 28 letter to treat all people equally and to modify its promotion that allowed festival patrons who attend a church service to enter free. Everyone else was required to pay the \$13 entrance fee. The church service rotates between a Catholic Mass and a Protestant service.

German Fest’s legal counsel responded March 29, writing that the admission promotion and church service attendance will be uncoupled. All festival attendees will now get free admission if they enter between 11:30 and noon on Sunday.

FFRF scotches grant for church sign

The Common Council of Muskego,

Wis., voted 6-1 against giving a \$3,000 grant to a church to build a new sign after Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott weighed in on the issue March 26 after being alerted by a resident. The city’s Community Development Authority had recommended grant approval.

Elliott pointed out that the project is beyond the scope of Muskego’s grant program for businesses because the church is not a commercial property. The grant program is only intended to create economic development to expand the tax base.

FFRF member Scott Weiss of Muskego also spoke at the council meeting in opposition to the grant.

FFRF fades Christian movie to black

The Kirtland Middle School principal in Kirtland, N.M., canceled plans to show the 2006 Christian drama titled “Facing the Giants” after Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel called the district superintendent about the planned showing. The movie’s tagline is a New Testament verse, “With God, all things are possible.” A concerned teacher contacted FFRF a few hours before the movie was slated to be shown.

The movie, produced by Sherwood Baptist Church and distributed by the Trinity Broadcasting Network, tells the story of a high school football coach whose team can barely win a game, is in danger of losing his job, drives a jalopy and can’t get his wife pregnant. Then he turns himself and the team toward God, wins the state championship and finds his wife is indeed with child, and it’s his (we hope)!

Seidel told the superintendent that showing such a movie at a public middle school is very inappropriate. The superintendent agreed and ordered the movie to not be shown.

Rotten Tomatoes’ professional critics rated “Giants” at 13% on the Tomatometer, while audiences gave it 83%. Sometimes you just want a cheesy Christian drama. [Read Sarah Eucalano’s trenchant movie review on page 8.]

Michigan graduation prayer is stopped

A concerned student at Galesburg-Augusta High School in Galesburg, Mich., contacted FFRF hoping to stop prayers at her upcoming May 31 graduation.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert contacted Superintendent Tim Vagts on Feb. 18, noting that “The Supreme Court has settled this matter — high school graduations must be

secular to protect the freedom of conscience of all students.”

Vagts affirmed May 1 that prayer would not be included in the ceremony this year or at future graduations.

Lord’s Prayer off meeting agenda

The Board of Supervisors in Newberry Township, Pa., will no longer recite the Lord’s Prayer at monthly meetings. A concerned resident contacted FFRF to report the ongoing state/church violation.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter to each board supervisor, urging removal of the inappropriate, divisive and exclusively Christian prayer from public meetings.

The Harrisburg Patriot-News reported April 25 that the board’s most recent meeting did not include any government-led prayer.

Ohio city detached from prayer event

Columbus, Ohio, Mayor Michael Coleman and a city office coordinated and organized the interfaith prayer service, which took place on June 12, 2012, with a Baptist preacher as keynote speaker.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a complaint letter to Coleman on June 6, 2012, about the illegal coordination. She also filed an open records request, which showed heavy city involvement. The city’s website advertised the event, a city office was in charge of ticket sales and a city employee was the contact person for the event.

In a June 25, 2012, memo, Michael Reese, mayoral chief of staff, said that while Coleman would continue to lend his name to the breakfast, no city resources would be used to organize, plan or conduct the 2013 prayer service.

FFRF and a longtime FFRF member from Columbus monitored the May 9 event. Markert confirmed that instead of a city office, Coleman for Columbus, the mayor’s campaign organization, coordinated the event. Coleman for Columbus is barred from using government resources.

Disclaimer added to school posters

A concerned parent contacted FFRF when posters announcing the May 2 National Day of Prayer were put up at Tiffin High School in Tiffin, Ohio. The posters contained a bible quote from Matthew 12:21, “In His name the nations will put their hope.”

The posters did not identify if they had been put up by a student group or by the school district. The parent was also concerned that a National Day of Prayer event was scheduled at the school.

In a response April 23 to an April 19 letter from Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert, Superintendent Don Coletta said the posters were put up by a student group, Students Taking a New Direction (STAND). He said their May 2 event would not be held during school hours and participation would be voluntary.

Coletta said disclaimers were added to the posters to make it clear that the event was not sponsored or promoted by the school district.



FFRF’s Legal
Victories

School play not
the time to pray

A concerned parent of a student at North Knox Primary School, Bicknell, Ind., contacted FFRF after the principal delivered a Christian prayer at a kindergarten play.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a complaint letter March 13 to Superintendent Darrel Bobe: “The law is clear. School events must be secular to protect the freedom of conscience of all students. It is coercive and inappropriate for a principal at a school function to urge attendees to participate in prayer.”

Bobe responded April 17 that the district’s administrative staff would not lead, direct or ask students to engage in prayer in the future.

Schools end Gideons
bible handouts

The Gideons will no longer hand out bibles at graduation at St. Johns River State College, a public school in Palatka, Fla. FFRF received a complaint from a concerned student who was recently a part of a school ceremony at which the Gideons were allowed to distribute bibles.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel contacted one of the college’s general counsels in a Feb. 12 letter. “This matter is especially troublesome in light of the wide range of cultures and faiths

Theocrats, beware



FFRF salutes spring interns (left) Travis Bohn, Maddy Ziegler, Calli Miller and Jarvis Idowu, pictured with staff attorneys Rebecca Markert, Patrick Elliott, Liz Cavell and Andrew Seidel. Read about their victories at ffrf.org/legal/other-legal-successes.

that were represented at graduation,” Seidel said. “The culmination of years of secular, publicly funded education should not end in an exclusionary distribution of bibles at the hands of a faculty member.”

The executive vice president and general counsel responded March 6 to say there will no longer be bible distributions at college ceremonies.

• • •

FFRF stopped the Gideons from distributing New Testament bibles to fifth graders in the Gates County School District in Gatesville, N.C. A concerned parent contacted FFRF when her student came home with a permission slip to receive a bible from a member of the Ahoskie Gideon Camp at Buckland

Elementary on April 23.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent the district an open records request April 19 to get information on its distribution policies.

District legal counsel responded April 29 that the school had chosen to cancel the bible distribution. The attorney added that the district had updated its distribution policy to bar groups like the Gideons from handing out bibles.

Calif. city median
cleared of cross

The city of Santa Ana, Calif., removed a Latin cross attached to a tree

on a city median after getting an FFRF complaint on behalf of a resident.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Mayor Miguel Pulido about the violation Dec. 28, 2012: “The display of this patently religious symbol on this street confers government endorsement of Christianity in an extremely public way.”

Raul Godinez II, public works executive director, responded March 20 that the cross had been removed from the public median.

FFRF also resolved a state-church violation in March at an elementary school in Santa Ana, where students presented a play about Jesus’ birth. The administration said religious plays won’t be presented in the future.

Thanks to journalism intern Sarah Eucalano for compiling FFRF’s legal victories.

Christian movie review

‘Facing the Giants’ falls flat on its face

By Sarah Eucalano

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel spent part of a day recently stopping “Facing the Giants” from being shown to a captive audience of middle schoolers in a New Mexico school. Sarah Eucalano, FFRF’s journalism intern, overheard Andrew working the phones and, out of morbid curiosity, decided to watch a clip of the 2006 movie. Like a rubbernecker at a car crash, Sarah got sucked in and after work convinced a free-thinking friend to watch the entire two-hour movie with her.

The Christian football drama titled “Facing the Giants” is brought to us by Sherwood Baptist Church, the purveyors of other god-awful godly “movies” like “Fireproof” and “Courageous.” It features the character Grant Taylor, football coach at a Christian high school in rural Georgia.

We never learn what Coach Taylor teaches or see him teaching because what good Christian cares about book learning when there is football to be played or nonexistent deities to be praised?

Taylor has fallen on hard times. His car won’t run and things around the house keep breaking. His doctor recently told him he was infertile so his wife can’t have babies. His team, the Shiloh Eagles, hasn’t had a winning

season in six years, and he is constantly interrupting conversations about his imminent dismissal.

What’s a man to do?

If you’re thinking (perhaps, your first mistake), he could take the broken car in for repairs, consider adoption, take high school football less seriously and learn how to do household repairs, you could not be more wrong. The answer provided by this limpid flick is as hackneyed as the book from which its savior will rise: Jesus.

Sure, his wife could work more than part time as a florist, but a woman’s proper place is in the kitchen, and that’s where she is in almost every scene. All good Christians know that women are too delicate to work 40 hours a week or go to college. And how is she supposed to feel fulfilled when Grant is shooting blanks in the sack?

Unsurprisingly, he starts reading the Good Book and talking to himself an awful lot (they call this “praying”). And guess what? Everything soon turns around!

He becomes so enthusiastic about his newfound delusion that he brainwashes all of the Eagles. Even the movie’s comic relief, an assistant coach who happens to be the only black character, gets serious about prayer. Yup, the Shiloh Eagles must be the only football team in Georgia where every single player is white.

Actually, there is one reluctant play-

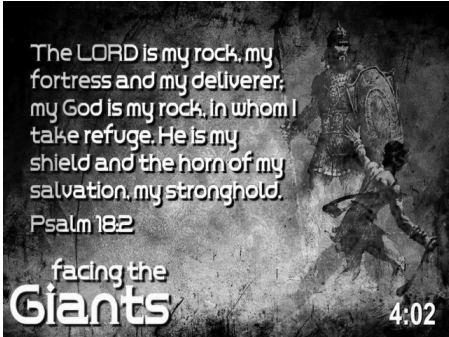
er to convert — Matt, a problem child at home and in school. He’s only at the Christian school (it’s amazing that they didn’t set it in a public school) because he got expelled from his last one.

Taylor confronts Matt and, Moses-like, tells him he needs to honor his mother and father.

Matt asks his coach if “he really believes in all that Jesus stuff.” Tritely and predictably, Taylor coaches Matt to accept Jesus into his heart. A scene minutes later has Matt accepting Jesus and calling his dad “sir.” Matt’s dad, who has a fancy office job, is so impressed with Matt’s improvement that he buys the coach a new car. (The obvious moral being if you give a child a stairway to heaven, you’ll be rewarded with earthly riches.)

Because Christians love a good “we don’t know how she got pregnant” story, Mrs. Taylor somehow is with child despite Grant’s medically diagnosed sterility. But we all know if you study science, as doctors are wont to do, that you’re probably wrong about everything. Or maybe God moved in mysterious ways through the milkman.

Most importantly, because we all know how much Jesus cares about the outcome of sporting events, the team starts winning. How could the Eagles fail to score with sage advice like “If we win, we praise Him, if we lose we praise Him,” and “Football is just one of the tools we use to honor God?”




The film ends at the state championship game, where the Eagles face the Giants — state champs for three years running due to their size and skill. All of this is thoroughly repeated just in case you’re too thick to catch the David vs. Goliath allusion the first time around.

The game ends with team runt David(!) kicking the winning field goal. David originally wanted to play soccer, but the school has no soccer team (soccer is for Europeans and homosexuals). His kick sails through the uprights, with a little help from a miraculous wind shift.

The unclimactic climax is Taylor’s pep talk to David: “Scripture says wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction.” The author of Matthew probably didn’t have field goals in mind when he wrote that, but one can’t be too thoughtful when reading scripture.

I’m glad God was there to guide the Eagles to a state championship. I wouldn’t want Him to get distracted with trivialities like curing AIDS and cancer or finally bringing us “whirled peas.” That would just be too big a waste of His time.

This ad ran in the Washington Post on May 2 (the National Day of Prayer).




"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute." - JFK

GOD & GOVERNMENT A DANGEROUS MIX

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL



Congress, in 1952, abridged freedom of conscience when, at the demand of Rev. Billy Graham, it designated an annual **National Day of Prayer**: "The President shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a National Day of Prayer, on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals." (Public Law 82-324) In 1988, at the behest of evangelicals, Congress set the first Thursday in May as the National Day of Prayer.

The Framers did not pray when they adopted our godless Constitution. The Constitution's only references to religion are exclusionary, such as there shall be no religious test for public office. The U.S. president and elected officials have neither the moral nor the constitutional authority to exhort citizens to pray and to gather with others "to turn to God in prayer," much less to tell citizens what to pray about, or set aside an entire day for prayer every year.

Our secular nation was founded in part by refugees seeking freedom of conscience and freedom from religious tyranny. Whether to pray, or believe in a god who answers prayer, is an intensely precious and personal decision protected under our First Amendment as a paramount matter of conscience.

DON'T LET THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT HIJACK OUR SECULAR CONSTITUTION

In enacting the National Day of Prayer, "the government has taken sides on a matter that must be left to individual conscience."*

"The same law that prohibits the government from declaring a National Day of Prayer also prohibits it from declaring a National Day of Blasphemy. Recognizing the importance of prayer to many people does not mean that the government may enact a statute in support of it, any more than the government may encourage citizens to fast during the month of Ramadan, attend a synagogue, purify themselves in a sweat lodge or practice rune magic."**"**

*U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb, April 15, 2010, *FFRF v. Obama*, 705 F. Supp. 2d 1039 (W.D. Wis. 2010) vacated on other grounds, 641 F.3d 803 (7th Cir. 2011).

PIOUS POLITICIANS: GET OFF YOUR KNEES AND GET TO WORK!

Nothing fails like prayer. The solutions to humanity's problems won't ever come from above. It's time to place our best energies in making *this* world better, *this* world our paradise. The only afterlife that ought to concern us is leaving our descendants a secure and pleasant future. When we have faith in ourselves, we won't need faith in gods.

The framers of our Constitution knew that religion in government is the enemy of freedom, of reason, of progress.

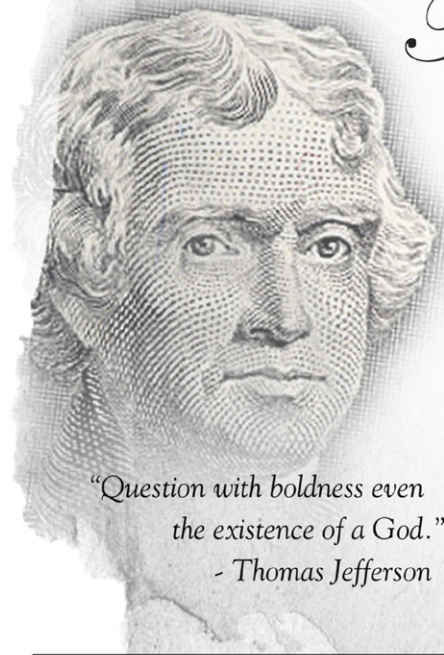
"There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state, as religion. Let it once enter our civil affairs, our government would soon be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed."**"**

Weiss v. District Board, 44 N.W. 967, 981 (1890)(Orton, J. concurring)

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5 years later: My memorable atheist mom

The following memory of FFRF member Anne Hodge is reprinted with the author's permission. It was first published on Daily Kos on April 7, 2013.



Anne G. Hodge in about 2005.

By Diana Read

My mother, Anne Garner Hodge, and I began preparing for her death a couple of years before the actual event, which was five years ago today. Diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia at Thanksgiving time in 1999, Mother had been finding it increasingly difficult to carry on. A miracle drug named Gleevec did much to make the disease bearable, but it was not without serious side effects.

Periodically, she would suffer a crisis and wind up in the hospital for a few days. We jokingly referred to it as “Mother’s resort.” One of her sisters warned her, however, that “one day you go in and you don’t come out.”

Between crises she continued to work as an administrative assistant at the Environmental Protection Agency, where she was part of a special senior citizens program. In fact, when her contract ended after 10 years, Mother was 85. She loved her job and was endlessly interested in people in all their fascinating variations of culture, ethnicity and religion. She made friends with everyone, from the mailroom person to the program manager.

