

Freethought Today

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FFRF puts kibosh on Christian park subsidy

There will be no public funding of a Christian park named The Shepherd's Garden in Sioux City, Iowa.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation had sent a letter of complaint May 19 after learning that the park's developers had been awarded a \$140,000 grant from the board of Vision Iowa, which is overseen by the Iowa Economic Development Authority, a public entity.

After the agency got FFRF Staff Attorney Seidel's letter, IEDA spokeswoman Tina Hoffman claimed that public money would only be used for green space and not the park's religious elements. Plans included a "Walk of Faith," a "Calvary Crosses water feature," "prayer spaces," "crosses" and "bible verses." The plans even differentiated between "public spaces" and "prayer spaces."

Using the money for so-called non-religious elements wouldn't make the grant any less unconstitutional, Seidel said. "This is one of the most egregious grants for a religious purpose FFRF has encountered," he said, noting that project plans described it as "a space that pays particular attention to the promise of new life in Jesus Christ that is available to all."

On June 6, Timothy J. Whipple, IEDA general counsel for legislative affairs and rules, emailed FFRF:



Photo: Adam Wozniak

Flyover for freethought?

The Northern Ohio Freethought Society, an FFRF chapter, didn't really arrange for a patriotic flyover of Dave Huntsman and his billboard (not that you thought they did). It was one of 11 FFRF placed in the Cleveland area.

"You will be pleased to learn that the applicant has declined the board's award and that the project will be completed entirely with privately raised funds. For your information, I have attached a PDF copy of the letter the board received declining the award."

"Thank you for your interest in Iowa's economic development programs," Whipple wrote.

"I didn't want to be in the middle

of a lawsuit," Garry Smith, a member of the Shepherd's Garden board, told The Associated Press. "All I want to do is build the park. I don't want to be in the middle of depositions."

Smith said June 6 that FFRF's objections prompted private donors to come forward so the project doesn't need state money. The \$810,000 park is on track for completion in the fall, he said.

"This was a no-brainer for anyone who knows anything at all about the Constitution," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "You don't build a private park with public money. We're expecting a card any day now in the mail from Shepherd's Garden thanking us for shaking loose the cash from their donors, who most certainly must see this as a win for the free market."

Inside This Issue

She said 'Yes!'

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Raleigh convention pictorial

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FFRF attorneys defend state/church wall

Pages 14-15



'David v. Goliath' meet in 7th Circuit Court of Appeals

FFRF tells pastors to 'Render unto Caesar' in housing suit

The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a brief in early June before the 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago, defending its major November victory in federal district court overturning the housing allowance exclusion uniquely benefiting "ministers of the gospel."

"Even the Bible commands citizens to 'render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's,'" the state/church watchdog notes in its 47-page brief. Yet the tax code and the clergy who benefit from it at the expense of all other taxpayers ignore "basic principles of

neutrality and fairness when it comes to clergy taxation."

"Just about every church denomination in the country has mobilized to fight our victory and flout the 'Render unto Caesar' injunction," said Annie Laurie Gaylor. She and her husband, Dan Barker, are FFRF co-presidents and co-plaintiffs in the nationally watched lawsuit.

"The rest of us pay more taxes because ministers don't pay their fair share. Ministers and churches are unabashed in demanding special treatment. We like to call it our 'David

versus Goliath' IRS battle," she added, "and you know who won that!"

The "parsonage allowance" law enacted in 1954 favors ministers by allowing churches to pay them through a housing allowance that is then excluded (up to the fair rental value of a home) from taxable income.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb of Madison, Wis., agreed that this major tax benefit — expressly awarded to clergy for fighting "godlessness," according to bill sponsor U.S. Rep. Peter Mack, D-Ill. — is an unconstitutional

Continued on page 3



Meet a Citizen Lobbyist

Claudette StPierre in her sister's Virginia backyard during her trip to Washington to lobby Congress during the Secular Coalition for America's recent lobby day and summit.

Name: Claudette StPierre.

Where I live: Franktown, Colo. I was born in Long Beach, Calif., in 1963, near the end of the baby boomer generation.

Family: My husband Pat and our three dogs and one cat. I have two sisters and a niece and nephew. Fortunately, we are all freethinkers!

Education: I graduated with a bachelor's degree in nursing in 1986 and have been practicing in the area of pediatrics my whole career, the past seven years as a nurse case manager at Children's Hospital Colorado.

How I got where I am today: I was raised Catholic and attended Catholic school through 12th grade, always questioning the validity of many of the tenets of the religion. I read [Bart Ehrman's] book *Misquoting Jesus* about 10 years ago, which was a turning point even though I was no longer a follower of religion at the time. It solidified my disbelief in religion.

Where I'm headed: I am now very passionate about the separation of church and state and hope to continue to advocate for this issue in my community. I also would like to see atheism "normalized" and help others under-

stand that we are just regular folks.

Person in history I admire: Carl Sagan, a passionate supporter of science.

A quotation I like: Margaret Mead's "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."

Favorite things: Gardening, dark chocolate, red wine!

Pet peeves: Using unsupported facts and fake science to support an issue.

My doubts about religion started: When they told us in Catholic school that it was a sin to eat meat on Friday, but you could eat fish. My mom said when she was a child, they ate fish to support the local fishermen. Umm, who was right? Mom, of course.

Before I die: I would like to visit all the museums in Denver.

Ways I promote freethought: I am out of the closet when it comes to my atheism. If religion comes up in conversation or situations, I take the opportunity to educate others about what an atheist is and that we are part of society. I don't make any apologies about it.

I am also president of FFRF's Denver chapter.

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 June/July 2014 or earlier please renew! Your prompt renewal (\$40-single membership; \$50-household; \$100-gung-ho; \$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 membership or renewal to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701,

FFRF welcomes 25 new Lifetime Members

FFRF is delighted to report 24 new Lifetime Members. They are:

David Barabino, Ronald Bochar, Harry Britt, Greg Bruna, Frank Dorka, Mareen Dorka, Luci Fer, Ronald E. Forman, Leonard Goldstein, David McKay, Caroline Milton, Wallace L. Oliver, Joseph Provino, Jonathan Reid, Rik Richter, Dr. Robert L. Rockwell, Dr. Donald N. Simkins, Joyce Steensrud, Mr. Doug Stein, Mary Jo Stirling, Dr. Jim Wheeler, M.D., James Wheelwright, Karl Wieggers, Charles S. Wilson Jr. and Susan A. Zerwick.

States represented: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming.

Individual Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000 designated for membership or membership renewal, ensure never another renewal notice, are deductible for income-tax purposes to the kind donor, and go into a "rainy day" re-



Photo: Cawanna Keeling

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor with new "Lifer" Brenda Germain

served account.

Warmest thanks to Susan, Charles, Karl, James, Jim, Mary Jo, Doug, Donald, Robert, Rik, Jonathan, Joseph, Wallace, Caroline, David, Leonard, Ronald, Luc, Mareen, Frank, Greg, Harry, Ronald and David!

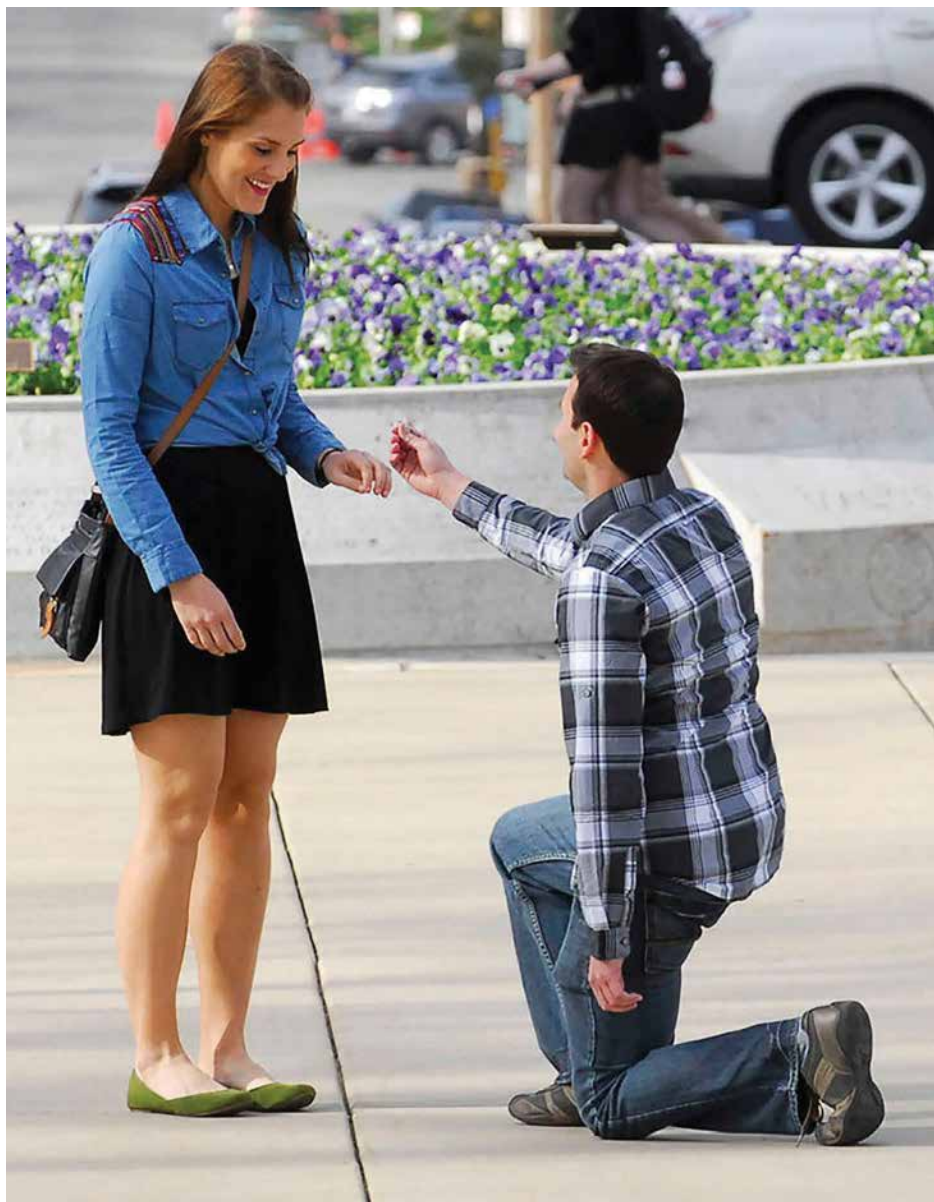


Photo: Andrew L. Seidel

Hell yes!

That's not exactly what Sarah Pechmann said in accepting FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott's marriage proposal in May at the Wisconsin Capitol. Actually, Patrick says with a smile, it was just "Yes." They plan to wed Sept. 26, 2015. Sarah works as a registered nurse.

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 June/July 2014
The only freethought newspaper in the United States

FFRF litigation updates

American Legion, Montana AG fight FFRF Jesus appeal

Montana's attorney general teamed up with the American Legion in early May to file an "unfriendly brief" opposing the Freedom From Religion Foundation's challenge of a Jesus shrine on federal property. FFRF's appeal of a district court ruling on the church/state controversy is before the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

The amicus brief was filed on behalf of the attorney general and conservative vets' group by the Liberty Institute of Texas. Liberty Institute lost a federal case to FFRF and the ACLU of Ohio last year in defending a portrait of Jesus in a public high school.

A 6-foot-tall shrine to Jesus Christ sits on a 7-foot pedestal on Big Mountain in the Flathead National Forest, which is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. Since 1953, the Forest Service has issued a permit allowing the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's group, to place without cost a "Shrine overlooking the Big Mountain ski run," whose purpose is "to erect a Statue of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In response to initial objections to the shrine, the Knights of Columbus claimed "that our Lord himself selected this site." The American Legion got involved because of the belated sham relabeling of the shrine as a "war memorial."

Bizarrely, the Legion and the attorney

general said there is no constitutional violation "simply because it is a statue of Jesus. But removing it because it is a statue of Jesus does create both impermissible viewpoint discrimination and a content-based restriction of the Kalispell Knights' private speech."

"A permanent Catholic shrine on public land is prohibited by the Establishment Clause, every bit as much as a Catholic church would be," asserts FFRF's appeal brief, filed Jan. 28.

Also filing an amicus brief against FFRF was the American Center for Law and Justice, started by televangelist Pat Robertson.

•••

A challenge of the invidious use of a religious motto on U.S. coins and currency by intrepid secular litigator Michael Newdow on behalf of many plaintiffs, including the FFRF and many of its members, was ruled against by a 3-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York on May 28.

Primary plaintiff in *Newdow v. The Congress of the United States* is Rosalyn Newdow, a member of FFRF and a devoted numismatist who collected coins for 40 years, but has felt obligated to stop purchasing coin sets which exclude her and all nonbelievers.

"It's necessary to remind not just the courts but the public that 'In God We

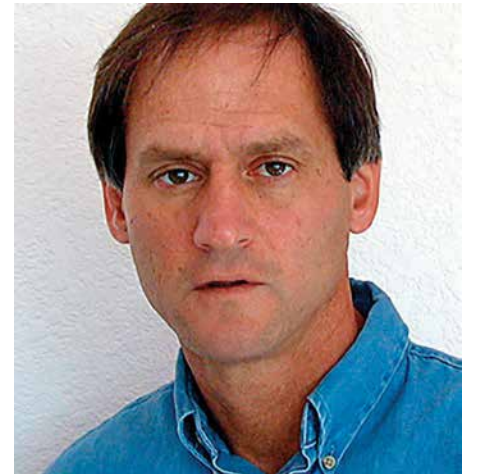


Trust' is a Johnny-come-lately motto adopted at the height of the Cold War. It was only officially required on all currency in 1955," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "It's not even an accurate motto. To be accurate, it would have to say, 'In God Some of Us Trust,' and wouldn't that be silly?"

She noted that nonbelievers are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population by religious identification, approaching 20% — the second largest "denomination" after Catholics.

FFRF first sued over the motto and its use on coins in the 1990s, and says that religion on the motto and on money remain two of the most common complaints the state/church watchdog receives.

Gaylor praised Newdow for carrying on his pro bono work to divorce religion from government. Says Newdow: "I plan to keep trying in the remaining



Michael Newdow

six circuits until we find some federal appellate judges who believe in the principles that underlie our Constitution."

To pastors: 'Render unto Caesar'

Continued from front page

preference for religion over nonreligion. Crabb noted that "the exemption provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise."

"It's more than disappointing that FFRF is under assault not just by conservative churches but by liberal ones,

including the American Baptists, traditionally our allies for separation of church and state," noted Barker. "Even Unitarian Universalists, Jewish and Islamic groups have joined literally hundreds of Christian denominations and nondenominational congregations in signing onto seven amicus briefs filed against FFRF by theocratic legal aid societies."

As a former ordained minister, Barker previously benefited from the preferential treatment of clergy by the IRS. But he and Gaylor, as directors of an atheist/agnostic group, may not deduct from their taxable income the portion of their salaries now designated by FFRF as a "housing allowance." That discriminatory treatment gave the couple standing to sue.

Richard L. Bolton, serving as FFRF's litigation attorney, laid out the discriminatory treatment of Gaylor and

Barker as similarly situated taxpayers. Section 107(2) of the tax code violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it is not neutral — providing significant tax benefits exclusively to ministers of the gospel, and providing greater benefits to ministers than to nonclergy taxpayers.

Ministers derive an enormous financial benefit by being paid in tax-exempt dollars, FFRF's brief notes. So do churches, which may pay clergy less because tax-free dollars go further. There's no requirement that the housing allowance be used for the convenience of the employer. Even retired ministers are eligible to claim the allowance.

The IRS has determined that teachers at parochial schools, even athletic coaches, may be paid through a housing allowance if they're ordained. FFRF documents the substantial entan-

glement between church and state that results from intrusive IRS standards about what constitutes an eligible church and minister.

"While all taxpayers would like to have exclusions and deductions to cover their housing costs, the reality is that only ministers of the clergy now get this break," FFRF's brief concludes. "Section 107(2) therefore violates the Establishment Clause in a most obvious way by conditioning tax benefits on religious affiliation."

FFRF is the nation's largest association of atheists and agnostics, with more than 20,000 members, and is based in Madison, Wis. FFRF has two other challenges of the IRS' preferential treatment of religion. Its challenge of lack of IRS enforcement of anti-electioneering laws by tax-exempt churches is in district court, as is its challenge of the IRS exemption of churches from mandatory reporting laws applying to all other 501(c)(3) entities.

The case is *Freedom From Religion Foundation, Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker v. Jacob J. Lew and John A. Koskinen*.

For background, including the seven theocratic amicus briefs against FFRF's challenge (scroll down to *FFRF v. Lew*):

ffrf.org/legal/challenges/ongoing-lawsuits

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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.

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*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.

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

Superstition

We see only our shadows on the wall of the cave.
— Plato

Outside
the holy winds are raging,
and here in the dusk of our lives,
patterns blur along the wall:
the games of forgotten children,
the arc of dying swallows,
wilting goldenrod—shadows now
along this barren rock.
Here, among fleeting caresses,
frenzied voices are crying *Believe*,
as our lives flare up in glory—
the gorgeous blast of shrapnel,
the halo of flashing guns—
while sages, standing in God's freezing fire,
breathe certainty, certainty,
certainty.

© Philip Appleman

Freethought Today is honored to reprint this poem from *New & Selected Poems: 1956-1996*.



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. Phil's books: ffrf.org/shop.



A fine point indeed

"Why would God bother to speak with no one there to listen?" wonders Jamie Dunn about the explosive claim on this marquee in Whiting, Wis., just outside Stevens Point.

Overheard

I think what troubles me — whether it's religiously inspired or not — is the ignorance, foolishness, and I might say, stupidity, in this country. This championing of anti-intellectual, anti-science, scientifically illiterate theories and lack of critical thinking is disturbing.

Ron Reagan, on signing off in FFRF's TV ad by saying, "Lifelong atheist, not afraid of burning in hell."

Los Angeles Times, 5-30-14



journalism professor, on revelations that an Oklahoma public school board met privately with Hobby Lobby CEO Steve Green about implementing his bible curriculum

Dallas Morning News, 5-21-14

I don't think [invocations are] a necessary thing. I think there's sufficient diversity among the people in terms of different religions, that I'm very content to leave it without a prayer or a moment of silence.