Three years before she died, I wrote her obituary and sent it to her to approve. She made a few changes but left most of it as it was. Then she started thinking about the music she wanted people to hear at her memorial service. We advertised on Craigslist for someone to record the selections on a CD.

A young Asian man showed up at her house with his laptop and the right software. When he learned the purpose of the recording, he refused to accept payment. People can be so kind.

- Here’s the music she chose:
- Morning, Peer Gynt Suite, Suite No. 1, Grieg
 - Polovstian Dances (No. 5), Prince Igor, Borodin
 - Träumerei (No. 7), Scenes from Childhood, Schumann
 - Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, Nabucco, Verdi
 - Intermezzo, Cavalleria Rusticana, Mascagni
 - Meditation, Thaïs, Massenet
 - Humming Chorus, Madama Butterfly, Puccini
 - Prelude to Act III of La Traviata,

Verdi

- Evening Star, Tannhauser, Wagner

After the recording was completed, Mother got so carried away that she wanted to hold her memorial service while she was still alive, so she could enjoy the music and chat with people who attended. Gently, I pointed out that although most of her acquaintances in the Washington, D.C., area would be fine with that idea, her relatives from her native Texas would be deeply shocked or even outraged.

There were two wishes she definitely wanted carried out: She wanted a big, rollicking party, and she wanted a completely secular service.

Always back to atheism

All of her life, Mother loved to discuss religion. She investigated several: Unitarian Universalist, Baha’i, even participating in my rituals when I started a Dianic Wiccan circle. But she always returned to atheism, reveling in the works of Will Durant, Isaac Asimov and Winwood Reade.

When I was about 10, she told me of a passage she’d read in Reade’s *The Martyrdom of Man*. He’d recounted a story about an Arab man burying his 2-year-old daughter alive in the desert because he could no longer afford to feed her, and how he wept when she reached up to brush the sand out of his beard with her little hand. That passage haunts me to this day.

Mother belonged to the Freedom from Religion Foundation, subscribed to its publication Freethought Today and attended its conferences when they were held in our area. She also belonged to the Hemlock Society and attended its annual summer picnic.

We held her memorial service almost two weeks after her death. Some of the Texas relatives refused to fly, so we had to allow time for them to drive to Virginia.

“How can you plan a memorial service for someone who didn’t believe in anything?” my daughter asked, referring to my mother’s lack of religion. “But she did believe in something,” I replied.

As nearly as it could be put into words, my mother Anne believed in truth, justice and the American way, rather like Superman. She loved her country but hated prejudice and its root causes. No adherent of any religion could have been more compassionate than Mother — her house was open to all. One of her hobbies was writing letters to shut-ins and sending checks to people she thought needed cheering up.

We created the order of the memorial service ourselves. Although I can use word processing software sufficiently well for my own purposes, I’m completely at sea when it comes to desktop publishing. I therefore asked a fellow freelancer to create the PDF file for me. He did a beautiful job and refused to accept payment.

We held her memorial service at the Fort Myer Officers’ Club in Arlington, Va., where she had been a member for years. My nephew, who for the first 10 years of his childhood lived with his mother and grandmother in Anne’s house, arranged the catering and room rental.

Many of her EPA colleagues from

She wanted a big, rollicking party, and she wanted a completely secular service.

the Crystal City office attended, as did her three sisters and one of her two surviving brothers (she was the second of 10 children). My daughter and her family flew in from Austin. Numerous friends and several of her nieces attended.

After people helped themselves to food and drink, the buzz of conversation quieted as the DVD with music and photos that accompanied it played on a screen. As the photos of Anne appeared, there were “oh’s” and “ah’s,” but even those died away as the speakers rose one by one to stand at the podium.

One of her friends read A.E. Housman’s poem “With Rue My Heart Is Laden.” Another read “Remember” by Christina Rossetti. My nephew read “On Grandmothers,” an excerpt from Alexander McCall Smith’s *The Miracle at Speedy Motors*.

My nephew told how Mother read Shakespeare to him after she tucked him into bed at night when he was little. He spoke of her adventurous life. Besides her travels in the Far East and Europe, she’d counted dolphins from a boat in Monterey, Calif., met with members of the Nez Perce tribe in Idaho to study wolves in a preserve and attended cooking school in Presque Isle, Maine.

“The Earth belongs to the living,” Mother would say, and asked us to make sure she was cremated rather than buried. Insisting that she wanted to come back as a batch of tomatoes, she even asked us to scatter her ashes on the tomato bed. We could not bring ourselves to do that, but we did bury some of her ashes at the base of the pink lilac we planted in her honor in our backyard.

A couple of years later, we held a brief ritual in the cemetery of the small Texas town where she was born, and buried some of her ashes in the family plot there.

Her legacy lives on

But in some sense, Mother is with us still. She’s present in the dill I plant every other year, not because I pickle anything, but because she did. All sum-



Anne Maude Garner, born in 1920, at Texas Women’s College, circa 1938.

mer long, I pinch off a bit and inhale it when I pass the herb garden because the scent always reminds me of her.

She’s present in my husband when he patiently coaches our young Chinese friend in the use of everyday English. One of Mother’s chief joys was to coach her foreign-born friends in the use of our language.

She’s here when I visit the farmers’ market — something we did together — and when I entertain her grandchildren and great-grandchildren with festive holiday meals.

She’s present in my daughter, who lives life to the fullest and is quick to help those in need. She lives on in my elder son, who is unfailingly devoted to his family, both his original one and the one he’s about to begin.

She’s present when I visit my younger son’s house on a Saturday to find him listening to the Metropolitan Opera’s matinee broadcast. Mother, an opera lover to the end, always listened to the Saturday broadcast.

After the memorial service, I wrote to Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the Freedom from Religion Foundation. After describing the memorial service that had included no mention of deity, I ended, “Mother was an atheist from the age of 21 or so. We were very proud of her.”

Diana, who lives in Virginia, adds, “Mother was a truly remarkable woman who was utterly devoid of prejudice. She rejected the fundamentalist religion that surrounded her and threw off its shackles after her marriage to my father, who described himself as ‘an unregenerate atheist.’ ”

Editor’s note: Visit ffrf.org/faq/freethought to learn more about secular funerals and memorials.

I was glad not to be thrown into an Inquisition.

Cosmologist Stephen Hawking, telling a California Institute of Technology audience how Pope John Paul II warned scientists in the 1980s not to study the origins of the universe
space.com, 4-17-13

I’ll let you pray — you let me dance.
Rally theme in Frankfurt protesting “Tanzverbot,” or dance ban, applying to all clubs, discos and organized dancing on Good Friday in Germany
Wall Street Journal, 3-29-13

It’s almost like The Bible is all made

up. It can’t be though. That would mean that billions of people were really gullible.

Tweet by atheist entertainer Ricky Gervais
twitter.com, 3-28-13

First of all, I’m an atheist. The second thing is, I know that name [God particle] was a kind of joke and not a very good one. I think he shouldn’t have done that as it’s so misleading.
Professor Peter Higgs, 83, referring to the phrase coined for a popular science book in 1993 by Leon Lederman and Dick Teresi
The Scotsman, 4-8-13

In Memoriam



Cleo with Hank Kocol

Hank Kocol, 1937–2013

FFRF Lifetime Member Hank Kocol made his “Final Exit” on April 20, 2013, in Roseville, Calif.

He is survived by his wife, Cleo, also a Lifetime Member, and sons, Henry Kocol and Steven Hall.

Born on July 16, 1937, Hank grew up in Chicago, attended Loyola University and received his master’s at Purdue University. He spoke seven languages, worked for the federal government and headed state agencies. As a health physicist, he worked in radiation protection, giving talks worldwide. He was a member of the Renaissance Society, various local freethinking organizations and the Sun City Democrats. He founded the Speakers Club in Sun City, Ariz. He was a founding/charter member of Atheists and Other Freethinkers, served as AOF president and was co-founder of the Sun City Humanists.

A world traveler, he and Cleo also logged 16 trips to Hawaii. He was an inveterate reader, enjoyed skydiving, hiking, the symphony, ballet and theater and never passed a museum without going in.

A friend called him a “polymath, one of those ‘wow’ personalities who accomplished so much and was so quiet about it, you just saw the surface, points and ripples.”

According to FFRF member Ken Nahigian, Hank and Cleo met at a Parents Without Partners meeting “and almost immediately fell into a mutual enchantment. Hank invited Cleo for dinner. He was so nervous he dropped a plate of spaghetti.”

Not wanting to lose his dignity or become a burden, he took his death into his own hands.

“I do want freethinkers to realize that Hank was extremely brave, con-

fident in his choice of his Final Exit,” Cleo said. “Because he had Alzheimer’s, he knew he had a short window of opportunity to self-deliver. He did it because he was already losing parts of his long-term memory and did not want to become a burden to me or lose all his intelligence, dignity and sense of self. He had always done The New York Times crossword in pen. In March he began to have trouble completing the puzzle. In April he could only fill in four or five words. We both knew it was time. I had first noticed the signs 10 years ago, and two years later he acknowledged his difficulties and was diagnosed. April 20 this year was a beautiful day in many ways, and later I may be able to talk about it in full. But he lived a full life, and I will miss him.”

Judy Saint, director of FFRF’s new Sacramento-area chapter, recounts: “Cleo tells me one of his proudest moments was presenting the AHA Humanist of the Year award to Isaac Asimov. Others felt Mr. Asimov might not attend due to his fear of flying, but Mr. Asimov told Hank, ‘I was wondering when you would get around to asking me!’ Hank was able to introduce Mr. Asimov, making him smile as he delivered an inside line from one of Mr. Asimov’s books.”

“I was the beneficiary of Hank and Cleo’s hospitality, staying in their home for an event they coordinated with Atheists and Other Freethinkers in the Sacramento area,” said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “Hank was a gentle man and firm freethinker, as well as a major booster of Cleo’s feminist activism. We’ll all miss him greatly.”

A celebration of Hank’s life will be held May 18.

John Tomasin, 1924–2013

John Tomasin, 88, West New York, N.J., died Feb. 20, 2013.

He was born May 28, 1924. After graduating from high school in 1942, he served three years in the Navy during World War II. He attended John Marshall College and later was a cum laude graduate of Rutgers Law School in 1950. He practiced law for over 50 years, served as Guttenberg town attorney for 25 years and as a municipal judge for nine years.

John was past commander for the

Disabled American Veterans Chapter 49 and legal adviser for 25 years to the state chapter’s judge advocate.

Survivors include Ruth (Schuler) Tomasin, his wife of more than 60 years; two sons, Davis Tomasin and Neal (Michele) Tomasin; two grandchildren; and a brother, Martin Tomasin. He was preceded in death by a son, Gordon J. Tomasin.

John was a longtime FFRF member. The Foundation offers sincerest condolences to John’s family and friends.



Rose Zerwick

Rose Alice Zerwick, 1918–2013

Freedom From Religion Foundation Life Member Rose Alice Zerwick, age 95, died as she had wished, at home in Madison, Wis., surrounded by her four children on April 10, 2013.

She was born March 6, 1918, in Chicago and was adopted as an infant. She cherished her childhood, growing up on her loving adoptive family’s farm near Carmel, Ind., with a lamb, dogs, cats and her father’s prize-winning chickens.

In 1942 in Indianapolis, she married her devoted husband Otto Zerwick, a Madison native. After his Army discharge in 1946, they moved to Madison, where they raised their children: James Zerwick (Susan), Ellen Zerwick Van Fleet (Jeffrey), David Zerwick (Nina) and Susan Zerwick (Daryl Scherkenbach), all of whom survive her. She is also survived by her four grandchildren: Peter Van Fleet, Tyler

Van Fleet, Bradley Zerwick and Douglas Zerwick.

Her husband Otto, with whom she had traveled much of the world, died in 1993. She was dedicated to her family and led an exemplary and quiet life, in good health to the end. She played volleyball in the Madison School Recreation program until at least age 80, volunteered at Olbrich Gardens and generously supported the Madison Public Library and the University of Wisconsin. She was a voracious reader, an excellent seamstress, an avid gardener, Packer fan and a wonderful mother.

Rose had been a member of FFRF since 1987. Her son, Jim, is FFRF treasurer.

“Rose was a stalwart FFRF’er and steadfast supporter. Our condolences to her family,” said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

Letter brings Oklahoma commandments down

An Oklahoma school district learned a valuable lesson thanks to FFRF and its student complainant. On May 1, FFRF sent a letter to Muldrow Public Schools Superintendent Ron Flanagan asking for removal of numerous Ten Commandments in classrooms.

Gage Pulliam, a student at Muldrow High School, had told FFRF the commandments placards were in every classroom.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott informed Flanagan the displays flagrantly violated the Establishment Clause and ignored Supreme Court precedent. Some teachers initially refused to take down the commandments, but FFRF was informed by the school district’s attorney that they had all been removed by May 10.

“This was a shocking and egregious violation,” said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “This is settled law.”

At the May 12 School Board meet-

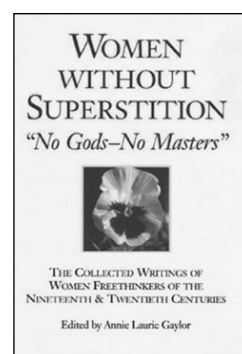
ing, Flanagan told an overflow crowd that the plaques were removed. “We understood some did not agree with that decision. As a school district, we have an obligation to demonstrate respect and adherence to the law.”

Flanagan said the school district’s attorney advised the board that FFRF would prevail in a lawsuit.

Fox News reported there were about 100 plaques donated by residents in district classrooms. Muldrow’s population is about 3,500.

“People think I’m attacking their religion,” Pulliam told 5-News. “I’m really not. I’m trying to help others so they can feel equal in a world, in a town. I just want them to feel equal.”

Flanagan said the plaques are stored in his office, adding that they’ll likely be returned to donors. He said he respects all the students, including Pulliam, for standing up for what they believe in.



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Freethought Hall to be ‘born again’

Continued from front page
for a very kind donor from Florida (who wants to remain anonymous at this point). The spacious library will be named for Joel Landon and Wanda Beers, who generously gave \$100,000.
Stephen and Diane Uhl have contributed an awe-inspiring \$250,000. The studio will be named the “Stephen Uhl Out of God’s Closet Studio,” the second story will become the Diane Uhl Legal Wing, and Diane’s name will be inscribed on the grand piano “of Dan’s choice” for the new auditorium.
The courtyard/garden patio, cupola and first and third-floor wings are

still available for “naming rights” as of publication.
FFRF, being frugal, has put aside savings for this much-anticipated expansion, with a goal of raising \$1.5 million. Freethought Today will carry a running tally of donors and donations (see next page for donations received by April 30). Donors’ names will be published only with express permission.
Personalized handcrafted tiles with room for name only (or name “in memoriam”) in the vestibule are available for \$2,500. Paving stones for the patio may be additionally acquired. A 6x12-inch paving stone is \$1,000. A 12x12-

inch stone is \$2,000 (while space lasts). All donations will be recorded in a keepsake book.
FFRF receives Charity Navigator’s highest 4-star rating. Donations to FFRF are deductible for income-tax purposes to the fullest extent of the law. Congress has extended the IRA charitable rollover through 2013 for seniors age 70½, allowing them to transfer as much as \$100,000 per year from a traditional IRA directly to FFRF.
Thank you to all who are investing in FFRF’s future and growth!
ffrf.org/donate/buildingfund

Right: FFRF’s current office building will soon expand.



This ad ran in The Progressive thanks to members who donate to FFRF’s advertising fund!

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Clarence Darrow



Emma Goldman

They all rejected the supernatural.*

They all worked to improve *this* world.