Al Bienstock, Hampden Township, Pa., Board of Commissioners chairman, which has a moment of silence only when someone dies

The Sentinel, 5-19-14

I believe in religion, but I believe we ought to keep it separate.

Levi Grant, Chadron, Neb., City Council member, opposing a colleague's idea to pray before meetings, which the council has never done

Rapid City Journal, 5-20-14

If the Supreme Court wants to open up the door to this, Satan and I will walk through.

Chaz Stevens, Florida FFRF member, who applied to give a satanic invocation to open the Deerfield Beach City Council meeting after the Supreme Court decision allowing sectarian prayers at government meetings

National Public Radio, 5-10-14



Not long before she left the bench, Justice O'Connor declared: "At a time when we see around the world the violent consequences of the assumption

of religious authority by government, Americans may count themselves fortunate. . . . Why would we trade a system that has served us so well for one that has served others so poorly?" It is deeply unfortunate that the majority of the court fails to understand this basic insight and is so greatly lessening the protections of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Erwin Chemerinsky, University of California-Irvine Law School dean, on the Supreme Court's May 5 decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*

ABA Journal, 5-28-14

Dawkins was my first choice for the part, my only choice. He's the voice of modern, rational society — calm, gently authoritative without being authoritarian, knowledgeable, very warm.

Kevin Malone, on Richard Dawkins' voice-over role in "Mysterious 44," Malone's opera based on Mark Twain's unfinished novel *The Mysterious Stranger*

The Guardian, 5-23-14

It ought to anger the public when they see a public body doing this. Nothing should make residents of Mustang madder than that.

Joey Senat, Oklahoma State University

The United States has a long history of conscripting someone called "God" into its worst mistakes, and American religion has been horribly corrupted again and again. For the sake of citizens who believe differently, or believe not at all, prayer has no place at the elbow of on-duty officials.

Columnist James Carroll, "Prayer at public meetings? Leave God out of it"

Boston Globe, 5-12-14

While public prayers may be constitutionally acceptable, according to the [Supreme Court] 5-4 majority, there is a Higher Power that takes a dimmer view of them. God save (and put some

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

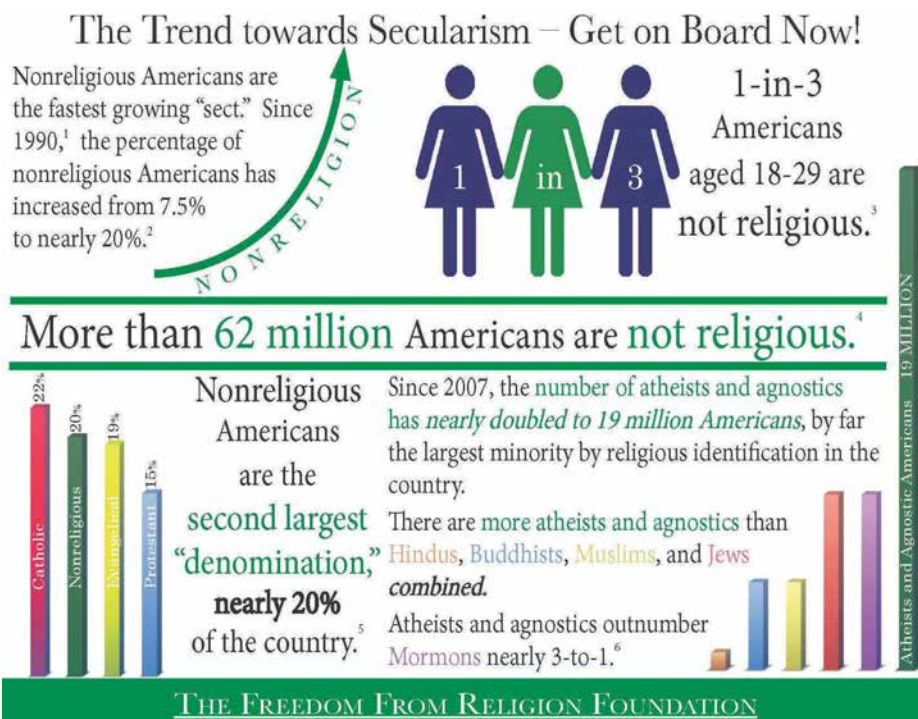
Broadcasts and streams Saturdays at 11 a.m. Central, Progressive Talk The Mic 92.1 FM, Madison, Wis., and over several other stations.

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

**Slightly irreverent views,
news, music & interviews**



FFRF attorneys Andrew Seidel (left) and Sam Grover (right) met with U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis.



Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel’s informative graphic that was put to good use on Capitol Hill.

FFRF attorneys join secular educational effort in D.C.

FFRF Staff Attorneys Andrew Seidel and Sam Grover spent June 12–13 on Capitol Hill in Washington spreading secular good news to Congress. They scheduled seven meetings at congressional offices and dropped in at 20 others to let officialdom know that while the Religious Right is shrinking, the secular movement is getting stronger and more organized every day.

As a 501(c)(3) organization, FFRF can only engage in limited lobbying, but as a member of the 501(c)(4) Secular Coalition for America, FFRF is able to extend its reach. The coalition set up meetings as part of its Lobby Day, where more than 50 freethinkers had more than 60 meetings at congressional offices.

Andrew and Sam scheduled many of their own meetings and dropped in on offices to let Congress know that the demographics are changing for the better. That the “nones” is the fastest growing segment of the population, that we are getting organized, that we

are a force.

While Sam contacted lawmakers to schedule meetings in addition to those organized by the coalition, Andrew drafted some eye-catching literature.

FFRF asked Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin to reconsider her co-sponsorship of the EACH Act (Equitable Access to Care and Health, HR 1814), which passed March 11 in the House. FFRF has taken a stand against this bill before. If it passes in the Senate, EACH would undercut the efficacy of the Affordable Care Act by exempting individuals with “sincerely held religious beliefs” from the requirement to get health insurance.

The bill effectively raises the cost of insurance for millions of Americans in the name of “religious liberty,” when in reality, those who object to health insurance on religious grounds are no less likely to need health care. It would also endanger children’s lives.

Andrew and Sam also alerted lawmakers and their staff to FFRF’s three

ongoing lawsuits challenging various church-specific exemptions in the tax code. The lawsuits include FFRF’s parish exemption lawsuit, its challenge to the Form 990 exemption for churches and its lawsuit on the lack of enforcement of church electioneering restrictions.

While FFRF has won its challenge to the parish exemption in federal district court, a legislative effort to undermine that decision could come at any time. FFRF asked legislators to vote against any bill designed to protect the disparate treatment between churches and secular nonprofits in the tax code.

FFRF attorneys found the meetings in less-than-friendly offices to be some of the most important. Politicians who use religious rhetoric to pander to their constituencies need to know that they are alienating the country’s fastest-growing demographic by religious identification.

They also visited the House Office of the Chaplain, deep in the recesses of

the Capitol, to do a little secular proselytizing. After meeting Patrick Conroy, a Jesuit priest who’s the 60th House chaplain, Andrew and Sam had an educational conversation with his two assistants, who didn’t quite know what to make of the polite, smiling atheists in their midst.

The conversation turned to morality and the atheists explained how it’s possible to be good without God. “Having had to reason out my moral code based on my appreciation for a shared humanity — rather than having it fed to me from a pulpit by reference to an antiquated book — has made my moral convictions all the stronger,” Sam explained.

Andrew passed along informational literature on the country’s nonreligious demographics and pointed out that the chaplain’s prayers typically exclude more than 62 million nonreligious Americans.

Andrew’s favorite moment

In between our scheduled meetings, we dropped in on numerous representatives and senators. In the one Southern lawmaker’s office, representing a state to which FFRF has written too many letters over the years, we sat down with a staffer who had been on her way out of the office. “I can give you three minutes,” she said. What can you say in three minutes, especially to a politician who scored an F on the Secular Coalition’s report card?

Quite a lot, actually. You can tell them, “the times they are a-changin’.” You can tell them, “the atheists are coming, the atheists are coming!” You can tell the staffer that when their representative invokes his or her god, they are alienating millions of Americans.

Andrew was wearing his scarlet letter, the Atheist “A” pin on his tie. “You must be a ‘Bama fan,” the staffer said, referring to the University of Alabama logo.

“No, it’s worse than being a fan of the Crimson Tide, I’m an atheist,” Andrew said proudly and with a smile. “I watched as, behind her eyes, her preconceived notions and stereotypes came crashing down. Clearly, she had never met an open atheist, and certainly not on Capitol Hill. It was by far my most favorite moment of the day.”

Overheard

commonsense into) this honorable court and town councils everywhere. Maybe we should pray, privately, toward that end.

Columnist Cal Thomas, “Court ruling dilutes the purpose of prayer”
Alexandria Town Talk, 5-15-14

A few people made a big issue over religious items on public property. The churches in this area have responded to that by erecting their own monuments, and nobody can stop us because it is private property.

Pastor Beverly Spore, Calvary United Methodist Church, Champion, Pa., dedicating a Ten Commandments monument at the church after FFRF got the Connellsville Area School District to cover one up at a junior high school
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 5-5-14

The bible left me a little cold. I have to admit. Maybe I came to it at the wrong time? I was reading a lot of dirty realism, and all the genre stuff in the Good Book was a real turnoff. So many fantastic elements. Angels? I mean, come on. And it was really trying hard to be “experimental,” with all those multiple

P.O.V.s and jumping around in time. If I were in workshop with the writer, I’d say, “Hey, hotshot, ixnay on the egat-bays.”

Colson Whitehead, author, when asked, “What book did you feel you were supposed to like, and didn’t?”
New York Times, 5-18-14

I became an unbeliever in 2007. It started with the idea of yearning for more knowledge on Christianity, specifically the Catholic religion I grew up with.

Ros Lyn, Humanist Association of Ghana, op-ed titled “Why I am an atheist”
GhanaWeb, 5-18-14

I’m a humanist first and an atheist second. Because I’m more sympathetic to religion than the prominent new atheists, I label my position “soft atheism.” But perhaps I’m a more insidious foe than Dennett and Dawkins. For instead of ignoring important species of religion, I want to prepare the way for their gradual disappearance.

Philip Kitcher, Columbia University



philosophy professor, interview
New York Times, 5-18-14

While receiving their diplomas and congratulations from school board members, the administration and staff, each student handed Rickert a marble, ceremoniously stating that he must have lost his marbles in making such a decision.

News story, “Pima grads get their prayer,” on Superintendent Sean Rickert’s decision to comply with the law so that graduates had to pray off to the side and weren’t part of the official program
Eastern Arizona Courier, 5-26-14

I don’t identify with the expressionless person who stands outside the abortion clinic reciting their rosary, but with young people, who are still against this practice, but are instead fighting for quality of life, their health, their right to work.

Bishop Nunzio Galantino, secretary-general of the Italian Bishops Conference, saying the Catholic Church focuses too much on abortion and euthanasia
CrossMap, 5-26-14

SCOTUS prayer ruling seen as 'hollow victory'

Linda Stephens was a plaintiff in the *Town of Greece v. Galloway* Supreme Court case. She's an FFRF Life Member and a member of the Atheists Community of Rochester, N.Y. Her op-ed was printed June 7 in the *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle* and is reprinted with her permission. To hear her on *Freethought Radio*, scroll down to May 30 at ffrf.org/news/radio/shows/. She and co-plaintiff Susan Galloway will receive FFRF Freethinker of the Year awards in Los Angeles at the 37th annual convention Oct. 24-26.

By Linda Stephens



All is not lost. There are some positives coming out of the recent Supreme Court decision about governmental prayer. First, the court ruled that governments can no longer exclude potential speakers on the basis of religion, as the Town of Greece did for years. If a government relies on outsiders to deliver a solemnizing message at meetings, it must now allow monotheists, polytheists and nonbelievers to do

so as well.

That has prompted a number of atheist and humanist organizations to encourage their members to "crash the party" and volunteer to deliver secular invocations at government meetings. The Freedom from Religion Foundation, the largest atheist and agnostic organization in the country, is offering an annual award for the best secular in-

vocation at a government meeting.

Similarly, the Humanist Society is training people to deliver secular invocations. Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which advocates for both theists and nontheists, has just launched "Operation Inclusion," which aims to help diversify the pool of people delivering prayers/invocations.

Another bright spot: Henceforth, those giving invocations may no longer proselytize or disparage religious minorities or the nonreligious. Having been on the receiving end of some disparaging and hurtful remarks hurled by overzealous Christian pastors at Greece Town Board meetings, I commend the court for laying down the law about this matter.

Some Christian pastors are gloating about the court decision, no doubt relishing the idea of returning to business as usual. One Greece pastor told a *Democrat & Chronicle* reporter that he was "ecstatic about the ruling."

In November, the pastor told a USA Today reporter: "Do I want everybody to be a Christian? Of course I do." And as for the residents who complain

about the invocations: They need to "grow some thicker skin," said the pastor.

Not all Christian pastors, it should be noted, are thrilled about this court decision. David Whitney, a pastor in Pasadena, Md., calls the decision "a hollow victory." Why?

"What really is at question is the role of Christianity in our society. Does it deserve a special place of honor and encouragement? The Court has said no. In that same opinion, part of the reason the Town of Greece was successful in this case, they allowed people of all persuasions, even a Wiccan, to offer a 'prayer' at a public meeting. What is even more amazing is that the Town Council said they would allow an atheist to offer the invocation as well."

Pastor Whitney goes on to say:

"Does it make a difference if Christianity is simply one among a pantheon of religions in America? That it holds no special place in our land?"

Apparently, the court has said just that.

Nothing fails like prayer

Stand up for freethought with secular 'invocations'

Below are transcripts of secular invocations recently entered into FFRF's new Nothing Fails Like Prayer contest. The individual deemed to have delivered the best "atheist homily" or secular invocation before a governmental body will receive an all-expense paid trip to FFRF's annual convention, to open the gathering with the winning "invocation" of reason, freethought, etc., and receive a \$500 honorarium.

Entrants must provide a video and transcript. All eligible entrants will receive a certificate suitable for framing. For more details:

ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer

Ted Utchen, Wheaton, Ill., City Council, 6-2-14



Let us rise each morning, and strive each day, to do only that which brings happiness and joy to others, and avoid doing things that cause others hurt and pain. Let us use our minds and our reason to foster behavior based on the mutuality and reciprocity inherent in human relationships, and let us always respect the dignity and worth of each other. And let us, above all, love one another, not to obtain rewards for ourselves now or hereafter or to avoid punishment, but rather always to bring each other contentment and peace. So be it.

David Williamson: Kissimmee, Fla., Osceola Board of County Commissioners, 6-16-14

Through the millennia we as a society have learned the best way to govern the people is for the people to govern themselves. Today, in this tradition, we travel from our homes and businesses across the county; citizens, staff, and those elected converge on this chamber to work as one community united and indivisible by nearly every measure. Each of us arrives as individuals with unique ideas and experiences but all with a need or, in a spirit of goodwill, to fulfill the needs of others.

Citizens request assistance and offer their concerns and we are ever grateful for their interest and for their trust in the process. Staff provides invaluable expertise in their particular field and we truly appreciate their continued service. Elected officials listen, debate, and choose the path forward for us all out of a sincere desire to serve and honor the people of Osceola County while shaping its future. We all offer our thanks in that often thankless task.

When we leave this chamber this evening, let us carry with us this same spirit of service and goodwill tomorrow and every day that follows.

This is how we assemble to serve and to govern, ourselves.



Robert Ray, Oak Harbor, Wash., City Council, 4-4-14

Thank you, mayor and council members, for this opportunity to provide an inspirational start to your meeting. Normally, you would bow your heads for an invocation in this chamber, but I am going to ask that you raise your eyes and think about a few things today.

When this body comes together to govern, they do so with the consent of the citizens of Oak Harbor. Oak Harbor is a very diverse community with many different views and opinions.

My secular humanism, which is to say reason and science, leads me to believe that we as humans can meet the challenges of these differences and create a society with less dissension and leave a better, more equal culture for future generations.

It is incumbent upon this council to make the best decisions for the community. In this regard, I ask that you use reason, wisdom and empathy in your deliberations today. To take into account the implications your decisions will have now and in the future. We should all plant an acorn, even though we may not live to hear the wind rush through its leaves or the joyous laughter of children playing in the comfort of its shade. We plant the seed for the benefit of future generations.

In the words of Bertrand Russell, in order to do our part, "One must care about a world one will not see."

David Suhor, Pensacola, Fla., City and County Commissions, 2-13-14/9-9- 12 [excerpted]

Mother, father, gods of ALL people,

we come today in our humble way to shape a small part of your creation

Gathering to a task, in your diverse and glorious presence,

together we invoke your unique blessings and your life essence

May the efforts of this council blend The justness of Allah with the wisdom of Odin

May Mithra the everlasting ground them with the grace of mother Gaia

May Yahweh forgive their shortcomings and Beddru foresee their salvation

And we praise you, Jehovah of Christ, Hu tzilop chtli and Ba'al

for the sanguine sacrifice that frees us all

And for the bounty of reason, science and logic, we thank the ONE deity

none of us knows, that of humanist, atheist and agnostic

Divine love, lead us, enlightened by Buddha and Eshu, empowered by Thetan spirits

that we may govern with the wisdom and the good of ALL gods of our nation

PLEASE impart our humble congregation

with prudence, prosperity and peace this day

and so we pray. Amen.

Tim Earl, Portage, Mich., City Council, 7-23-13

Thank you once again for inviting me back to give this invocation on behalf of the nonbelievers in our city.

As you gather here today to see to the business of our city, I ask you to consider whom you are here to serve.

Stand up for freethought with secular ‘invocations’

Not a deity, but the diverse population of Portage. This includes not only Christians of many sects, but also Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Wiccans, nonbelievers and others.

As Aristotle said over 2,000 years ago, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Our community is made stronger by the presence of different cultures, traditions and viewpoints. The freedom each of us enjoys to follow our own spiritual path with no government interference, established by our constitution over 200 years ago, has served as a shining example for the rest of the world and has contributed to the astonishing success of our nation. When we forget or ignore this principle of inclusion, we turn our backs on the wisdom of the founding fathers and tarnish their legacy, weakening our society in the process.