*For details on these and other famous freethinkers and atheists, visit ffrf.org/day

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1-800-335-4021 FFRF.ORG

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This tally lists building fund donations received by FFRF as of April 30, 2013. Freethought Today will list subsequent donations in future issues. No donors will be identified by name without express permission from the donor. (If you plan to donate to the Building Fund and would like such recognition, please be sure to check the box on the donation coupon mailed to you or online at ffrf.org/ffrf-building-fund-contribution-page granting such permission.) If you gave a building fund gift by or before mid-April which does not appear to be reflected in this list, feel free to contact FFRF so we can check our records and publish your gift. Contact FFRF Bookkeeper Katie Daniel at 608/256-8900 9-5 Central weekdays or email: Katie@ffrf.org.



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Total: \$367,151.87

Atheists guaranteed cootie-free



By Dawn Brittain

During the April 4 City Council meeting on the Vietnam War memorial in Mingus Park [in Coos Bay, Ore., a monument with a Latin cross about which FFRF has formally complained], I was flanked on either side by two men: my husband and a friend from out of town. There was a perceived threat to safety due to the overwhelming unpopularity of my viewpoint and

provocative online comments. I was outnumbered about 300 to four. It pleased me to learn that when I spoke, those with opposing views listened to me quietly and attentively, affording me the same respect during my five minutes of speaking time that I had afforded them during their combined two-and-a-half hours of time. Something else happened that took me completely by surprise. During a short restroom break, I slid over into the empty seat beside me to lean forward and speak to friends in the next row up. The woman in the seat next to me repeatedly sighed and tsk'd in an irritated way. Eventually, she said to me in a sarcastic tone, "Excuse me."

I had no idea what she appeared to be so bothered about. She finally sputtered, "Could you move to your own seat, I'm saving this (chair) for a family member!" This occurred two hours into the meeting, and, as I expected, no family member arrived to sit in the seat which remained empty for the rest of the meeting. The woman put her coat on the seat. For the final 45 minutes of the meeting, each time I shifted position or

Secular humanism is a philosophy of life, not a medical condition.

crossed my legs, her head would whip around as she huffed sardonically to make sure I wasn't disturbing her coat. I think her behavior is most likely the exception and not the norm that people of religion feel toward people of irreligion. But for anyone who shares the sentiment of this woman, whose actions I found so foreign and so odd, please know that atheism is not contagious. We don't have "cooties" and you can't "catch" what we've got. Secular humanism is a philosophy of life, not a medical condition. Thank you to the four people who shook my hand at the end of the meeting, and for the kind words of two of those attendees. They shared with me that although they disagreed with my viewpoint, they respected what I said and were glad that when I spoke, it was not a negative commentary on re-

ligion. You have no idea how very much appreciated this human kindness and the warmth of your connection truly was! The South Coast Secular Society is grateful to FFRF for its interest in our church/state violation. Although I don't enjoy the stress and negative attention this has garnered, if the end result is that people begin talking about this topic with increased acceptance and understanding of irreligion, partnered by less religious bullying and exclusion, then this will have been worth the effort. FFRF member Dawn Brittain is active in the South Coast Secular Society and has been writing monthly secular articles and weekly gardening articles for her local paper for about a year. "The editor is an advocate of freedom of speech and does not shy away from controversy," Dawn says. She also tends to her own extensive gardens and volunteers for the Coquille Valley Seed Library and Coquille Community Garden. "It is my hope that acclimating people of religion to the philosophies of secular humanism by positive words and actions will eventually lead to better communication and understanding."

Meet a Member

Priest's JFK sermon turned her from church

Name: Cheryl Kolbe.
Where I live: Portland, Ore.
Where and when I was born: Boston in 1946.
Family: I've been married for 43 years to Ed, and we have two daughters. Lisa lives in Orange, Calif., with her daughter, Jaylee, whom she adopted when she was 11. Sarah lives in England with Nick, her longtime partner.
Education: B.A. in mathematics from the University of New Hampshire. Informal Education: No degree in motherhood, but it certainly presents a wonderful list of opportunities for learning.
Occupation: I retired in 2004 from Portland Community College, where I was Student Systems Support manager with responsibility to implement software for Enrollment Services.
How I got where I am today: I feel like I was born a doubter, but until I was well into adulthood, religion was just there and I didn't think about it too much. I was raised Catholic, and the last time I went to the Catholic Church was when President Kennedy was shot. The priest chewed us all out for coming to church then but not in recent weeks. That seemed to miss the point and that was the end of my being Catholic. We raised our daughters in the Unitarian Church and heard many interesting speakers. I didn't feel the need to really think about if I believed in religion per se or in the existence of God. The kicker for me followed a book club discussion in 2009 of the very Christian novel titled *The Shack*. Except for me, the entire group was Christian and the discussion was very religious and all about how Christianity is truly what life is all about. I left feeling that my opinions and beliefs were completely discounted by

the group. Driving home, I spotted one of FFRF's billboards, joined the group and the rest is history.
Where I'm headed: By being open about being an atheist, I hope to help to alter the negative opinions some people have of atheists.
Person in history I admire and why: Katharine Hepburn. She was an independent woman long before it was fashionable. She was extremely talented and willing to be her own person. I love her statement "I'm an atheist and that's it." It inspires me to be more upfront about who I am.
A quotation I like: "First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a communist. Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me." (Martin Niemöller)
These are a few of my favorite things: Cross-country skiing, hiking, kayaking, cooking, gardening, reading.
These are not: People telling me that Jesus is going to choose me someday, barking dogs, manipulative behavior.
My doubts about religion started: When I was about 12 years old. My older sister was dating a guy who was Jewish, and my mother said, "Well, he's a really nice guy, but you wouldn't want to marry him because he is Jewish." I so clearly remember thinking that yes, you would need to talk about what you would do on Hanukkah and on Christmas, but aren't there bigger issues in building a marriage than religion? I



Ed and Cheryl Kolbe have spent more than four decades together.

think I just didn't buy into the idea of one true religion.
Instead of "thank God" or "God bless you," I'm more likely to simply express happiness — glad you feel better today, or so happy it is such a beautiful day. Gesundheit is what I am likely to say when someone sneezes.
Why I'm a freethinker: I'm a very analytical person. Evolution makes complete sense to me, and I can't make sense of the concept of religion and of God. I'm far more comfortable with being responsible for my own well-being and making decisions based on logic and reasoning.
Life goes so much better when I make choices based on the options available to me rather than to wish or pray for other options.
Ways I promote freethought: I have been looking for ways to promote freethought that go beyond being an FFRF Lifetime Member. After the 2012 conference, I felt that there was enough energy in the Portland area to create a local chapter here. In February, we were approved, and I hope to lead this group to actively promote the goals of FFRF. Although Portland is an area which is generally quite accepting of nonbelievers, there is still much that can be done.
I wish you'd have asked me: Why I think FFRF is such an impressive organization. Is it because it's filled with extremely talented people and they run an organization that ranks 4 out of 4 on Charity Navigator? Or is it because they have an inspiring conference and they produce a fantastic newspaper? Or is it because they are so successful in supporting separation of church and state? FFRF is certainly all of these things. But what impresses me the most is that they maintain respect for everyone's personal and political beliefs, and at the same time remain very clear and consistent about their mission.

Newsnotes

Evangelicals resist new Scouts proposal

A proposal by the Boy Scouts of America would let gays join but continue to bar gay adults from serving as troop leaders.

The decision, announced April 19 by the BSA Executive Committee, must be approved by the roughly 1,400 voting members of the National Council at its meeting in Texas in late May.

"No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone," reads the resolution.

Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian lobbying group, urged the organization "to do the right thing and not yield to any societal pressure."

Perkins added, "For a century, Scouts have stood honorably for God and country. Scouting has never been about political correctness. Making it so today would have disastrous results for the organization." BSA has made no move to permit nontheist children to join.

Faith-healing parents lose second child

Faith-healing Philadelphia parents Herbert and Catherine Schaible have watched another child die. Their 8-month-old son Brandon died April 19. Autopsy results are pending.

The Schaibles belong to First Century Gospel Church, which substitutes prayer for medical care. They were convicted of involuntary manslaughter in 2009 when their 2-year-old son died of bacterial pneumonia. The sentence included 10 years' probation and an order to arrange continuing medical care for their remaining children.

Child welfare workers are monitoring the medical needs of the seven other Schaible children, ages 3 to 18, who have been placed temporarily in three foster homes.

Kent Schaible died in 2009 after having pneumonia for two weeks. "We tried to fight the devil, but in the end the devil won," Herbert Schaible told a social worker investigating Kent's death.

Nelson Clark, 71, the Schaibles' pastor, told a Philadelphia Inquirer reporter that God didn't want the children to die. They died due to some "spiritual lack" in the Schaibles' lives, Clark said. "They realize they must get back to God, to seek wisdom from him, to find where the spiritual lack is in their heart and life."

Boys' herpes tied to Orthodox ritual

Two New York City baby boys contracted herpes after undergoing an ultra-Orthodox Jewish circumcision ritual called *metzitzah b'peh* in which the mohel uses his mouth to "cleanse" the penile wound and suck away blood.

A week after the ceremony, one boy developed a fever and a lesion on his scrotum, according to the city Health Department. The city started requiring parents to sign consent forms in 2000 to acknowledge awareness of the ritual's risk.

Fox News reported that Dr. William Schaffner, chair of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University, said the

ritual is always unsafe. "These terrible infections are completely preventable. They should not occur in the 21st century with our scientific knowledge."

Father's killing called 'will of God'

Witnesses said Reshad Riddle, 25, started yelling about God and Allah after fatally shooting his father, 52-year-old Richard Riddle, after an Easter service March 31 at Hiawatha Church of God in Christ in Ashtabula, Ohio.

Associate Pastor Sean Adams told the Star Beacon that Reshad Riddle, still holding a handgun, yelled that the killing was "the will of Allah. This is the will of God."

Ahlquist gets First Amendment Award

Rhode Island teen Jessica Ahlquist, who successfully challenged her school district's prayer banner in federal court, is the 2013 "education" category recipient of a Hugh Hefner Foundation First Amendment Award. Last year's education recipient was Zack Kopplin, who led the successful effort to repeal the Louisiana Science Education Act that promoted teaching creationism and so-called intelligent design in public school science classes.

Ahlquist will receive \$5,000, a commemorative plaque and a trip to the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles for a May 22 reception with other recipients and judges.

Atheist's soles slowed by believers?

The Atheist shoe company, based in Berlin, suspects that religious U.S. postal workers may be behind slowed delivery or even nondelivery of Atheist orders.

The firm found out last year due to customer feedback about the problem. American customers wondered if the Atheist name on packaging materials was behind the slowdown.

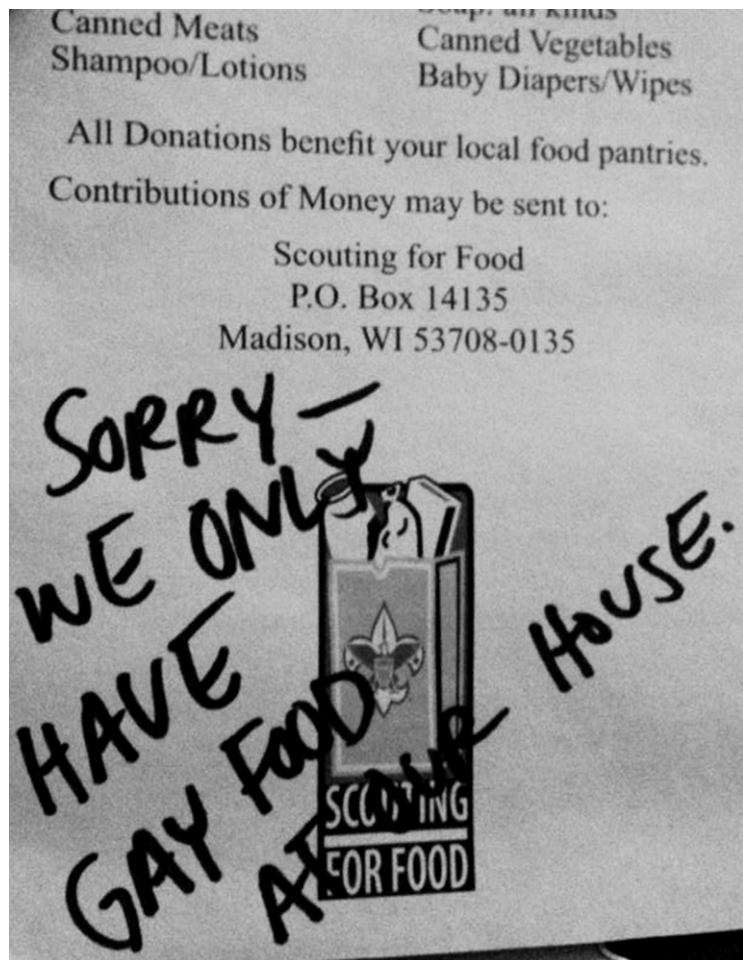
As a test, the company sent two packages each to 89 customers in 49 states, one sealed with Atheist-branded tape and the other with plain tape. The company stays neutral. Sure enough, the Atheist-taped packages took an average of three days longer to arrive, and of 10 that didn't arrive at all, nine were Atheist-taped.

According to a Religion News Service story, package delivery was just as likely to slow down in the Pacific Northwest as in the Deep South. "There was no regional variation at all."

Egyptians targeting satires of Islam

Satirist Bassem Youssef, known as "the Jon Stewart of Egypt," was released on bail March 31 after prosecutors questioned him on charges that he insulted Islam and President Mohamed Morsi. Youssef tweeted that the bail was for three separate cases.

Youssef, 39, is a surgeon who became vocal during the 2011 "Arab Spring." He "has regularly derided members of the government and those he says misuse religion for political gains," reported the Abu Dhabi National. "We



Wisconsin FFRF member Michele Ritt let her local Scouting group know her family's feelings on a food drive doorhanger.

are not the ones who insult religion, all we do is expose the channels that have misused religion and harmed it more than anyone else."

Comedian Adel Imam narrowly avoided a prison sentence last year for "insulting Islam" through his depictions of characters. A higher court overturned the three-month sentence and fine in May.

In January 2012, telecom tycoon Naguib Sawiris was sued for posting an image on Twitter of Mickey and Minnie Mouse wearing conservative Islamic clothing.

Prayer power puffed by Church of England

The British Humanist Association criticized the Church of England in March for "seeking to mislead the public" about a poll question on the power of prayer. As reported by Huffington Post-UK, the one-question survey of church members, conducted by ICM Research, asked, "Irrespective of whether you currently pray or not, if you were to pray for something at the moment, what would it be for?"

The church reported the result "four out of five believe in the power of prayer."

Andrew Copson, BHA chief executive, called that "a desperate attempt to have an Easter good news story through misleading claims conceal[ing] the reality of the religious demography of our country." He added, "If you asked someone 'Irrespective of whether you make wishes of genies, what would you wish for?' or 'Irrespective of whether you believe in Father Christmas, what would you ask him for?' you could hardly use the responses to demonstrate wide public belief in genies or Santa Claus."

Study: Mother Teresa far from saintly

An academic paper by Serge Larivée and Genevieve Chenard of the University of Montreal's Department of Psychoeducation and Carole Sénéchal of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education debunks the myth of Mother Teresa. The paper was published in

the March issue of the journal *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* and analyzes 287 documents on Mother Teresa's life.

In an article on *Vendredi News* headlined "Mother Teresa: anything but a saint," the researchers note "her rather dubious way of caring for the sick, her questionable political contacts, her suspicious management of the enormous sums of money she received, and her overly dogmatic views regarding, in particular, abortion, contraception, and divorce."