We don't have to respect each other's views. But we do have to respect each other's right to hold those views and practice their beliefs without fear of persecution, as long as it doesn't infringe upon the rights of others.

But the differences between us are really not that significant. Nearly every religion claims that its holy book serves as the basis for human morality, and yet they're remarkably similar. Even

atheists, with no holy book of our own, share many of the same values as believers. Whereas a Christian may value all life as a gift from God, an atheist values life just as much because he believes that it's all we have, and all that we'll ever be. In the end, our goal is the same: to enrich the lives of others and make the world a better place for everyone. It's our common humanity, not ancient texts, that unites us all and guides us to treat each other with dignity and respect.

And so I ask you to consider that common humanity as you deliberate tonight.

Because in this chamber, it doesn't matter what Jesus would do, or Buddha or Muhammad, or even Jefferson or Lincoln. What matters is what's best for the citizens of Portage today and in the years ahead. Let that be the principle which guides your decisions.

Justin Vacula, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., City Council, 6-12-14
[excerpted]

I asked to provide a secular invocation at the start of council meetings to provide an alternative to the gov-

ernment-led Judeo-Christian prayer offered by Councilwoman Maureen Lavelle which begins each meeting.

The council refused my request to offer an invocation at the beginning of the meeting, but allowed me to offer a secular invocation during the public comment period. I lament that decision to continue exclusionary prayer led by government officials at public meetings.

We come here to do the business of local government. Government officials have pledged to improve the quality of this community and are entrusted with doing so.

As we gather, we are reminded that although we have differences we are linked by our common humanity. When we work together to move our community forward in a spirit of mutual respect and common decency, we showcase what is best about our community, our state and our nation.

We embrace many traditions and represent many demographics. We are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, humanists, atheists, agnostics, Wiccans, pagans, unaffiliated, uncertain and so many other things. We are young and old and everything in between. We represent many races and nationalities. We identify as libertarian,

liberal, progressive and conservative.

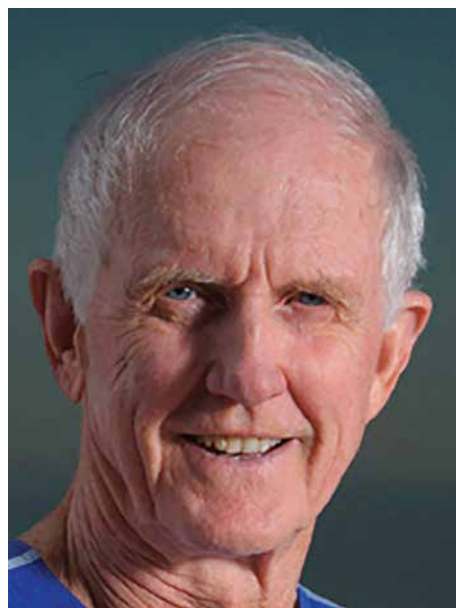
To be sure, we do not agree about everything and we often feel fiercely protective of what we do believe. But there is one thing on which we all agree. We share the goal of making our community the best place it can be. We unite here today with that noble aim and common purpose.

Let informed reason, evidence, and argument inform discourse not only at council meetings, but also in all aspects of our lives. Demand good reasons, arguments and evidence when people present claims. Thoroughly consider perspectives of those with whom you disagree.

For if we happen to discard our cherished beliefs, we make intellectual progress. While it may be difficult to admit being wrong or break away from tradition, changing our beliefs so that we perceive the world more accurately is a huge benefit, a sign of growth and maturity.

It is my hope that we challenge ourselves and others to improve our quality of life. It is my hope that respect, when deserved, is extended to others. It is my hope that good argument, evidence and reason guides the decisions of all within and outside of this room. Thank you.

Start standing up (at a podium) for the Constitution



By Don Ardell

There are many days that will live in infamy alongside Dec. 7, 1941. Just two obvious examples are Nov. 22, 1963, and Sept. 11, 2001. If asked, I would also list May 5, 2014, as a date certain to live in infamy.

That's the day the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* that it's constitutional for local governments to host prayers at official meetings.

Someday, a secular Supreme Court will override this dreadful decision. Our Constitution is godless. It is not hostile or friendly to religion. It is simply neutral. Our founders met centuries ago at a constitutional convention that included no prayers. A separation was established in the Constitution between religions and governments

at all levels. This was deliberate. The founders knew from their experience in Europe that religious matters were divisive, that disparate sectors of the population did not want to be governed by or included in the religious dogmas and rituals at odds with their own religious beliefs, or absence of such beliefs.

Freedom *from* is as important as freedom *of* religion, and these two freedoms require governments that are neutral in matters of a religious nature. Yet today, politicians and many influential allies enthused with church-based sensibilities have introduced, at every level of government, elements of the predominant form of religiosity — namely, Christianity.

My views are the same as Robert Green Ingersoll's, who in one speech said: "Improved Man will not endeavor, by prayers and supplication, by fastings and genuflections, to change the mind of the Infinite, or to alter the course of nature; neither will he employ others to do these things in his place." In another he said that "all prayers die in the air that they uselessly agitate."

Consider this partial list of areas in which violations or influences are rampant:

- Religion in public schools and universities (e.g., creationism, school prayer, bibles/religious texts in curricula/student religious clubs and religious distributions, music, Pledge of Allegiance, displays, events and evangelism during the school day and use of facilities by church groups).
- Faith-based programs and other subsidies of religious institutions.
- Tax exemptions for churches and clergy.
- School vouchers and government

These violations will not cease owing to the good will of Christian and other religious elements.

subsidies of religious schools.

- Official prayer, religious displays and ceremonial religion at government events and meetings, religious displays on public property, religious mottoes, pledges and resolutions.

- Governments-sanctioned discrimination, religious exemptions (military, prisons, housing, health care facilities, etc.).

- Church involvement in elections/lobbying and ballot initiatives and U.S.-Vatican diplomatic relations.

- Marriage, reproductive justice and other privacy issues.

A course of action

These violations will not cease owing to the good will of Christian and other religious elements. Secular Americans have to make known their desires for adherence to separation of religion and government at every level and in social and other interactions. Doing so need not be confrontational; constructive requests for governmental neutrality should be sufficient to slow and hopefully reverse a steady drift toward theocracy. Secularists have many allies in the religious communities who share their desire to keep religion and

government apart.

This requires, as a first step, that more Americans be aware of the nature, rationale and history of separation of church and state. Local officials should be reminded that they may not legally use their authority, public funds or government property to promote religion, despite the fact that a majority presently approves of religious intrusions.

The *Greece* decision has energized many secularists to actively resist further Christian incursions into public life, and to do more about those already in place. To foster specific protest about government prayer, FFRF has designed a contest, the purpose of which is to show that government prayers are unnecessary, ineffective, embarrassing, exclusionary, divisive or just plain silly. The thinking is that if more citizens protest prayers, the likelihood increases that they will stop sooner rather than later.

Anyone interested in the contest need only sign up or otherwise gain a chance to appear at a council meeting or other government function and deliver a secular, instructive invocation. The goal of the contest is to educate everyone about why we have, or should protect what we are entitled to have — namely, separation of church and state.

Giving an invocation is a *real* wellness act of freedom-seeking, as well as the patriotic thing to do. If you are planning such a thing, I thank you in advance for your service.

Don Ardell is a Florida member who writes the Ardell Wellness Report.



Freedom From Religion in the Bible Belt

May 2-3, 2014

Raleigh, North Carolina

In conjunction with the Triangle Freethought Society

Southern freethinkers gather in a superstition-free zone

Over 200 attended the “Freedom From Religion in the Bible Belt” Raleigh Regional FFRF Conference May 2-3 in North Carolina. CNN was there! View CNN’s coverage (both a blog by CNN Belief Blog Editor Daniel Burke, and a fun video: religion.blogs.cnn.com/2014/05/24/atheists-in-the-bible-belt-a-survival-guide/)

Registering participants

FFRF Director of Membership Jackie Douglas, chapter volunteers Veronique Matthews, Faith Rodriguez, Joyce Gad, Charles Keeling and Frank Kloch, who coordinated the many helpful volunteers.



Tabling

Displayed above: one of the Raleigh “out of the closet” billboards featuring students Sophia and Collette Winkler.



A Godless Trio

FFRF’s Annie Laurie Gaylor (middle) enjoyed a reunion with Chris Roerden (right), formerly of Wisconsin, who now lives in North Carolina with Pat Meller.



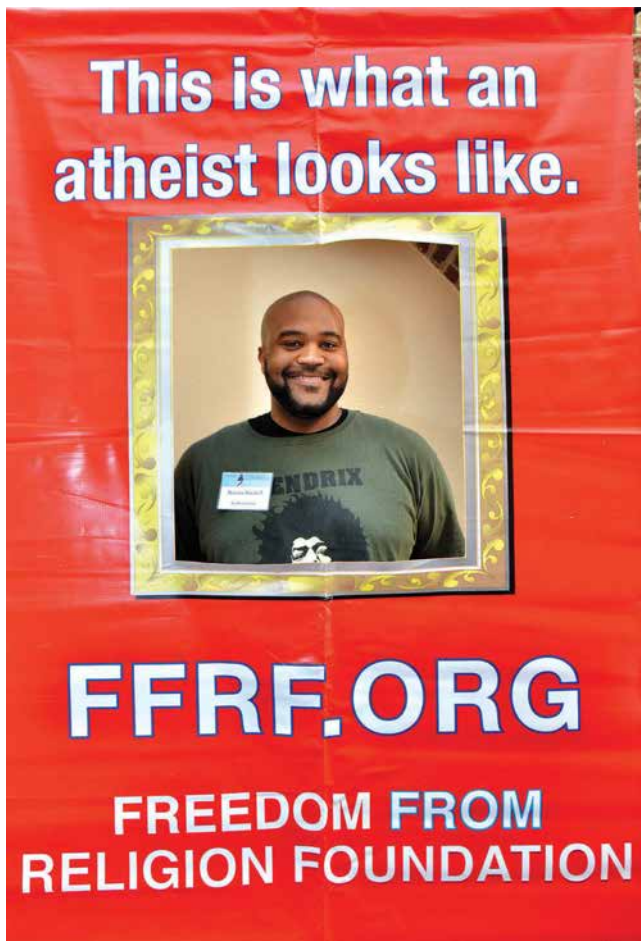
Volunteering

From left to right: Triangle Freethought Society volunteers Molly Mast, Charlotte and Harry Shaughnessy, Ramiro Rodriguez, Marcus Mitchell, Faith Newsome, Sue Kocher, Veronique Matthews and Frank Kloch. Thank you, Sue, primary liaison between the chapter and FFRF office, who provided countless hours of help and collaboration.

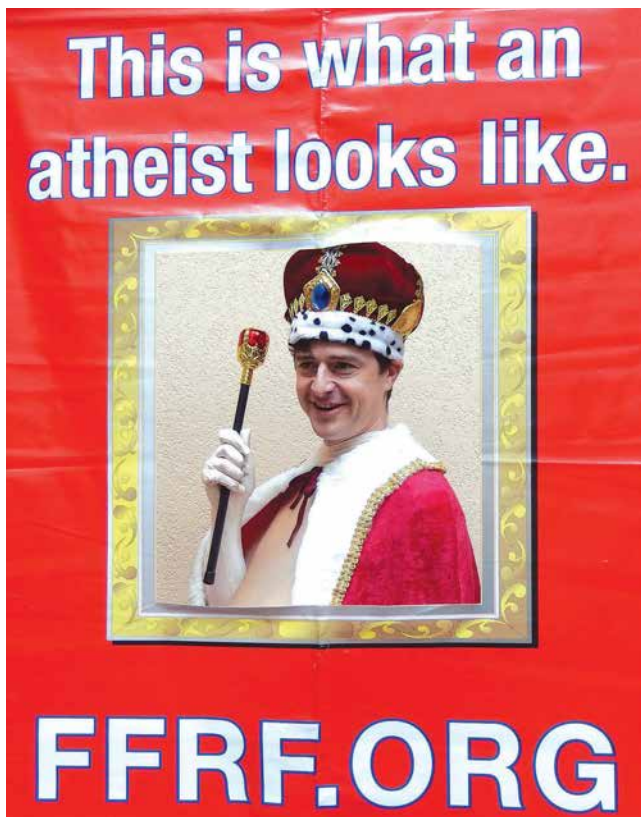


Pat Cleveland, founder and president of Alabama Freethought Association, FFRF’s longest-lived chapter, with North Carolina volunteer Charles Keeling.

Photography by Cawanua Keeling, Alan Howell, and Joey Carabetta



Marcus Mitchell



Harry Shaughnessy hamming it up as the Emperor Who Has No Clothes.



Veronique Matthews



Enjoying the hearty opening appetizers, which were followed by complimentary cupcakes, are Raleigh chapter members and activists: Lynn Harke, Dan Wascher, Robin Wascher and Frederic Depujo.

Freethought Fun

Triangle Freethought Society President Harry Shaughnessy with "robots" Max Nielson and Nick Freeman. Max received a student activist award and Nick Freeman is a chapter activist.



The Village Idiots, a local comedy improv troupe that entertained at the conclusion of the Friday night opening, enlisted some audience participation. From left: Village Idiot Mike West. Seated: Village Idiot Katie Stephens. Drafted from the audience: student activist Kalei Wilson with convention honoree Todd Stiefel behind her. That's Village Idiot Laura Parker ducking under Kalei to right.



Joey Carabetta



Chapter volunteers Faith Rodriguez and Todd Pratt volunteering at the Human Beans Together table. Freethinkers Carmen and Donald Zepp founded the charity, in which nonbelievers raise money and volunteer to help Raleigh homeless. Conference participants donated nonperishables.



Mandisa Thomas, founder and president of Black Unbelievers, Inc., based in Atlanta, as a bonus after her talk singing the inspiring "Ain't No Stopping Us Now."



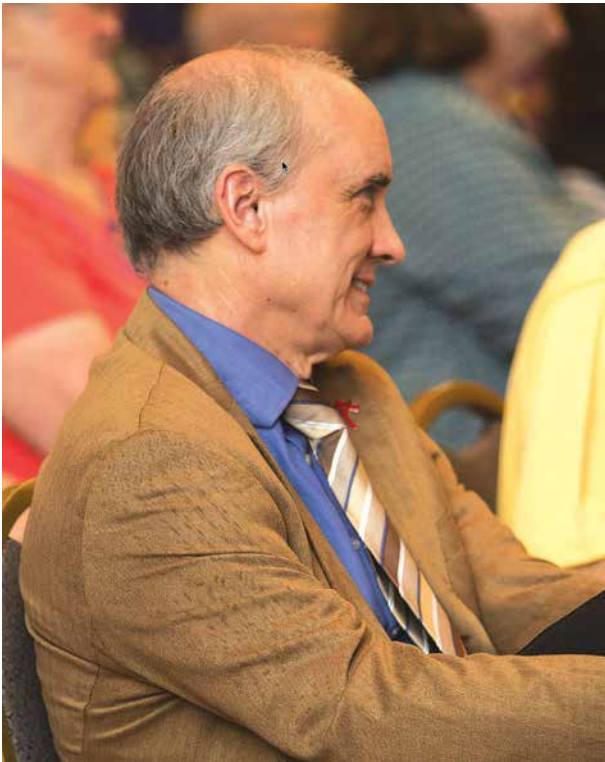
Triangle Freethought Society Board Member Sue Kocher.

Michael Nugent, founder of Atheist Ireland, flew in from Dublin to talk about Irish and global state/church conflicts, including blasphemy.



Chapter volunteer Kim Ellington introducing Todd Stiefel.

Speakers



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.



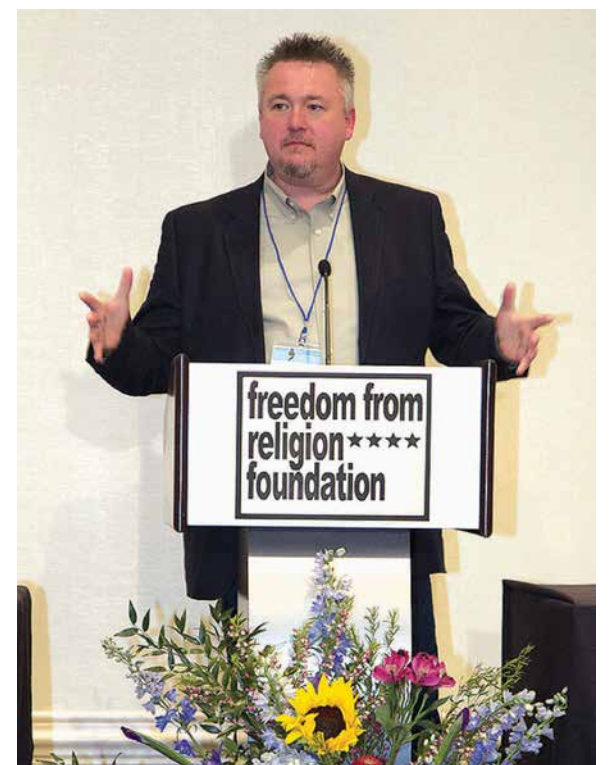
Candace R.M. Gorham is a former evangelical minister and author of "The Ebony Exodus Project: Why Some Black Women Are Walking Out on Religion — and Others Should Too."



Sarah Morehead, a recovered fundamentalist, is executive director of Recovering From Religion.



Dan Barker (at podium) — a co-founder of The Clergy Project with Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Linda LaScola — introducing other former ministers turned nonbelievers (from left): Randy Bender, former Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Candace R.M. Gorham, former evangelical minister and Matt Killingsworth, former Pentecostal minister.