Before she died, Mother Teresa had opened 517 facilities for the poor and sick in more than 100 countries. Some doctors who visited them described the missions as "homes for the dying" where many people languished for lack of food and medical care.

The study notes her response to criticism cited by the later journalist Christopher Hitchens: "There is something beautiful in seeing the poor accept their lot, to suffer it like Christ's Passion. The world gains much from their suffering."

After accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, she commented that "the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a direct war, a direct killing, direct murder by the mother herself."

Pakistani youth favor Islamic law

A survey of Pakistanis ages 18-29 showed 38% believe the country should be governed by Islamic law and only 29% think democracy is the best political system. The study was conducted between December 2012 and January 2013 by the British Council.

"The results are not surprising, and we face a really confused young population that is brainwashed with visions of a glorious Islamic past and the gritty reality of unemployment, insecurity and political turmoil," Raza Rumi, an Islamabad-based writer and analyst, told *The Independent*.

"The last five years of democracy have also been misrepresented by the same elements who are permanent stakeholders in nonrepresentative forms of governance."

State/Church Bulletin

Board member resigns over meeting prayer

Leonard Pryor resigned May 3 from the Rockingham County Board of Education in Eden, N.C., citing the board's consideration of opening its meetings with a prayer.

"We took an oath of office to support the Constitution of the United States, and it is my opinion that recent motions and topics of discussion could subject Rockingham County schools and its individual board members to the threat of lawsuits in the future," he wrote.

The school board starts meetings with a moment of silence, but in April a member asked the board to consider opening with a prayer. On April 22, Pryor threatened to walk out if a vote was held that night.

With Pryor off the panel, the board voted 7-3 on May 13 against opening with prayer.

"Our forefathers recognized the danger in having a government endorsing any particular religion," board Vice Chairman Hal Griffin said. "We are a government body."

Hell breaks loose in wake of 'fetus dolls'

The Roswell, N.M., School District didn't violate five students' rights by stopping them from further distributing "fetus dolls" with an anti-abortion message, the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled 3-0 on April 8.

School administrators could have reasonably forecast that the two-inch rubber dolls would cause a disruption at two high schools, Education Week reported.

The students belong to an evangelical youth group called Relentless. In January 2010, they planned to distribute some 2,500 rubber fetus dolls at school.

At Goddard High, about 300 dolls were given to students before administrators shut down the distribution. "Meanwhile, some students tore the small heads off the dolls and bounced them around classrooms like rubber balls. Some students used the dolls to plug toilets, while a few of the dolls were covered in hand sanitizer and lighted on fire. And other students found lewd uses for the rubber dolls," the story said.

A Roswell High security officer called the distribution a "disaster."

Doll distribution "would likely merit First Amendment protection outside the school context," the court said. "Inside the school walls, however, we must consider whether the expression was, or was reasonably forecast to be, disruptive."

In school, "the government has a compelling interest in protecting the educational mission of the school and ensuring student safety," the court ruled.

Top Louisiana court kills private vouchers

Louisiana's Supreme Court has ruled that the funding method for a private school tuition voucher program pushed through the Legislature last year by Gov. Bobby Jindal is unconstitutional.

A 6-1 decision May 7 upheld a state

district court ruling that the state constitution forbids using money earmarked for public schools in the state's Minimum Foundation Program to pay for private school tuition.

The Jindal administration has pushed on with the voucher program, despite the previous court rulings. Roughly 8,000 students have been approved for vouchers in the coming school year. It remains unclear how the program will be funded, now that use of the MFP money has been struck down.

Judge dismisses suit by Islamophobes

U.S. District Judge Patrick Duggan dismissed a lawsuit in Detroit on May 14 against Wayne County law enforcement by three members of the Bible Believers, who alleged their First and 14th Amendment rights were violated when they denounced Islam at last year's Arab International Festival in Dearborn.

The American Freedom Law Center, representing the plaintiffs, said in a press release it will appeal to the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals and will take the case to the Supreme Court if necessary, the Dearborn Press and Guide reported.

The group claimed law enforcement didn't protect them when they were being pelted with debris by angry festival-goers. Defendants' attorney Nabih Ayad said the plaintiffs' rights weren't violated because they were agitating children and were a threat to public safety.

Duggan wrote in his ruling that the Bible Believers wore T-shirts or carried banners with messages like "Only Jesus Christ can save you from sin and hell," "Turn or burn" and "Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. All others are thieves and robbers."

One Bible Believer carried a pig's head on a stick. Video shows group member Ruben Chavez, aka Ruben Israel, shouting through a megaphone, "Your prophet is nothing but an unclean swine. Your prophet married a 7-year-old girl. Your prophet is a pedophile, and your prophet teaches you not to believe in Jesus as the Christ."

'Jesus rifles' quashed again by Army

The U.S. Army has ordered soldiers at Fort Wainwright, a base near Fairbanks, to remove references to bible verses on their weapon scopes, the Alaska Dispatch reported April 23.

Michigan-based defense contractor Trijicon supplied the scopes, which referenced John 8:12 and Second Corinthians 4:6 near the serial numbers.

Army spokesman Matthew Bourke told Fox News that Trijicon agreed to remove all bible references from future deliveries. The company's scopes on so-called "Jesus rifles" first raised concerns in 2010 when Trijicon delivered them with inscriptions to the Army and Marine Corps.

Florist sued for denial of services

The ACLU of Washington has filed a discrimination suit in state court against Arlene's Flowers, Richland,



Voice of reason

FFRF member Justin Vacula was a one-man protest (with a supportive passerby joining him for a photo) at a National Day of Prayer event on public property May 2 in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Justin also protested religion on city property last December by applying for a permit to place FFRF's "There are no gods" winter solstice banner, which was vandalized.

Wash., for failing to sell a Kennewick male couple flowers for their wedding.

State Attorney General Bob Ferguson also announced April 9 his office has filed a consumer protection lawsuit against Arlene's. The suit alleges that Arlene's owner Baronelle Stutzman told longtime customer Robert Ingersoll on March 1 that she couldn't sell him flowers for his wedding "because of [her] relationship with Jesus Christ."

Nebraska school board silences prayer

Prayer at the start of Kearney [Neb.] Public Schools Board of Education meetings is unconstitutional, the board was told by its attorney, according to a story in the Kearney Hub.

"We've received information from our school attorney and were told, I quote from our attorney, 'We advise against such practice as courts have determined that school board prayers are unconstitutional,' " board President Tim Higgins said at the April 8 meeting.

Board member Dave Glover told his colleagues that they took an oath to abide by the Constitution when taking office. "I would find it difficult for us to support a practice that has been deemed to be unconstitutional."

Board member Doug McCarty suggested a moment of silence instead of prayer. "My personal beliefs can't affect what is right and best for the schools."

Mandate challenges mostly on hold

In *Ave Maria University v. Sebelius*, a March 29 decision, a Florida federal district court dismissed on ripeness grounds a challenge by a Catholic university to the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive coverage mandate, Religion Clause report. The court said in part:

"The crux of Defendants' ripeness argument is that they are in the pro-

cess of amending the challenged regulations to accommodate religious concerns and that they have represented that they will never enforce the regulations in their current form against Ave Maria or any similarly situated entity. Ave Maria concedes that it is eligible for a temporary enforcement safe harbor."

According to the Christian Post, many of the 53 cases filed by religious institutions have been rejected in court because the rules of the mandate have yet to be finalized.

Also on March 29, the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals granted Hobby Lobby's petition for an en banc hearing on whether to halt enforcement of the mandate requiring coverage for emergency contraceptives such as the "morning-after pill."

Tax money questioned for rabbinical school

Beth Medrash Govoha, an all-male, Orthodox Jewish rabbinical school in Lakewood, N.J., was awarded \$10.6 million in taxpayer funds in April for a new library and academic center, among the highest designated for a private institution.

A Newark Star-Ledger analysis showed the college persuaded Gov. Chris Christie and lawmakers to make last-minute changes to the \$1.3 billion funding bill to get the school on the list. Rabbi Aaron Kotler heads the school and traveled with Christie to Israel last year.

Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, D-Essex, said she's concerned about tax dollars going to a college with admission standards she said resemble a "religious test."

The funding bill made private schools like Catholic Seton Hall University, with open admission, eligible, but excluded "any educational institution dedicated primarily to the education or training of ministers, priests, rabbis or other professional persons in the field of religion."

After FFRF/ACLU suit gets portrait removed

Jesus ‘resurrected’ for Day of Prayer

Continued from front page

coverage, and we cannot risk taxpayer money at this time,” Superintendent Phil Howard wrote in a statement carried by the Columbus Dispatch.

Howard told the Associated Press: “At the end of the day, we just couldn’t roll the dice with taxpayer money. When you get into these kinds of legal battles, you’re not talking about money you can raise with bake sales and car washes. It’s not fair to take those resources from our kids’ education.”

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor called removal of the painting “a major victory” and the presence of the painting “a major violation.” She and FFRF Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert, who wrote the January letter of complaint leading to the lawsuit, both expressed surprise that the conflict got this far.

“It’s a victory for the Establishment Clause,” commented Nick Worner of the ACLU of Ohio.

The litigation against the school district continues. It is represented by the Liberty Institute, an aggressive Texas

Religious Right legal group.

However, the painting made a startling “resurrection” on May 2, the National Day of Prayer. Students and what appeared to be adults or faculty members gathered in a prayer circle around the Jesus painting, which was resting against the flagpole.

The ACLU of Ohio and FFRF inquired how the painting came to be resurrected from storage at the high school for this occasion. Attorneys for the school district replied that “the Fellowship of Christian Athletes held a prayer event at 7:40 a.m.” before school for five to 10 minutes, and that neither the principal nor superintendent participated or had been made aware of the gathering.

The defendants’ attorneys claimed “many members of FCA are also members of the Hi-Y Club,” which has claimed ownership of the painting. The religious painting allegedly was presented to the high school by the Hi-Y Club, a Christian student club, in the late 1940s.



A National Day of Prayer group gathered May 2 around the flagpole at Jackson High School. The “Head of Christ” portrait sits at the base of the pole.

Students, with teachers’ OK, skipped classes to pray

FFRF wants Georgia teachers, students disciplined

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is asking Lumpkin County Schools in Georgia to discipline the four staffers who left their classrooms unattended and about 50 students who skipped class to join a prayer rally that started in a coach’s office.

In a May 9 letter to Superintendent Dewey Moye, FFRF also raised other concerns about religion in Lumpkin County High School in Dahlonega.

The letter from Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel was sent to Moye after he publicly stated that there would be no “consequences for any employee or any student” involved in the May 1 episode. FFRF informed Moye that such leniency shows unconstitutional favoritism to religion and that it will “encourage participants to repeat the crime.” As one student participant told that media: “I would do it again tomorrow.”

Media reported that the prayer started about 7:30 a.m. and lasted for more than six hours. One student claimed that “between 12 and 15 fel-

low students turned their lives over to Christ during the prayer.”

FFRF made it clear that “We are not asking you to punish people for exercising their religious faith. We are asking you to discipline teachers for violating the law and abandoning their duties and to discipline students for skipping class.”

The letter pointed out that “Teachers left classrooms unattended — the gravity of that offense cannot be overstated.”

FFRF also pointed out the complicity of the principal: “Either he knew this was happening and didn’t stop it or he did not know that a significant portion of his charges and employees were violating the Constitution, state law and school rules. Each is a serious dereliction of duty.”

Several new concerns about the unconstitutional encroachment of religion in Lumpkin County Schools indicate that the illegal prayer episode was foreseeable. FFRF has received multiple allegations of the highly re-

ligious nature of high school athletic programs, including coaches subjecting students to their personal religious beliefs and pressuring them about religion at games, practices or in classes they teach.

Seidel wrote, “We have been told that during practices, coaches ask students why they did not go to church. FFRF also received an allegation that “Kids were forced to wear team shirts saying something akin to ‘God, Family,

School, Basketball.’ ”

“Perhaps this is why students thought it acceptable to skip class in violation of the Georgia compulsory attendance law,” Seidel added.

FFRF requests that “all teachers and students be made aware of the proper constitutional boundaries regarding prayer in public schools — that they not lead, encourage or suggest that students pray and that they not participate in any student-led prayer.”

Overheard

An evidence-based case can be made for why many religious people are less accepting of atheists than gays. Most aren’t worried about homosexuals “converting” heterosexuals, but they worry about hearing sound arguments from atheists that might resonate with their flock. You’re much more likely to stay with your childhood religion if no one ever questions those beliefs.

Herb Silverman, Secular Coalition of America founder, “What atheists can learn from the gay rights movement”
Washington Post, 4-3-13

I ran home shaking like a dog. I had wee short trousers on and the shit was running down my leg. My mum and my auntie had to wipe me down.

Pat McEwan, 62, describing the aftermath of being raped by a priest in the U.K. when he was 8

The Guardian, 4-6-13

WAUKEGAN, IL — Without any concern for what his self-destructive habits are doing to him and to his relationship with the Lord, future born-again Christian Travis Sutton is currently drinking, doing drugs and thinking everything is just one big joke, sources confirmed Tuesday.

Satirical news story
The Onion, 4-11-13

Show me any culture that’s traditionally hostile to women, and I will show you a culture that is screwed up. Like the Taliban. Like our military with its enormous rape problem. And like the Catholic Church.

Bill Maher, on Pope Benedict XVI’s resignation
“Real Time with Bill Maher,” 2-15-13

Minnesota latest to OK gay marriages

Minnesota became the 12th state to sanction gay marriage May 13. Gay couples can wed starting in August.

Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton signed the bill the next day. Both legislative houses are controlled by Democrats. The Senate passed the bill 37-30. The House approved it 75-59.

“In my heart of hearts, I know that today love wins,” Sen. Tony Lourey, a Democrat, told *The New York Times*. Bill opponents waved signs saying “Don’t Erase Moms and Dads.”

“It’s an objective reality that every baby has a mom and a dad,” said Rev. Thomas McCabe, a Catholic priest who came to the Capitol.

Lilian Romero, 34, St. Anthony, Minn., came to the Capitol with her church group. She told the St. Paul Pioneer Press that she questioned homosexuality and gay marriage because she’s been told some gay men and lesbians underwent therapy to become straight. “We believe in what God created — man and woman. This is a spiritual problem.”

Earlier in May, lawmakers in Delaware and Rhode Island also legalized gay unions. In Rhode Island, Providence Bishop Thomas Tobin called the bill “immoral and unnecessary” and in a letter to Catholics wrote that “homosexual acts are always sinful.”

Recruit a Member: Sample Copies for \$2

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Freedom depends upon freethinkers

(Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Thomas M. Chmura, 57, Benet Lake, WI: Attempted child abduction and disorderly conduct. Chmura, a Benedictine monk, is charged with trying to abduct a 14-year-old girl in Antioch, IL. He allegedly told police he'd been offering rides to teen girls for 6 weeks.

The girl told police she was walking along a city street when a man pulled up in a Ford station wagon and asked if she needed a ride, telling her, "Come on, you're so beautiful. Let me drive you home." She ran and told her mother and a school official and gave police a detailed description of the man and car.

An off-duty officer later saw a similar station wagon alongside 3 girls walking on the sidewalk and got the license number.

"I shudder to think what we would be looking at had she got in that car," said Police Chief Craig Somerville. *Source: Sun-Times, 4-27-13*

Menachem Schweib, Afula, ISR: Taking bribes, fraud, breach of trust and bringing illicit substances into prison. Schweib, who heads a yeshiva at Shita prison, is accused 3 times of hiding drugs in cigarette boxes meant for a prisoner serving a life sentence for murder.