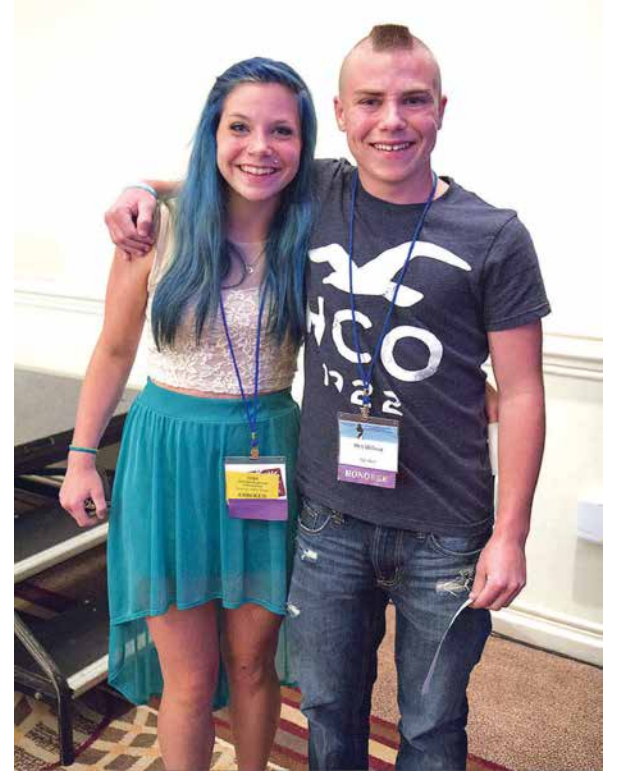
Matt Killingsworth still looks and talks like a Pentecostal evangelist, but he now preaches reason, science, and freethought.



Max Nielson received the Allen P. Wilkinson Student Activist Award of \$1,000 as student plaintiff in FFRF's South Carolina federal lawsuit against graduation and school board prayer.



Bart Ehrman, as an agnostic bible scholar who debunks many myths in his bestselling books on religion, receiving an "Emperor Has No Clothes" Award from Dan Barker on behalf of FFRF.

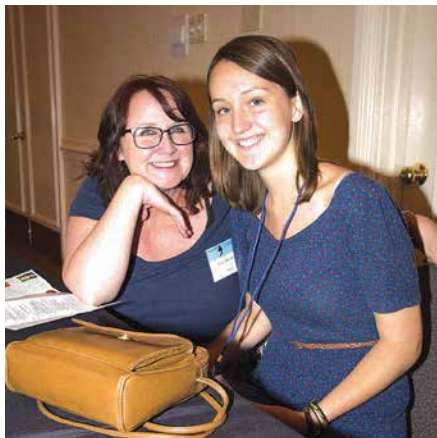


North Carolina siblings Kalei and Ben Wilson received respectively the Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Student Activist Award of \$1,000 (endowed by Annie Laurie Gaylor) and the Cliff Richards Memorial Student Activist Award of \$1,000. They endured censorship trying to form a freethought club at their high school.



Todd Stiefel, the man behind the Reason Rally and head of the Stiefel Freethought Foundation, was surprised in the middle of his presentation with an Emperor Has No Clothes Award. Dan Barker presented the award as Harry Shaughnessy — dressed as the Emperor — looks on.

Awardees



Student honoree Sophia Winkler with mother Lois.

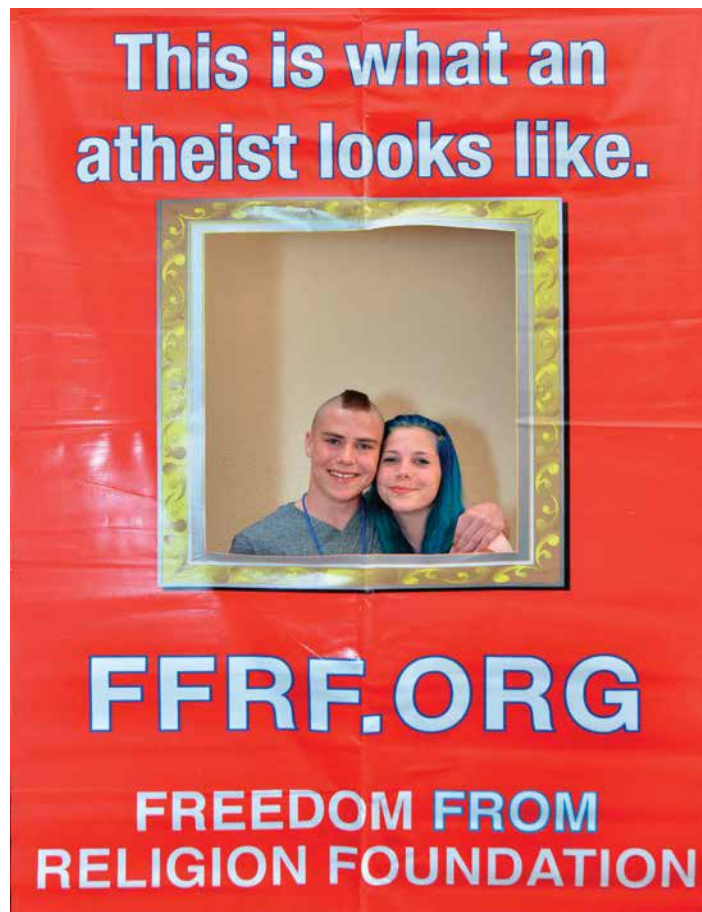


TV reporter Stuart Watson, with WCNC-TV, the NBC affiliate in Charlotte, N.C., spoke about his investigation of abuses of clergy housing allowances. He's holding a "Freethought in the Media" Award from FFRF.

*Photography by
Cawanua Keeling, Alan Howell,
and Joey Carabatta*



Harry Shaughnessy and Todd Stiefel



Ben and Kalei Wilson.



Artist Scott Burdick, a N.C. Lifetime Member, received an appreciative Freethought in the Arts plaque from FFRF. With him: Sophia Winkler, 16, who "starred" in one of Scott's documentaries, "Sophia Goes to the Good News Club," which was shown at the conference. Sophia received a \$1,000 Thomas W. Jendrock Student Activist Award. Scott served as volunteer convention videographer.



Michael Scott (second from right), founder of the new Atlanta chapter of FFRF, pictured with his wife MBahlia, daughter Madison, and FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker.



FFRF Board Member Todd Peissig, Wis., ran the “chances” table for “clean” (pre-“In God We Trust”) currency.



Volunteer sound engineer Curtis Brothers assisted by Jay Harris.

Drawing For ‘Clean’ Money



Student Kalei Wilson presenting Ann Slowey with her “clean” money.



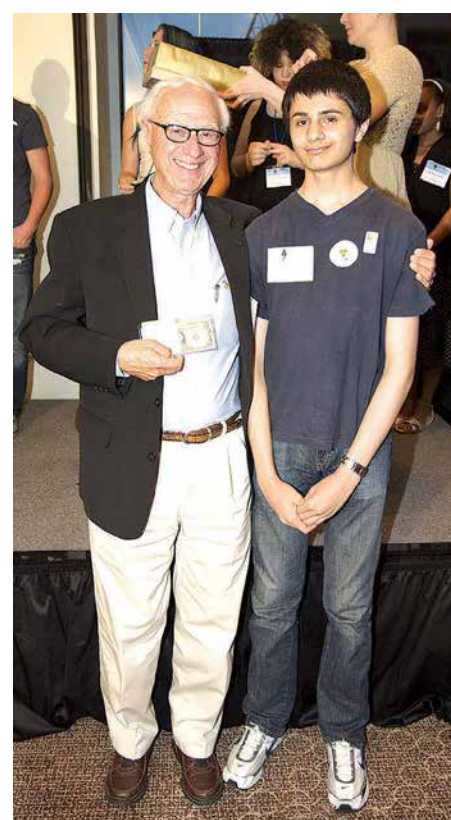
Conducting the animated drawing for “clean,” pre-“In God We Trust” currency: Triangle Freethought Society President Harry Shaughnessy, assisted by FFRF Bookkeeper Katie Daniel, and volunteer students.



Madison Scott presenting Pam O'Brien with her godless currency.



Assembled: the winners of the drawing for “clean,” pre-“In God We Trust” currency. They variously won \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20 or \$100, all sans deity. The “clean money” drawing is an FFRF convention tradition.



George Saunders, NY, receiving his “clean” currency from Jacob Krevat, 17.

FFRF's Emperor honor to truth-telling bible scholar Ehrman

Bart Ehrman, FFRF's newest recipient of its Emperor Has No Clothes Award, is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He accepted the award May 2 at the Raleigh mini-convention. He writes "The Bart Ehrman Blog" and is author of many books, including *Did Jesus Exist?*, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God — Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, and his newest, *How Jesus Became God*. All three can be ordered at ffrf.org/shop/.

After Bart's acceptance speech, artist and FFRF Lifetime Member Scott Burdick taped an in-depth interview, transcribed here:

BE: I'm Bart Ehrman. I identify as both a humanist and an agnostic.

SB: And are you openly agnostic?

BE: What do you mean, openly?

SB: Do people know it? Does your family know it?

BE: Am I in the closet? Aha! Yes, I'm quite openly agnostic. Everybody knows it.

SB: So writing books about it means you're open?

BE: Well, if anybody reads my books they know I'm an agnostic, yeah.

SB: I find it interesting, having read most of your books, how you talk about that you weren't always an agnostic.

BE: No, I started out as an evangelical Christian. I got interested in biblical studies because I was actually a fundamentalist as a late teenager. That got me interested in the bible. But as I developed my scholarship through graduate school, I realized that my beliefs about the bible were completely wrong, that the bible's not some kind of inherent revelation from God.

And so for years I'd become a liberal Christian. I still went to church, I still believed in God, but I didn't believe the bible was the inspired word of God. But after many years of being a liberal Christian, I finally became an agnostic for reasons unrelated to my scholarship, reasons having to do with why there is suffering in the world, if there is a God who is in control?