Schweib's attorney said the rabbi wanted to "aid a prisoner in need" and didn't know drugs were hidden inside. *Source: Times of Israel, 4-27-13*

Julian Fox, 67, Rome: 10 counts of bugery, indecent assault and common law assault. Fox, a Salesian Order Catholic priest and former principal at Salesian College, Rupertswood, AUS, is charged in Melbourne with molesting students between 1976-85.

He moved to Fiji in 1999 and later to Rome. It's alleged the Salesians knowingly let Fox relocate to Rome after accusations were made against him. *Source: Herald Sun, 4-26-13*

Police in Chile arrested 4 members of a sect accused of burning a 3-day-old baby girl to death Nov. 21 near Valparaiso because they believed she was the antichrist and the end of the world was near. The girl's mother, **Natalia Guerra**, 25, allegedly approved the sacrifice and was among those arrested.

"The baby was naked. They strapped tape around her mouth to keep her from screaming. Then they placed her on a board. After calling on the spirits, they threw her on the bonfire alive," said police investigator Miguel Ampuero.

Sect leader **Ramon G. Castillo Gaete**, 36, who calls himself "Antares from the Light" and is believed to be the child's father, is still at large. *Source: BBC, 4-26-13*

William F. Vatterott, 36, St. Louis: Possession of child pornography. Vatterott, pastor of two Catholic parishes, had images of a nude boy on his computer, authorities said.

He was placed on administrative leave in 2011 after a complaint was filed with Ballwin police. At the time, a church official said 2 teens reported incidents of inappropriate correspondence. A newspaper said he was also accused of involvement in underage drinking and "other inappropriate behaviors." *Source: Kansas City Star, 4-25-13*

Australian police arrested an **unidentified Catholic priest** on 10 counts of child abuse after long negotiations to have him returned from the Vatican. The priest, age 67, surrendered in Melbourne. Charges stem from alleged incidents in 1976-85. *Source: AP, 4-22-13*

Tommy Issachar, 25, Lagos, NIG: Breach of public peace and stealing. Issachar, pastor of All Nations Evangelical Church, is accused of stealing underpants, a bra and \$63 from a congregation member who hosted him at her home for a prayer session related to her husband's business.

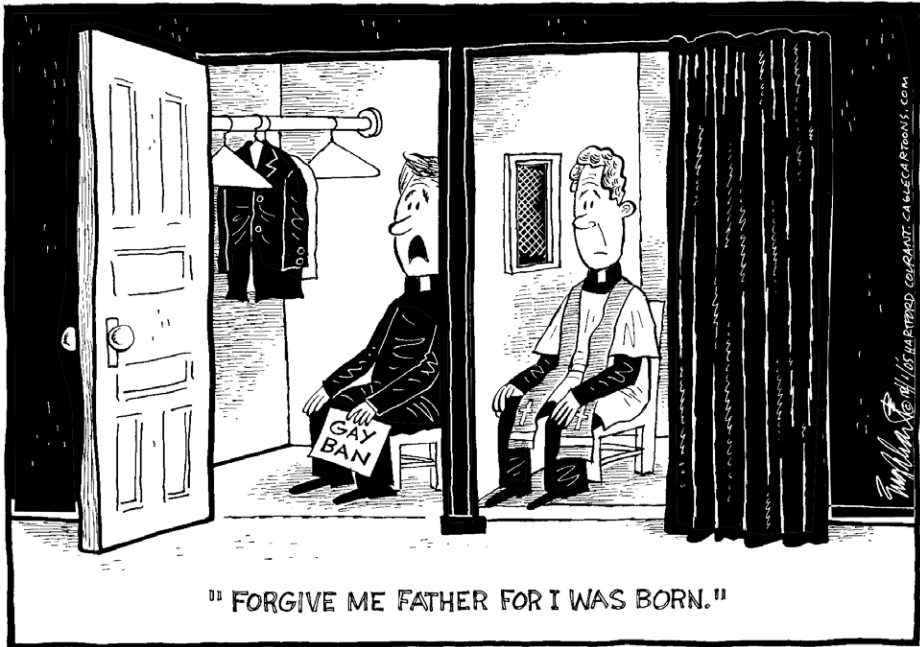
Prosecutor Kehinde Olatunde said the pastor confessed "he wanted to use [the underwear] to pray for her, but denied taking the money." *Source: Information Nigeria, 4-22-13*

Mario Delgado, 47, Sturgis, MI: 6 counts of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct. Delgado is pastor at Sturgis Missionary Church.

Police reports said one alleged victim told police the abuse started when she was 6 and stopped when she was 13. Another victim alleges she was 6 or 7 when it started. *Source: Commercial-News, 4-18-13*

Joshua Earls, 28, Garland, TX: 2 counts of indecency with a child by contact. Earls, a youth pastor at Arapaho Baptist Church, is accused of inappropriate contact with females under age 17. His brother, Jordan Earls, 24, a church volunteer who has moved out of state, is listed as a person of interest in the case. *Source: WFAA, 4-11-13*

Alfons A. Mandorfer, 79, a defrocked Austrian priest, is accused of molesting 15 children and torturing other students as head of a Benedictine monastery school in 1973-93 in Kremsmuenster. He's also charged with unlawful pos-



session of a weapon.

The disclosure is part of an inquiry started in 2009 by the Austrian Catholic Church into allegations of clergy abuse. It's uncovered more than 700 cases so far, some dating back to the 1960s. *Source: Press TV, 4-10-13*

Bruce Burnside, 59, Madison, WI: Homicide by intoxicated use of a vehicle, hit and run resulting in death, and homicide by negligent operation of a vehicle. Burnside, bishop for the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is accused of killing Maureen Mengelt, 52, a mother of 3 who was jogging on a path crossing the off-ramp of Hwy. 151 in Sun Prairie.

The complaint listed a preliminary breath test reading of 0.13% percent. He's also charged with misdemeanor hit and run for hitting a vehicle, said police, who arrested him at a gas station nearby, where he'd been corraled by people who witnessed the accident. He was on his way to a 3 p.m. church service.

A witness told police Burnside's SUV jumped a median and hit a light pole before hitting Mengelt. He was granted bail, has entered a treatment facility and resigned as bishop. *Source: State Journal, 4-9-13*

Noah J.B. Njegovan, 30, Rosenort, MAN: Fraud over \$5,000. Njegovan, an Anglican priest and the son of Diocese of Brandon Bishop Jim Njegovan, is suspected of bilking the church out of about \$190,000 by using a church credit card for personal expenses in 2010-12. *Source: Winnipeg Free Press, 4-9-13*

Franco Decaminada, 68, Rome: Decaminada, a priest who was executive director of the Istituto Dermatologico dell'Immacolata from 2004-11, is accused of embezzling €4 million (\$5.3 million) from a medical facility owned by his order, the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception. It was founded in the 19th century and became well-known for producing creams to treat ringworm.

The facility is now in bankruptcy and Decaminada's €1 million country home in Tuscany was impounded. *Source: The Tablet, 4-9-13*

Robert Couture, 49, Windsor, ONT: Theft over \$5,000. Couture, former pastor of Ste. Anne's Catholic Parish in Tecumseh, left the parish in 2010 and was granted a personal leave of absence. A financial audit later showed \$180,000 in irregularities from 2002-10, authorities said. *Source: CTV News, 4-9-13*

Olander D. Cuthrell, 41, Petersburg, VA: 2 counts of arson. Cuthrell, minister of music at Good Shepherd Baptist Church, is suspected of setting fires on the front porch of his house and in a car and of painting a racial slur on his home. *Source: AP, 4-4-13*

Bala P. Shukla, a Hindu priest, and alleged accomplice Devendra Shukla are charged with kidnapping and raping a 33-year-old married woman from Kavar, IND. Police said the woman was then sold for 40,000 rupees (\$739) to 3 brothers, Vimlesh Yadav, Pappu Yadav and Virendra Yadav, who also allegedly raped her. *Source: Press Trust of India, 4-2-13*

David W. Smith, 35, Poquoson, VA: Possession of child pornography. Smith, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church and School, testified at his bond hearing that he's had counseling since seminary school for some of his issues.

Dr. Rick Ellis, a Virginia Beach clinical psychologist, explained why that information wasn't made public. "We have to protect the confidentiality of our patient. They have to feel free to be able to speak with us about their concerns openly."

He added there would be no information on

a person's mental health history unless they were a danger to themselves or others. *Source: WWBT, 4-1-13*

Freddy Hovater, 72, Spruce Pine, AL: Sexual torture of a child younger than 12, 1st-degree sexual abuse and enticing a child for immoral purposes. Hovater, a former pastor in Franklin County, is charged with molesting an 8-year-old girl for about a year when she visited his home. The girl and her family had attended a church where he was pastor.

He's accused of using a vibrator and a wooden bell handle to abuse her and of watching her bathe on numerous occasions. *Source: Times Daily, 3-30-13*

A prominent, **unidentified rabbi in Jerusalem** is suspected of molesting 3 of his underage daughters and faces multiple counts of sexual assault and invasion of privacy. According to the indictment, the alleged crimes started more than 10 years ago when the daughters were ages 12-14 and included the suspect telling one girl they should sleep naked together. *Source: ynetnews.com, 3-27-13*

Richard S. Hurlston, 45, Gainesville, FL: Sexual battery of a victim 16 or 17 by a person 24 or older. Hurlston, pastor at the Church at Steeplechase, admitted in a sworn statement he molested a 16-year-old male congregation member in Hurlston's truck in a Publix parking lot. *Source: Gainesville News, 3-25-13*

Mark Hooper, 42, and **Susan Hooper**, 40, Mt. Jewett, PA: Child endangerment. Hooper, pastor at Cobb Street Baptist Church, and his wife are accused of punishing their 9-year-old daughter for failure to do her homework by withholding food. She is home-schooled.

The girl ran away from home but was found. Police said she weighs only 31 pounds and has a 5-year-old's bone structure. *Source: Daily Local, 3-22-13*

Pleaded / Convicted

Robert E. Warren, Yuma, 44, AZ: Pleaded guilty to criminal trespass with a sexual motivation. Warren, youth pastor at Valley Baptist Church for 22 years, initially was charged with furnishing harmful materials to a minor for buying sex toys for a 14-year old girl and delivering them when her parents weren't home. The girl's mother later called the sheriff. *Source: CBS 13, 4-26-13*

David Kramer, 52, St. Kilda, VIC: Pleaded guilty to 6 counts of indecent assault. Rabbi Kramer was charged with molesting students at Yeshiva College in the 1990s. He later fled to the U.S., where he was sentenced to 7 years for assaulting a 12-year-old boy. He was extradited to Australia in 2012. *Source: Press TV, 4-15-13*

Conleth Byrne, 78, Loughinisland, IRE: Pleaded guilty to fraud by abuse of position. Byrne, a now-retired Catholic priest, "naïvely" gave £150,000 of parish funds over 19 months to a woman he believed to be destitute.

Marie Hanna allegedly told Byrne in 2007 she had just been released from prison and was homeless and destitute. She also talked him out of £45,000 of his personal funds. *Source: Belfast Telegraph, 4-10-13*

Keith W. Denford, 78, Shoreham-by-Sea, UK, and **Michael Mytton**, 69, East Chilton, UK: Found guilty of indecent assaults against juvenile boys while Denford was a Church of England priest at St. John the Evangelist Church, where Mytton was church organist in the late 1980s.

Police weren't alerted until last year, when one of the victims, now in his 30s, found out

'This monster is a shell in which evil dwells.'
— Daniel Chamberlin's victim

that Denford was still in contact with children. *Source: Daily Mail, 4-5-13*

Kevin Wallin, 61, Waterbury, CT: Pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess methamphetamine with intent to distribute. A plea agreement, which must be approved by the court, calls for a sentence of 11 to 14 years in prison for Wallin, who has been suspended as pastor at St. Augustine Catholic Church.

He allegedly sold \$300,000 worth of meth while also running an adult video and sex toy shop from his apartment. *Source: AP, 4-1-13*

Sentenced

John D. White, 55, Mt. Pleasant, MI: 56 to 85 years in prison after pleading guilty to 2nd-degree murder and being a 3rd-offense habitual offender. White, pastor of Christ Community Fellowship, confessed to killing Rebekah Gay, his fiancée's 24-year-old daughter.

According to an affidavit, White admitted that for 2 weeks he thought about killing Gay and having sex with her dead body. At 2 a.m. on Oct. 31 after drinking 4 or 5 beers, he struck the victim's head repeatedly with a mallet, then strangled her with a zip tie. He said he stripped her body but didn't remember carrying out a sex act. *Source: CBS Local, 4-19-13*

Willie D. Bacote, Troy, NY: Fined \$13,391 by the state Workers' Compensation Board for misrepresenting a back injury. Bacote, pastor of Missing Link Street AME Zion Church, was paid \$128.27 a week since Oct. 31, 2011. Video surveillance for 15 days showed him lifting and carrying couches, chairs, boxes and other heavy objects. *Source: Times Union, 4-19-13*

Kyung Soon Kim, 53, Norristown, PA: 2 consecutive weekends in the county jail, 7 years' probation, 200 hours of community service, \$5,000 fine and \$24,554 in restitution after pleaded guilty to theft by unlawful taking and conspiracy to commit theft. Kim, a Presbyterian pastor, along with an accomplice, reported a 2008 Lexus stolen and collected from the insurance company.

Investigators later learned that between Dec. 2008 and Nov. 2011, the vehicle actually was stored in the garage at Kim's home. *Source: Lansdale Reporter, 4-15-13*

Stanley Wilkinson, 61, Rochester, MN: 91 days in jail suspended, 2 years' probation and 100 hours of community service after pleading guilty to misdemeanor discharge of a weapon. Wilkinson, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, shot his 16-year-old granddaughter in the neck after mistaking her for an intruder. She has recovered. *Source: KTTC, 4-15-13*

William Finnegan, 60, Acacia Close, UK: 6 months in jail after a jury found him guilty of sexually assaulting his parishioner at St. Mary's Catholic Church in 2012. The victim was 17.

Finnegan remains in denial, Judge Roger Thomas said at sentencing, while criticizing parishioners supporting the priest. "Maybe some of them would believe the sun would rise in the west tomorrow if he said it."

During the trial, it came out that Finnegan broke his vow of celibacy by secretly marrying Beverley Dawson in 1999 in Cyprus.

"On Easter Sunday, you did not restrain yourself and you acted out of your sexual attraction to 'B' by committing this offense of sexual assault," the judge added. *Source: Yorkshire Post, 4-11-13*

Richard Simcock, 27, Rawtenstall, UK: 10 years in prison, no unsupervised contact with females under 18 and lifetime ban on working with children. Simcock, who began studying for the Mormon priesthood after the alleged offenses, pleaded guilty to penetrative sexual activity with a child, 3 counts of attempted rape and 4 counts of indecent assault involving 2 females. *Source: Lancashire Telegraph, 4-9-13*

John A. Astorga, 38, Titus, AL: 10 years in prison after being found guilty of 1st-degree sexual abuse of a child less than 12 years old. Astorga, a former youth minister at Bethel Assembly of God, was also convicted in April 2012 on similar charges in another county.

He was sentenced to 36 months on those charges and is appealing the conviction. The judge ordered sentences to be served consecutively. *Source: al.com, 3-4-13*

Richard Craft, 69, Greeley, CO: 5 years in

prison and 5 years on supervised release for possession of child pornography. Craft, interim pastor at Family of Christ Presbyterian Church, told U.S. District Judge Brooke Jackson that he was addicted to child porn.

“As the defendant told Judge Jackson during his sentencing hearing, sexual predators view children as objects for gratification, not human beings to nurture,” said U.S. Attorney John Walsh. *Source: KMGH, 4-2-13*

Angel A. Perez, 47, Woodburn, **OR**: 6 years in prison after pleading guilty to 1st-degree sexual abuse, DUI and furnishing liquor to a minor. Perez, pastor of St. Luke Catholic Church, admitted molesting a 12-year-old boy he invited for a sleepover at his home.

The child told police he woke up to find the priest touching his genitals and taking photos with a cellphone. The boy ran outside with Perez chasing him. *Source: AP, 4-1-13*

Chad Foster, 33, Cypress, **TX**: 5 years in prison after pleading guilty to sexual assault of a child and online solicitation of a minor. He met his 16-year-old victim while he was youth pastor at Community of Faith Church.

The girl he seduced testified she felt “used and cheated” and said she’d lost her faith in god. She said Foster exposed himself to her over Skype. Records show he sent her about 15,000 texts between Jan. 1 and Nov. 2, 2011.

Foster also was found guilty of having an inappropriate relationship with a girl he met online while serving as youth minister for Second Baptist Church. *Source: KHOU, 4-1-13*

Daniel Chamberlin, 37, The Dalles, **OR**: 30 days in jail and 3 years’ probation after pleading guilty to 2nd-degree sexual abuse and 3rd-degree sodomy. Chamberlin, youth pastor at First Christian Church of The Dalles, apologized to the victim and her family before being led away in shackles.

The girl, who was 15 when the abuse started in 2006, spoke at sentencing. “This monster is a shell in which evil dwells. I have survived the hell he put me in for 7 years; I let the darkness come into my life because he told me it was OK.” *Source: The Dalles Chronicle, 3-23-14*

Eric M. Manuel, 23, Lafayette, **LA**: 27 years in prison and 15 years’ probation after pleading guilty to coercing a minor to engage in criminal sexual acts. Manuel, a youth minister who taught confirmation classes at St. Thomas More Catholic High School, was “every parent’s nightmare,” Judge Elizabeth Foote said at sentencing.

The original 20-count indictment alleged he had sex with 1 male victim and produced pornography with 18 minors. He was arrested after a mother found explicit images on her son’s phone. *Source: The Advocate, 3-23-13*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

Raquel Mallett, 20, is suing **Peterson-Warren Academy** in Inkster, **MI**, and the **North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventists** in Detroit, alleging that an assistant principal at the Christian school started grooming her for sex at age 15.

The newspaper report didn’t name the married principal, now 40, who hasn’t been criminally charged, although a complaint was filed against him with police. When reached by phone at his Ypsilanti home, the man, who has been put on administrative leave, hung up on a reporter.

Mallett alleges the man, who was also her homeroom teacher, would lock the classroom door and kiss and touch her inappropriately. Sex followed in his car, hotels, his house and on her senior class trip to Disney World.

“He took away my virginity,” she said. “I can never get that back.” *Source: Free Press, 4-28-13*

Danny Tice, pastor at Bay Shore Community Church in Millsboro, **DE**, is being sued by the husband of a woman who was allegedly raped and murdered by a church janitor.

The suit alleges Tice gave janitor **Thomas Burton**, 28, 2 weeks to find a job after learning he was on probation for multiple sex crimes. Burton’s last day on the job and Nicole Bennett’s last day alive was June 14, 2012.

Bennett, 35, a mother of 3 and director of the church’s day care, was found dead along a dirt road the next morning. She’d worked late at the church the night before finishing a mailing. Burton is charged with her murder.

In his wrongful death suit, Kevin Bennett alleges Tice never alerted his wife to Burton’s violent history. *Source: Philly.com, 4-24-13*

Two men in their mid-60s are suing the **Chicago Catholic Archdiocese** and former priest **Alexander S. Baranowski**, claiming he molested them during overnight trips in 1961-62 when they were students at St. Wenceslaus grammar school in Chicago.

Baranowski, who resigned after similar allegations and was defrocked in 1975, allegedly told the boys only rooms with a single bed were available and assaulted them while they were sleeping. *Source: Sun-Times, 4-22-13*

Joseph Gutnick, an Australian Chabad rabbi and mining magnate, is being sued for allegedly swindling plaintiff Roy Tashi out of \$1 million in a “pump-and-dump” stock swindle.

‘He took my virginity away. I can never get that back.’ — Raquel Mallett, victim

Tashi told the Melbourne Supreme Court that Gutnick convinced him to buy shares in a firm mining gold in Canada. He alleges he paid 15 cents a share more than Gutnick, who had a stake in the firm that conducted the deal, and said the shares now have no value. *Source: Herald Sun, 4-17-13*

“Jane Doe” and her husband are suing the **Archdiocese of Philadelphia**, the **Order of St. Paul the First Hermit**, the **National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa** and **Fr. Marek Lacki** in Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas. Doe alleges Lacki digitally penetrated her during counseling in 2012 and “smeared her menstrual blood on her face.”

The Does claim they reported the assault to the archdiocese, which notified the Bucks County District Attorney’s Office. Lacki declined to be interviewed by police, citing the seal of confession. He was later transferred by the Pauline Fathers to Poland. *Source: Courthouse News Service, 4-15-13*

Romanian lawyer Madalin Ciculescu, 34, is suing the **Orthodox Archdiocese of Arges** and **4 priests**, alleging they failed to exorcise flutulent demons responsible for odors that were ruining his office business.

Ciculescu claimed that after the failed exorcism, the demons started haunting him at his home in Pitesti. The archdiocese said the smells are all in the plaintiff’s head. *Source: Daily Mail, 4-6-13*

A complaint for failure to prevent sexual abuse was filed in **New Mexico** against the **Archdiocese of Santa Fe** and **St. Anthony Catholic Parish** in Questa on behalf of “John Doe,” 37, who alleges **Fr. Michael O’Brien** raped him starting when he was 10 or 11 and continued until he was 12 or 13. O’Brien died of cancer in Taos at age 48. *Source: The New Mexican, 4-3-13*

“Jane Doe” is suing **Canaan Galilee Missionary Baptist Church** in Madison, **IL**, and Pastor **Donald Sanford**. She alleges Sanford made sexual advances after she sought counseling in 2012 and that she eventually consented to several encounters due to his position of authority.

The church is accused of negligence in hiring Sanford. *Source: Madison-St. Clair Record, 4-1-13*

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is suing **Mark A. Reese**, 45, senior pastor of Southern Hills Community Church, Kingston, **OH**, alleging that Reese’s construction firm fleeced customers out of more than \$100,000. Some of the money was diverted to the church, the suit claims.

At least 7 people have complained that Reese failed to build pole barns and similar structures as promised or performed shoddy work. The company is defunct. *Source: Columbus Dispatch, 3-27-13*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

Thomas James, Fayetteville, **AR**, associate pastor at St. James Missionary Baptist Church in Ft. Smith, has agreed to pay \$66,500 to church member Renee Lee. James is also required under the settlement with the state Securities Dept. to account for all the money he received for investment purposes and detail what he did with it.

In a civil complaint, the agency accused James of diverting money to his personal account that he accepted from Lee to invest. The complaint also said he claimed to have financial and investment credentials that he actually didn’t have. He was a registered broker-dealer for Merrill Lynch, but his registration has expired. *Source: Times Record, 4-24-13*

The **Diocese of Fort Worth, TX**, settled for an undisclosed amount with a victim of **Fr. James Reilly**, a deceased priest at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church in Arlington from 1969-87. He moved to Philadelphia and died in 1999.

Tahira Kahn Merritt, a Dallas attorney who represents 26 men molested by Reilly, said she isn’t representing the person who settled. She said her 26 clients were altar boys. *Source: Star-Telegram, 4-18-13*

Legal Developments

Trust Women founder Julie Burkhart, Wichita, **KS**, is seeking to make a protection from stalking order against **Pastor Mark Holick** permanent. Burkhart opened the women’s health facility in the building that housed a clinic run by Dr. George Tiller, who was murdered in church by abortion apponent **Scott Roeder** in 2009.

Holick allegedly picketed at Burkhart’s home and handed out “wanted” posters with her ad-

dress. He also allegedly held a sign that read, “Where’s your church?”

Holick contends he’s protected by the First Amendment. *Source: AP/Capital-Journal, 4-11-13*

A judge reduced bail from \$2 million to \$500,000 for **Louis Bristol**, 28, youth pastor at Carpinteria **[CA]** Community Church, who is accused of sexually assaulting 2 teen girls.

Bristol faces 3 counts of forcible rape, 2 counts of forced sexual penetration by a foreign object and sexual battery by restraint.

He also is accused of but not yet charged with sending unwanted videos of himself masturbating to a woman. The woman told police he texted her “about not being sexually satisfied by his wife and needing to look elsewhere for sex.” *Source: Santa Barbara Independent, 4-3-13*

A court denied the appeal of **Gary Mercure**, 65, a former Diocese of Albany, **NY**, priest convicted in 2011 of raping altar boys during trips to Berkshire County, **MA**, in the 1980s.

Mercure was sentenced to more than 20 years in prison. He appealed on the grounds the jury shouldn’t have heard testimony about uncharged sex crimes related to the 2 victims as well as from 4 other alleged victims in New York. *Source: Times Union, 4-2-13*

Allegations

Nicholas Chungu, 38, Chawama, **ZAM**: Chungu, senior pastor at Kings Chapel Church, was accused in court by James Lundu, 34, of an adulterous affair with his wife, Mary Mwenda, 26. The couple are Chungu’s parishioners.

Lundu told court magistrates Martha Tembo and Kalunga Chansa he found salacious text messages on his wife’s phone from Chungu, who told the court the messages were meant for a woman named Gloria. He said his son accidentally sent them to Mwenda but didn’t explain how he had her number.

Mwenda testified Chungu had proposed marriage and that they had sex every Monday in Room 7 at the Blue Water Motel. The court adjourned to visit the motel. *Source: Zambia Daily Mail, 4-28-13*

Leonard Meyers, 59, **San Antonio**, died of apparent natural causes April 6 just weeks after it was discovered he embezzled thousands of dollars from Harvest Fellowship Community Church, where he was finance director since 2006.

Church leaders allege Meyers stole at least \$491,000 since 2010, according to a police report and a church lawyer. It might be closer to \$750,000.

Harvest Fellowship Sunday attendance is down from 2,000-plus to about 150.

Meyers was sentenced to 15 months in federal prison in 1993 for defrauding 8 elderly people in New Jersey of nearly \$300,000 he had promised to invest. He was convicted in 1998 in Texas for presenting himself as a lawyer, resulting in a \$1,000 fine and 3 years’ probation.

“We were aware of his past, but he wasn’t exactly truthful about that either,” said Darrell Lindsey, interim pastor. *Source: Express-News, 4-23-13*

The Diocese of Pittsburgh sent a letter to parishioners at St. James Catholic Parish in Wilkinsburg, **PA**, about an accusation of sexual abuse against **Fr. John Wellinger**, who died in 2011. The alleged victim is also dead.

In the letter, the diocese asks people who may have been harmed by Wellinger to call the diocesan Victim’s Assistance Hotline at 1-888-808-1235 or the state abuse hotline at 1-800-932-0313.

The alleged victim’s sister called the diocese. “She said that her brother had told her that he had been abused by this priest sometime between 1981 and ’85, told her this before he died,” said Fr. Ron Lengwin, diocesan spokesman. *Source: KDKA, 4-9-13*

Kyozan Joshu Sasaki, 106, a Japanese Rinzai Zen teacher who’s lived in the U.S. since 1962, sexually harassed female students for decades, according to an investigation by a council of Buddhist leaders. The report revealed complaints started as early as 1991. The council interviewed 25 women.

Seven women alleged in a news article that Sasaki had sexually touched them. Nikki Stubbs, Vancouver, WA, said he fondled her breasts and asked her to massage his penis.

Eshu Martin, a Zen abbott in Victoria, BC, accused Sasaki of a “career of misconduct,” from “frequent and nonconsensual groping of female students” to “sexually coercive after-hours ‘tea’ meetings to affairs.” *Source: N.Y. Times, 2-13-13*

Removed / Resigned

The Serbian Orthodox Church has accepted the resignation of **Bishop Vasilije Kacavenda** in **Bosnia** after an Internet video appeared to show him having sex with a young man. Kacavenda submitted his resignation in 2012 for what he said were health reasons but was asked to keep the post until this May.

A statement offered no explanation for why the resignation was accepted April 22, but it coincided with the weekend YouTube posting of

the video showing someone closely resembling Kacavenda kissing and being fondled by a man. *Source: Missoulian, 4-22-13*

The Catholic Diocese of Davenport, **IA**, has suspended 2 priests while reports of sexual abuse are investigated: **Robert Harness**, pastor of Holy Family Church in Davenport, and **John Stack**, chaplain at Mercy Medical Center in Clinton.

Allegations center on abuse of minors from 1980-90 and have been reported to the Scott County Attorney. *Source: AP, 4-22-13*

David Roberts, 68, Taunton, **UK**, was suspended as priest-in-charge at St. John’s Church and has been defrocked by the Church of England. He was later sentenced to 12 years in prison after pleading guilty to 5 charges of sexual assault in the early 1980s against a boy age 13 to 15. *Source: Somerset County Gazette, 4-18-13*

The Catholic Diocese of Green Bay announced retired priest **Justin Werner** has been accused of molesting a minor in the 1970s at St. Edward Parish in Mackville, **WI**. Werner is in his 80s and has been a priest for more than 50 years. *Source: Journal Sentinel, 4-12-13*

The Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia has permanently removed 3 priests from the ministry for pedophilia, including **Joseph Gallagher**, 78, whose accuser killed himself after his allegation was dismissed by church officials. Also removed were **Mark Gaspar**, 43, and **Richard Powers**, 77.

“Our only problem is that it took so long,” said Marci Hamilton, attorney for the family of Daniel Neill, who committed suicide in 2009. “Gallagher belongs in prison, but because of the archdiocese’s cover-up, the criminal statutes of limitations for these victims expired long ago.” *Source: AP, 4-8-13*

Thomas Corbino was fired as a volunteer Catholic chaplain at Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, **IL**, after officials learned Diocese of Joliet Bishop R. Daniel Conlon had placed the priest on restricted ministry in 2012 and barred him from having unsupervised contact with children.

Hospital spokesman Christopher King said the diocese didn’t mention the allegation when it recommended Corbino. “It was new to us, and we dismissed him that afternoon.”

Corbino’s parishioner at St. Irene Catholic Church in Warrenville accused him of inappropriate touching, taking photos of him when he was a young boy and forcing him to try on clothes. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 4-5-13*

The Society of the Divine Savior (Salvatorians) relieved **Robert Marsicek**, 71, of pastoral duties at Pius X Parish and Wauwatosa Catholic School in Wauwatosa, **WI**, and at Mother of Good Counsel Parish and School in Milwaukee.

Church spokesman Jerry Topczewski said police were called after a teacher observed behavior she called “questionable or inappropriate.” *Source: Journal Sentinel, 4-2-13*

Other

Michael Broyde, reportedly on the short list to become England’s chief rabbi, can likely kiss his chances goodbye due to an academic scandal. The Jewish Channel has reported that Broyde, a law professor at Atlanta’s Emory University, created a fake professional identity called Rabbi Hershel Goldwasser and used it for almost 20 years.

A second identity, David Tzvi Keter, was later discovered. “The Jewish Channel has been unable to find any evidence of David Keter’s existence,” says a story on the cable TV outlet.

Broyde did not reply to multiple e-mails or phone messages asking for comment. *Source: The Jewish Channel, 4-24-13*

Gilles Bernheim, France’s chief rabbi, resigned after admitting he committed plagiarism and claimed an unearned academic title. Bernheim is usually introduced as an “agrégé,” a sort of “doctor.” The title agrégé of philosophy has long appeared with his name.

Bernheim admitted he didn’t earn an agrégation in philosophy and said a “personal tragedy” prevented him from earning it.

Concerning plagiarism, Bernheim said parts of the 2011 book *Forty Jewish Meditations* were taken from other sources. He said he used a ghostwriter.

“I have been fooled,” he said in a statement. “However, I am responsible.” *Source: Le Figaro/JTA, 4-11-13*

Federal and state agents seized 4 computers from **St. Ann Catholic Parish** in Independence, **MO**. Detectives said they detected 2 downloads of child pornography on Feb. 5 using an IP address associated with the parish office.

Jack Smith, diocesan spokesman, said the office had an unsecure WiFi connection, meaning the downloads could have been made by a computer in the office or nearby. *Source: Kansas City Star, 3-26-12*

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

Letterbox

Member challenge to extend FFRF’s reach

Enclosed is a check for \$1,160 to fulfill my pledge to become a Life Member this year and to pay for the first-year membership for four individuals. I have now paid for six memberships and found two new members who paid their own dues within the last 12 months.

There are many forms of activism. Given the time demands of my consulting career and my new practice, I feel the most effective course for me is to discuss my philosophy of rational humanism and my atheistic beliefs with others, to identify fellow freethinkers and to introduce them to FFRF by way of a gift membership.

The threat of theocratic influence on our government and society is as dire as ever. When our president’s response to the Boston bombing is to attend an “Interfaith Service,” I am appalled. Why not just cast entrails on the White House lawn?

I encourage all FFRF members to commit to finding at least one new member each year. I decided to abandon my two-per-year pledge and just bring as many new members to FFRF as I can, as soon as I can, to have them join an organization devoted to reason and constitutional law as the best means to oppose superstition and prejudice.

John R. Steinberg, M.D.
Maryland

• • •

Enclosed is a check for \$1,000 to cover my Lifetime Membership. It is a pleasure to support your organization for all your hard work and all that you have accomplished.

Henry Lengel
Pennsylvania

• • •

I have been a member of FFRF for many years because you do such an excellent job of performing very important work. The time has now come for a Lifetime Membership, but it is not for me. It is for my son, Josh, who shares my views on God, religion and the separation of church and state. Thanks for all that FFRF does to make our world a saner place.

Jeff Robertson
Illinois

• • •

Enclosed find my check for \$1,000 to pay for what remains of my life, certified as a nontheist.

Maybe it’s simply another inflexibility of old age that causes me to think our society and the world are becoming more superstitious, even in the face of data indicating an increase in “nones.” At least with my remaining time I can be part of protests and legal actions by having my name behind your letterhead.

Your work is very important to deny and defer the continual encroachment of the religious superstitionists into our public. It seems the battle is never-ending to keep religious bigots from inserting their dogmatic claptrap into the rules of our (and other) societies.

Lloyd A. Jones, Ph.D.
Retired biologist
Ohio

• • •

I’ve had a lot of medical and dental expenses but felt a Lifetime Membership is important. It seems America is being taken over by the Christian reli-

gion, and that has to stop, including all the prayers by the president and Congress. If they want “In God We Trust” as our motto, why not get “God” one day to run the government and see how that goes!

Michael Walker
Ohio

• • •

Enclosed is my check for \$175, which puts me at \$1,050 for 2013 and completes my installment plan Life Membership payments. Please rush all appropriate documents and, of course, my Life Member’s Decoder Ring. (Yes, I know there is no such thing, but you have to admit there would be a certain fund-raising enchantment connected to it.)

I chose to expand my commitment to FFRF’s work because of its record of successful intercession on behalf of students and military personnel who are being bullied into silence/acquiescence by authorities who brush aside their concerns without even granting them the dignity of an explanation. “We’re going to do it anyway” or “That’s the way we’ve always done it” are bad enough. When one adds, say, a brazen threat to contact the college or university the student hopes to attend for purposes of smearing that individual’s reputation, things have gone way too far. When the United States military spends time and energy proselytizing an evangelical world view and mandating attendance at ultra-conservative religious rallies, but will not find time or resources to effectively address the epidemic of sexual assault, not only in the ranks but also at our service academies, I’ll come right out and admit it: I’m offended. I often find myself thinking, “Time for an Andrew Seidel blast!”

I am inspired by Dr. John Steinberg’s letter in Freethought Today in which he details what he calls “my own little membership crusade” following up his own Life Membership with complimentary initial year dues payments for two fellow atheists per year.

I’ll be looking forward to seeing my name, at long last, among the new Life Members in the next Freethought Today.

John Reiser
Texas

Editor’s note: There’s no decoder ring, but “Lifers” do receive a Lifetime pin!

• • •

Please cease sending renewal notices. As a token of my sincerity, I enclose a Life Membership donation.

Peter Lundman, Ph.D.
Gay and godless in New Mexico

P.S. Keep the pressure on New Mexico!

Putting income tax refund to work

I didn’t send this donation at the solstice, but I will send it at the vernal equinox! I wanted to wait and use my income tax refund money as a contribution to help end the tax exemptions for churches and pastors, priests, etc.

Thanks for all you do and for your courage. It gives the rest of us the courage to be honest, to start speaking out.

Corinne Lee
North Dakota

Sending my thanks for FFRF sending thanks



Glastonbury, Conn.

“I’m not sure if this is supposed to be Crusader Rabbit, but from my time in foxholes, it is clearly a Corporal Rabbit,” writes Luther Weeks, Connecticut.

I donated (or pledged, I guess would be the correct word) to your organization via the Combined Federal Campaign this year and recently received a thank-you letter. I have given through CFC for over 20 years to multiple organizations, some of which, like Habitat for Hummanity, had a good mission with a religious background. Yours was the first to take 10 seconds and send out an acknowledgement. Thanks.

Howard B.
Maryland

Members give Jehovah’s a ‘real’ read

I just got home this morning from by girlfriend’s and noticed a flier stuck in my door. It was from the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

I could see some people smartly dressed up the street so I knew that I could catch up and talk to them. I considered giving them a book *worth* reading and briefly scanned my bookshelf. *On The Origin of Species*, *The Moral Landscape* and *The God Delusion* jumped out at me. Then I figured that they more than likely would just toss any of these and my library would be poorer.

I looked around and picked up a recent copy of Freethought Today and decided this would make a wonderful gift. I clipped my name and address from the first page and headed out the door. On my side of the street was a couple in their 40s. The other side of the street featured an older couple with a toddler in tow.

When I reached them, the former couple was on a porch, so I walked a little further up the street, turned around, and greeted them as they left that home. I had their flier in my hand, and I showed it to them and said, “I’m sorry that I missed you this morning.”

I then presented the gentleman the copy of Freethought Today and said, “One good turn deserves another. This is very good reading and I highly recommend it.”

He thanked me, and I went home. It’s a beautiful Saturday!

Nick Zbiciak
Michigan

• • •

The same day I received Freethought Today, I also got a Jehovah’s Witnesses flier slipped under my door. We live on

a small island. Most of our friends are freethinkers, and we meet new ones almost every day. I returned the flier along with a copy of the FFRF newspaper and a note that visitors are welcome to my home, but proselytizers are not.

I am always amazed at the violence, anger and hatred toward others shown by those whose beliefs are supposedly based on love. The religious are supposed to rejoice at the thought of going to heaven and being with Jesus, yet they cling to life more tenaciously than most nonbelievers.

I see religion as frosting on a cake, ornamentation for the substance underneath. That substance is *fear*—fear of death, of living a meaningless life, of not seeing loved ones again, of dealing with life alone, of seeing the so-called evil ones go unpunished, of everlasting pain in hell.

When we expose those fears, the fearful can only lash out; hence all the hatred and threats. We are the puncturers of their rosy bubble. We deny that reality can be circumvented through the magic of denial. In short, we deny the deniers.

I have finally been able to reach one of my goals and become a Life Member. Being a Lifetime Member emphasizes and amplifies my desire for this movement.

Jack M. Pedigo
Washington

‘Emperor’ of Rome as naked as the rest

Barely tolerating the constant media barrage over the pope’s crowning inspired this:

Mountebank

What matter all the pomp and circumstance
with excessive finery
What matter all the trumpets score
all the solemn accolades
paying tribute with incessant bor
What matter all the masks of glee
as the newsmongers cater to the
herd
Substituting contrived babble
for the truest word.

What matters is the mockery of reason

For when all is said and done
No matter what our season
No matter how vain his prose
The emperor still, wears no clothes.

Michael Maduras
New York

Congratulations on building expansion

Your photo array of your chaotic offices was a shocking reminder of my old workplace, the cataloging department of the Detroit Public Library System. (I retired in 1999.) Such surroundings are inefficient and downright depressing.

Congratulations on outlasting your neighbor and converting his property to your benefit. It may not have been divine intervention, but it certainly is poetic justice.

Kathleen Yagelo
Michigan

Free youth from anvil of religion

I read in a recent Freethought Today how the Boy Scouts of America is widely funded by church groups. Their recent bad press over discrimination has led many people to call for them to change membership policies, but they’re clearly reluctant.

I can’t help but feel that there is a missed opportunity here. Rather than focus efforts on reforming an organization with such stubborn religious affiliations, perhaps now is the time to present the public with an alternative. I would suggest a program for boys (and girls) which retains a similar modus operandi to the scouts, but which is founded on more forward thinking principles of membership, an organization open to all, regardless of religion, race or sexual orientation.

Areas of focus could include topics often neglected in public schooling such as philosophy, charity and environmental stewardship. (I credit philosophy in particular with helping me see reason beyond my own family’s religious affiliations.)

It’s no secret that enlightening children is key to ultimately winning the day for reason. I don’t think sending them to church-sponsored organizations is the way to accomplish this, even if religion is not the primary focus.

Perhaps it’s time for an organization which allows children the opportunity to develop more freethinking attitudes while still being part of a supportive community.

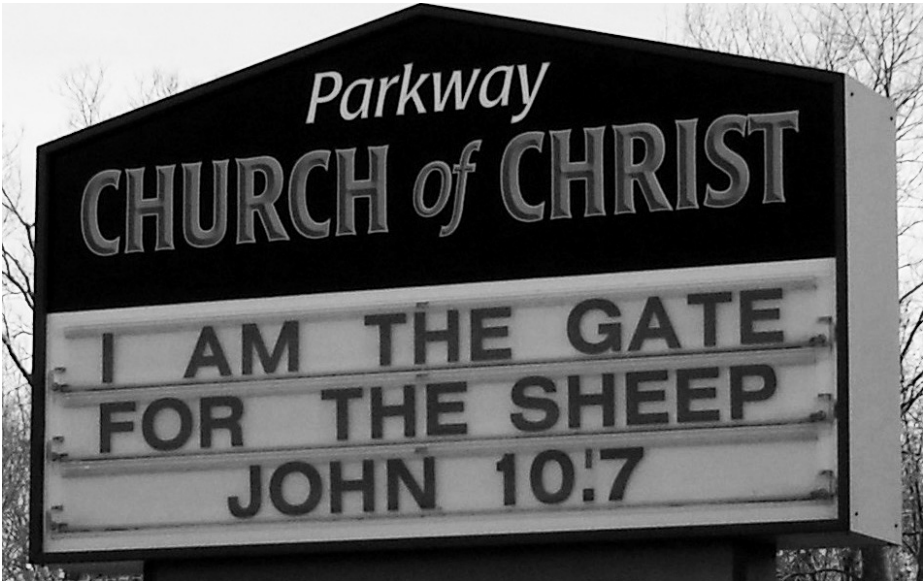
Matt LaPlante
Illinois

Obama oath of office endorsed slavery

With the ongoing controversy regarding President Obama’s hypocrisy in swearing (on two bibles) to protect our godless Constitution, I wonder if the president is aware of the undemocratic laws he promised to uphold.

One in particular should make him cringe. Lev. 25:44 (New Catholic Edition, 1963) states very clearly: “Slaves, male and female, you may indeed possess, provided you buy them from the neighboring countries.”

There are, of course, plenty more “laws of God” that would stun the president if he knew the true contents of scripture. As it is, we have to assume that he is both biblically and constitu-



Springfield, Ill.

“I appreciate the honesty of the message, if nothing else,” notes Dean Mentjes, Illinois.

tionally ignorant, or else he is intentionally deceiving the American people in his rush to turn our democracy into a theocracy.

Herb McClelland
Ohio

‘If’ you buy this, you’ve been framed

In his April letter, Mark Kelley asked how to answer someone who says, “If you believe God doesn’t exist without proof, that’s faith as well.” Christopher Hitchens noted that what can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence.

The person who made the statement began with the word “if.” What he is saying is conditional. He then uses the word “believe” so he can frame the subject. It then appears that you believe something you do not believe, because atheism is the absence of belief (in theism).

He should be reminded of this fact and, if he claims you have any belief, the burden of proof is on him.

Robert McCurdy
Pennsylvania

Catholics encased in another ‘infallibubble’

When a new pope is elected, does he become infallible-ized? Is he instantly infallible (“then a miracle occurs”), or does the former pope relinquish the claim and become uninfallible?

Sheila Somner, Life Member
Arizona

Editor’s note: We have forwarded your question to Oz, the Great and Powerful.

Legislating morality to controlling women

I would argue that theocrats are especially eager to legislate “morality” that controls women. The concepts noted by Judith Lynne Hanna in “Theocrats eager to legislate morality” [April13] are not just Christian. It was from a Muslim woman that I first heard that only the husband should see the woman’s nude body.

Tim LaHaye’s quote in her article about men’s volcanic sexual explosions at the slightest provocation have been used by the Taliban to attack a woman whose burqa flew with the wind and a bit of her ankle became visible. Rapists in the U.S. claim that women’s revealing clothing was to blame.

Unfortunately, feminists have ceded or been forced out of the dialogue

about pornography, prostitution and sex trafficking, particularly in the U.S. That’s left the field wide open to the Christian Right, which is not in support of women.

Pornography, including strip clubs, is a real problem for women and has nothing to do with morality but with crime, harm and trauma. The Supreme Court does treat issues of pornography differently than other First Amendment cases by focusing on the freedom of expression of the corporation, i.e., the club owner, not on the freedom of expression of the woman who is dancing.

In one of the steps toward *Citizens United*, the court found that corporations have freedom of expression for a woman to dance nude. Note the corporation is not dancing nude but yet has the right. But when a woman dances topless (activist Nikki Craft, for example), she has no freedom of expression, even though her “statement” is blatantly political.

So we cycle back to the inevitable — it’s about power and control. Just because theocrats oppose it, we should not have a knee-jerk reaction and support it but use our reason to understand the full story.

Dianne Post
Arizona

...

The April article by Judith Lynne Hanna is a timely warning bell. Organizations like SPACR and others, if left unopposed, will have us ending up like Saudi Arabia. Remember how Saudi “morality enforcers” urged female students to go back to their burning school because they had left their full-body veil behind to escape the fire. (All were burned to death.)

Does the Christian Right desire that we should adopt such stringent methods? They have already started on this road. They think that yoga exercise is perilous to biblical teachings and should therefore be banned.

What is next — stoning to death for adultery?

G.M. Chandu
New York

‘A. Roe’ article was very informative

Thanks for publishing Nicole Jacobsen’s article “A. Roe: 12 years later” in April. Whenever I’ve read or heard about a lawsuit involving families hidden by legal pseudonyms, I’ve always wondered how the families, especially the children, fared during and after the suit and how well the pseudonyms really shielded them.

Nicole’s article provided significant answers to these questions. I’m glad to see that she and her family made it through and that she’s going on with her life.

Another thing: Nicole mentioned a “catchy tune” her sister “B. Roe” learned during the illegal classes, which I recognize as “Awesome God” by the late Rich Mullins. The chorus is certainly catchy and innocuous enough, but the verses have an edge to them, which is why, a lot of the time, only the chorus is sung.

Andrew C. Jones
Michigan

Tell retailers to skip the proselytizing

Like Kathy Bonham [“Evangelicals’ target: knitting community,” [April13], who got a religious solicitation with her Vogue Knitting magazine, I ordered a book of gardening tips (not Garden of Eden tips), and when I opened the box there was a stack of Jesus literature on top.

I never dug my way down to the book, just taped it back up, wrote “Refused: Return to Sender” and sent it back. I also used to phone-order a wonderful hand cream from a lady who whipped it up in her kitchen and just praised the Lord all over me every time I reordered. After I boycotted for a long time, my family demanded more of that cream (it really is great), but at least now I can get it via the Internet and don’t have to go through the well-meaning but nauseating personal blessings.

In hindsight, I realize a better response would be to tell these companies that their religious messages are such a turnoff that we would rather not do business with them. I don’t think they realize there are actually customers who don’t share their beliefs and may also not wish to share their dollars.

Joan Reisman-Brill
New York

Board ‘marks territory’ with public prayers

Below is an excerpt of a member’s letter to the editor that was published in Battle Ground, Wash., objecting to a county board’s resolution to pray at meetings.

Invocations used to (and sometimes still do) involve animal or plant or human sacrifice to attract the attention of a particular deity. Once our commissioners have attracted the attention of a deity, they can grovel before it, asking publicly for wisdom and guidance in making political decisions about creating parking fees or cutting spending. They clearly hope to score points with the 75 to 80% of believers in our county.

But these are modern times, and we no longer burn or stab stuff while praying. Invocations in today’s Information Age serve the same purpose as flashing a gang sign, or wearing an arm band, or spraying graffiti on a street sign. A public prayer announces your allegiance to a particular religious tribe. It marks your territory.

This message is loud and clear and divisive. This “territory marking” is especially offensive to the 20 to 25% of citizens who no longer believe, have yet to believe or remain unconvinced by any of the deities.

David Norris
Washington



Reason on the Bayou

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel (back, fourth from right) was part of an April 14 freethought conference in Baton Rouge sponsored by Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics at Louisiana State University attended by about 130 people. Andrew’s topic was “Sweat the small stuff: Why we need to challenge every Establishment Clause violation.”

FFRF on the Road

FFRF’s new Sacramento-area chapter

From left in the photo at right are Barri Babow, Life Member and chapter organizer; FFRF Co-President Dan Barker; chapter President Judy Saint; and Janet Thew, first recipient of the new “Imagine” award, which she’s holding, for bravery in state/church activism.

The chapter and the Student Secular Alliance at Sacramento State co-sponsored Dan’s talk April 20 on “Should religion and government be separate?” at Cal State-Sacramento. The next day, Dan and about 40 chapter members mixed and mingled at a waterfront brunch.



Janet’s “Imagine” award is inscribed:

*Awarded to
Janet Thew
In honor of her commitment and courage
Standing alone in the defense of
Separation of Church and State
In Loomis, California, 2012
Upon which courage others stand
Holding such conviction and stamina as a beacon
To all those who follow.*



‘Is there a God?’

LEFT: That was the discussion topic for Dan Barker and Imam Muhammad Musri (right) May 4 at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Musri, a native Lebanese, “did not want to call it a ‘debate,’ but that’s what it was,” notes Dan. David Williamson (center) was event co-organizer as head of the Central Florida Freethought Community, an FFRF chapter.

California debate

RIGHT: Dan Barker debated Russell DiSilvestro (at right), Sacramento State philosophy professor, on the topic “Does The God of the bible exist?” at Turlock [Calif.] High School. Nathan Lusher (center) organized the April 19 event on behalf of Stanislaus Skeptics and the Secular Student Alliance at UC-Merced and Sacramento State.



Grand Rapids, Minn.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel spoke May 1 to the Itasca Community College Secular Student Alliance. From left are Amanda Harkins, Brandon Harkins, Jaden Larson, Andrew Seidel, Josh Figgins and faculty adviser Drew Davis. Andrew’s noon and 7 p.m. presentations were titled “The Greatest Story Ever Sold: America’s Judeo Christian Heritage.” (Ken Eck photo)



Also attending the evening presentation were members of Grand Rapids Atheists and Freethinkers (an acting FFRF chapter directed by Ken Eck) and FFRF members. From left are John Schirber, Cathi Harding, Brian Vroman, Andrew Seidel, Lou Hendrickson, Drew Davis and Ken Eck. About 100 people attended the two presentations. Andrew also was a morning guest on KAXE Radio, the northern Minnesota NPR affiliate. (Bethann Perendy photo)

Overheard

I was locked in, so I feel kind of close to you. I was locked in the Sistine Chapel, which is a lot nicer than here.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, one of two cardinals deposed in a probe of the cover-up of Catholic Church pedophilia, speaking to inmates at Shawangunk Correctional Facility near Wallkill, N.Y.
New York Times, 3-28-13

I would point out that if you're a believer in the bible, one would have to say the Great Flood is an example of climate change and that certainly wasn't because mankind had overdeveloped hydrocarbon energy.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, supporting the Keystone XL pipeline
BuzzFeed, 4-10-13

Would it be for the government to decide whether a person believes in God or not? I've committed no crime.

Turkish pianist and composer Fazil Say, given a suspended 10-month prison term in absentia for insulting Islam on Twitter, including poking fun at the afterlife

New York Times, 4-16-13



Photo: Brent Nicastro

Days before I helped my mother die in 1983, when physician-assisted suicide was neither an issue nor a movement, I noticed a change in her. She became her-

self again. Once she knew she would be able to "get out of life," as she put it, her terror about suffering through an impending cancer death left her, and she was suddenly calm.

Betty Rollin, board member of the Death with Dignity National Center and author of *Last Wish*

New York Times, 3-31-13

Congress has passed no federal protections for gays on employment, housing and education. In 29 states, it is perfectly legal to fire someone because of his or her sexual orientation. Thirty-one states have enacted constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage. The Supreme Court should know that civil rights are not supposed to be determined on the whims of the people.

Columnist Maureen Dowd

The New York Times, 3-31-13

There is no such thing as Egyptians in Egypt. There are only Muslims and Christians.

Emad Thabet, a Coptic Christian locked in a church for hours while four Christians were killed in sectarian violence in Cairo's main Coptic cathedral
Associated Press, 4-8-13

According to a photo of Brownback's desk shot by the AP, the words "JESUS + Mary" are scrawled across the top of the governor's notes on the bill, like two lovers' names carved into a tree.

News story on Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback signing one of the nation's most restrictive abortion bills

gawker.com 4-20-13

As Christians, my family and I remember the incredible sacrifice Jesus made for each and every one of us — how He took on the sins of the world and extended the gift of salvation. And we recommit ourselves to following His example here on Earth. To loving our Lord and Savior. To loving our neigh-

bors. And to seeing in everyone, especially "the least of these," as a child of God.

President Barack Obama, "President Obama Offers Easter and Passover Greetings"

whitehouse.gov, 3-29-13

The only way this is going to stop is if God's people get together and pray.

Mayor Donald Kile, Kemp, Texas, also an elder at River of Life Church, on God telling him to start a prayer group outside the office of slain Kaufman County District Attorney Mike McLeland and his wife Cynthia

Dallas Morning News, 4-1-13

From my experience, pedophilia is actually an illness. It's not a criminal condition, it's an illness.

Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier, Catholic Archbishop of Durban, S.A., radio interview

Reuters, 3-16-13

Boston College doesn't care how students handle their private lives. You can have condoms in your room. But it has become an attempt to make a mockery out of Catholic values. If these students had been circumspect, discreet, private, it never would have come to a head.



Merced, Calif.

Dan Barker talked about "Losing faith in faith" and "Music's debt to nonbelief" at UC-Merced on April 18. The event, sponsored by the Society of Freethinkers at UC-Merced, drew a large crowd of students and community members to hear Dan talk and perform some of his music. From left are Michael Frisch, Jordan Rice, Dan and Society President Brittney Shea Wong.

Jack Dunn, spokesman at Jesuit-run Boston College, which is threatening to discipline students who distribute condoms on campus

NBC News, 3-27-13

Just as Nehemiah built a wall around Jerusalem, we want to build a wall of prayer around our nation's capital.

Rep. Mike McIntyre, D-N.C., co-chair with Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va., of the

Congressional Prayer Caucus, which prays weekly in a room next to the floor of the U.S. House

Charisma News, 4-10-13

Prayer and WD-40.

Hattie Schneider, Molino, Fla., on what got her to 104 years old March 31

northescambia.com, 4-1-13

Newsnotes

Utah atheist may sue over T-shirts

The Atheists of Utah are considering legal action against TIKI Printing of West Valley City, a Salt Lake City suburb, for refusing to print "Gotta Be Real Cuz God Ain't!" on T-shirts.

"We weren't going to be the delivery method for that message that

demeaned our beliefs," TIKI Printing owner Sam Saltzman told KUTV. Saltzman said he agreed to print the front of the shirt, which includes the group's website atheistsofutah.org/.

"I found it quite shocking that an organization that stated that they were Christian would not do business with someone because they were not Christian," said Connie Anast with Atheists

of Utah.

Israel moves to bar gender segregation

Israeli government officials are moving to ban religious practices that give second-class status to women. "The issue is at the heart of a long and emotional struggle between Israel's secular majority and an ultra-Orthodox Jewish minority over lifestyle in the Jewish state," the Jerusalem Post reported May 9.

"Today, I instructed the Justice Ministry to draft legislation . . . that will make any segregation of women and their humiliation in a public space a criminal offense," Justice Minister Tzipi Livni said.

On May 8 in a 71-page document, Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein recommended outlawing any behavior that stops women from receiving "public services with equal conditions."

Recommendations include:

- Ensuring that no cemeteries separate men and women or prevent women from giving eulogies.

- Barring separation of women and men at ceremonies or events sponsored by the government or any of its ministries, in health clinics or on public transportation.

- The Transportation Ministry must monitor bus companies to make sure there's no gender separation.

- Signs indicating separate sidewalks for men and women or calling for modest dress must be removed by authorities, especially when posted in a public place.

- The haredi "Kol Barama" radio station will have to stop its policy of not employing female broadcasters within six months.



FFRF chapter gets northern exposure

The Freethought Association of Northern Michigan, which meets in Petoskey and celebrated its two-year anniversary in April, has put up six billboards in the area. Bob Speeter of FANM writes: "We have already had local residents noticing the billboards, contacting the group and attending meetings. We have not received any negative feedback from the community."

FFRF 36th annual convention Sept 27-29 in Madison

Prepare to be
entertained,
enlightened



Julia Sweeney (left) and Jill Sobule will enlighten and entertain FFRF convention attendees with “The Jill and Julia Show.”

The Freedom From Religion Foundation will host its 36th annual national convention September 27-28, 2013, at the Concourse Hotel, 1 West Dayton St., in Madison, Wis. Enjoy thought-provoking and entertaining talks and performances, as well as the beautiful autumn weather and vibrant downtown scene. The historic Capitol, State Street shopping and restaurants, lake views, museums and other attractions await you! Get more information and register now at:

<http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>
Confirmed speakers:

- **Jill Sobule** and **Julia Sweeney** will team up for witty songwriting and social commentary. Author, playwright, actress and “Saturday Night Live” alum Sweeney (“Letting Go of God”) intersperses comedic improv and stories in between songs by Sobule. Sweeney also has a new book, *If It’s Not One Thing, It’s Your Mother*, on parenting and being parented.
- Sobule, who wrote the title song for Sweeney’s DVD, “Letting Go of God,” broke new ground in 1995 when her recording of “I Kissed a Girl” was the first Top 40 hit to deal with overtly gay themes. Sobule is releasing a new album with the string quartet Ethel and writes commentary on Huffington Post.

- Also entertaining will be Australia’s singer and guitarist **Shelley Segal**, who has released a freethought CD, “An Atheist Album.” Her signature freethought song, “I Don’t Believe in Fairies,” makes a cameo on FFRF’s new musical CD “Adrift on a Star,” featuring Dan Barker and friends. FFRF Co-President Dan Barker will also entertain at the piano and team up with Shelley for a few songs.
- Honored with the first Richard and Beverly Hermen Student Activist Award of \$5,000 will be 19-year-old **Zack Kopplin**, a Louisiana student activist and Rice University student who’s made national news in his work to repeal a stealth creationism law in his home state. His repeal effort has been endorsed by 43 Nobel laureates, among others.
- Receiving a Freethought Heroine Award will be mystery writer **Sara**



Paretsky, an ardent supporter of separation of state and church and women’s reproductive rights and creator of the famous V.I. Warshawski detective series, which revolutionized the mystery world. Paretsky took ill just before FFRF’s 2012 Portland conference and will be accepting her award a year late. Her memoir, *Writing in an Age of Silence*, chronicles her journey from Kansas farm-girl to New York Times bestseller, and includes social commentary.

- **Jamila Bey**, former producer and editor at National Public Radio of such shows as “Morning Edition,” hosts the weekly radio show, “The Sex, Politics and Religion Hour: SPAR with Jamila,” airing in Washington, D.C., and New York City. A stand-up comedienne, Bey says she enjoys the stage because it’s a cheaper hobby than scrapbooking. She frequently writes and lectures on state/church and religious issues and



is working on a book examining the role of religion in the lives of African-American women.

- The convention will celebrate the 65th anniversary of the landmark *McCormack v. Board of Education* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court by airing the Peabody Award-winning documentary “The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today,” directed by **Jay Rosenstein**.
- Jim McCollum**, previous FFRF “Champion of the First Amendment” will also appear.



Hotel information

The Madison Concourse Hotel
One West Dayton Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(800) 356-8293 or (608) 257-6000
To avoid disappointment, book your room now for the convention rate of \$149 plus tax single, double, triple and quadruple. Phone the hotel indicating you are with the Freedom From Religion Foundation room block. The registration number to verify the room block is 211725. Or book your room with the concourse online at:
<http://bit.ly/ZETE0t>

Register online at: <http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>

Return with payment to: FFRF, Attn: Convention, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701

**Freedom From Religion Foundation’s
36th Annual Convention
September 27-28, 2013
The Madison Concourse Hotel
Madison, Wisconsin
Make checks payable to “FFRF”**



Number registering

_____ FFRF member registration(s) @ \$65 per person	\$_____
_____ Nonmember spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$70.....	\$_____
_____ Nonmember registration(s) @ \$110	\$_____
(or join for \$40, save \$5!)	
_____ Student registration(s) @ \$25 (Ask about student group rate)	\$_____
_____ Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast @ \$20* per person	\$_____
_____ Classic _____ Classic Vegetarian _____ Vegan/gluten-free	
_____ Saturday Night Dinner @ \$45* per person	\$_____
_____ Turkey _____ Salmon _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan	
If gluten-free, please specify.	Total: \$_____
* Meal prices include 20% gratuity & 5.5% sales tax	

Name(s)	Please include names of all registrants for nametags
Address	
City/State/ZIP	Please include phone/email (in case we have a question about your registration)

Convention menu

The Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast is the plated Classic Breakfast: scrambled eggs with roasted breakfast potatoes, bacon, seasonal fruit cup, juice, coffee and tea and chef’s pastry basket. Vegetarian option is broiled tomato instead of bacon. Vegan and gluten-free will receive chef’s choice version. The cost is \$20, including 20% gratuity and 5.5% sales tax.

The Saturday Banquet Dinner will be a choice of traditional breast of turkey, salmon or seasonal ravioli. The turkey is accompanied by andouille corn bread stuffing, whipped potatoes, cranberry relish and smoked apple-briquette gravy.

The vegetarian ravioli is filled with sautéed squash. The atlantic salmon (farmed) includes roasted red potatoes with asiago, and lemon-creamed spinach.

Entrées include fresh bakery breads, coffee and hot and iced tea, garden greens and chocolate roulade cake. Saturday dinner is \$45, including gratuity and tax.