I, for years, had thought about it, had read what the biblical authors said,

'I actually consider myself to be both an agnostic and an atheist.'

what theologians, philosophers said. I got to the point where I just didn't believe it anymore. So I just acknowledged at one point then that I'm probably an agnostic, and that's what I've been for maybe 15 or 16 years.

SB: Sounds like it was a very gradual process.

BE: It was. I've heard people say that I went from being a fundamentalist to being an agnostic because of problems in the bible. That's completely wrong. It was a very long process. I was a very open-minded liberal Christian for many, many years. It was really the problem of suffering that ended up creating the big issue for me that led me to acknowledge that I am an agnostic.



Internationally-known artist Scott Burdick, also a filmmaker, interviewed Bart Ehrman.

It's very interesting being an agnostic scholar of religion. I'll begin by explaining what I myself mean, by this term that I'm using, that we all use all the time, the term "agnostic," because over the last 18 months or so I've come to think it means something different from what I used to think.

What I used to think was that agnostics and atheists were two degrees of the same thing. When I first declared myself agnostic, I was amazed at how militant both agnostics and atheists can be about their terms.

Every agnostic I met thought that atheists were simply arrogant agnostics. And every atheist thought that every agnostic was simply a wimpy atheist. Two degrees of the same thing. When someone will say "I don't know," the other will say they *do* know. I've come to think that they are not two degrees of the same thing but are two different things.

Agnosticism has to do with epistemology — what you know. Atheism has to do with belief — what you believe. I actually consider myself to be both an agnostic and an atheist. I am agnos-



Photos: Alan Howell

tic because if somebody says to me, is there a greater power in the universe? My response is, "How the hell would I know!? I don't know!" So, I'm an agnostic.

If somebody were to ask me, do you believe in the god of the bible? Do you believe in a god that interacts with the world, who intervenes in the world, who answers prayer? Do you believe in the supernatural divine being? No! I don't believe it! So, I don't believe, so I'm an atheist. But — I don't know. So I'm an agnostic. And since I'm a scholar I prefer to emphasize knowledge rather than belief. And so, I tend to identify as an agnostic.

SB: Were there any issues with coming out to your family? Were they very religious?

BE: When I was an evangelical Christian, most of my family converted to evangelical Christianity in my wake and so, hah! When I left the Christian fold, they did not leave with me, and so they're still there wondering where I went.

SB: So, you're an evangelical agnostic, I guess.

BE: When I was an evangelical Christian I believed in converting everyone to my point of view because I thought if you didn't agree with me you were going to roast in hell. I was very evangelistic. I'm not evangelistic as an agnostic because it certainly doesn't matter for somebody's afterlife — because I don't believe there is an afterlife.

I'm not that interested in people converting to what I think. What I'm interested in is getting people to be more thoughtful about whatever they believe or don't believe. So I'm not interested in converting, actually.

SB: You talk in your books about how many people become ministers and learn these same facts from the bible but seem reluctant to share that with their congregations. Why do you think that is?

BE: Well, pastors learn the kind of material I teach in seminaries and divinity schools, if they go to a mainline denominational school. If they go to a fundamentalist seminary, of course, they don't learn this, unless they learn it in order to attack it. An evangelical school wouldn't teach this kind of

material, but Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist and Presbyterian seminaries teach this kind of material.

And yes, when the people who go through that training become pastors, they tend not to tell their congregations. I think it's because they're afraid to make waves. They don't think that people will be welcoming of it, they don't think people are ready for it. There are some issues of job security. They want to keep their job, so they don't want to ruffle too many feathers.

But I think it's too bad because churches have education programs, and it's a pity that people aren't getting educated. There are adult education programs in most churches. But they don't actually get educated, they sit around and talk about other issues. They don't talk about the things that most people are interested in, which is what does one think about the bible, what does one think about theology?

SB: Do you think though that they may feel that this may put too many doubts in people's minds?

BE: Possibly. I think pastors tend not to be in the business of generating doubt. [As] professors at universities, that is our business. Our goal is to get people to think. But pastors don't generally see that as their goal, and so they tend to shy away from these various issues that would cause problems for people.

The result is they've got parishioners who really don't know anything about what scholars are saying about materials that they are most interested in, which I think is a real pity.

What Is a Freethinker?



free-thinker
n. A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.



FFRF legal staff resolves constitutional violations

Proselytizing teacher told to stop

A public high school teacher will no longer urge students to attend church in Fargo, N.D. A local complainant reported that a teacher told students there is a "meaning behind Easter" and that "You all should go to church."

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote a letter to Fargo Public Schools on April 25, explaining that urging students to attend church is unconstitutionally endorsing religion.

The school district's attorney promptly responded and said that the district took disciplinary action and placed the results in the teacher's file: "Fargo Public Schools strictly forbids their employees to proselytize."

Post office removes 'Smile! God loves you'

A post office in Cleveland, Ohio, will no longer display a "Smile! God Loves You" sticker near the service counter after a local complainant contacted FFRF. Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell sent a letter to the post office manager April 17, asking for immediate removal of the religious symbol.

The Postal Service replied April 25: "The 'God loves you' sticker that you mentioned in your letter has been removed."

Bible quotes halted in Arkansas school

Cutter Morning Star High School in Hot Springs, Ark., will no longer include religious quotes and references in the school's daily announcements. A parent reported to FFRF that the emailed announcements sent by a school employee often included quotes from the bible such as "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6."

On March 20, Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter of complaint to the superintendent: "You must make certain that staff members are not unlawfully and inappropriately indoctrinating students in religious matters."

On May 15, the superintendent responded that the matter was resolved a day after getting the complaint. Staff were instructed to stop emailing bible quotes.

Ohio school to stop church graduations

Marlington High School in Alliance, Ohio, will no longer hold graduation in churches starting in 2015. FFRF received a complaint that the school was scheduled to hold its commencement ceremony at The Chapel in Marlboro ("a Bible church") on June 1.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter to the superintendent Feb. 17: "[I]t is unconstitutional for a public high school to force, compel or coerce its graduating students, their parents, teachers and other members of their families or friends, to violate their rights of conscience at a graduation ceremony."

On May 8, the superintendent responded: "While it is not possible for the district to find an alternate location



FFRF attorneys visit the Supreme Court of Wisconsin in the State Capitol. From left at Sam Grover, Elizabeth Cavell, Rebecca Markert, Patrick Elliott and Andrew Seidel.

for graduation [this year], I have spoken to the Board and they have agreed to find a secular site for the 2015 graduating class."

Court: cross was 'completely inappropriate'

A customer service desk in the Austin, Texas, Municipal Court will no longer display a cross. Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter March 6 to the presiding judge, explaining that the Latin cross is indisputably a religious symbol.

FFRF received a response from the court May 16: "[T]here had been a cross given as a gift from one employee to another and it was placed in an inappropriate place. The situation was strongly addressed with the employees. I do not think it was an intentional display but a careless placing of a gift. Regardless, it was completely inappropriate."

Subway rescinds church bulletin discounts

Four Subway Restaurant locations will no longer offer a 20% discount to customers who present a bulletin from churches in Escanaba, Mich. Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell sent a letter to the restaurant owners about the civil rights violation.

"Your restaurant's restrictive promotional practice favors religious customers, and denies both customers who do not attend church as well as non-believers the right to 'full and equal' enjoyment of Subway. Any promotions should be available to all customers regardless of religious preference or practice on a non-discriminatory basis."

FFRF was notified May 23 that the church bulletin notice was removed.

Baptist rec team warned in Texas

Howe Independent School District in Howe, Texas, took action to stop

proselytizing during an annual Field Day event for fifth- through eighth-grade students. A concerned parent contacted FFRF that the Field Day was being organized through Dallas Baptist University, whose stated mission is "to provide Christ-centered quality higher education."

Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent a letter informing the district that giving Dallas Baptist University Recreational Teams access to impressionable students is a constitutional violation.

On May 15, Howe Middle School's principal replied: "It has been communicated to the Dallas Baptist Recreation Team leader and will be communicated with the team Friday morning that they are at the Howe Middle School Field Day to lead the recreation games for our students and not to proselytize to our students or promote Christianity during the Field Day activities."

FFRF's complainant later thanked FFRF and noted that "the Field Day went without any issues."

School washes hands of baccalaureate

George Washington High School in Charleston, W. Va., will no longer coordinate and fund a baccalaureate service for graduating seniors.

FFRF was contacted by a concerned student after the school sent two mailings to seniors describing the service as a "worship experience." The mailing said a teacher was supervising student planning and sought donations, with checks made payable to the high school. A formal invitation was also sent to students, with the envelope mailed from the school. The invitation announced the date and time of "a service representing all walks of faith."

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott's letter of objection said: "The school's role in sending letters to seniors from the school, collecting and disbursing funds for the service, and allowing a teacher to coordinate the service, signals to a reasonable graduating senior or parent that Kanawha County Schools endorses the religious messages espoused

at these services. To avoid the perception of school sponsorship of religious practices, a public school should take measures to disassociate itself from the activity. This means that no public school employee can be involved in the organization, planning or coordinating of baccalaureate services. Public schools may not collect and distribute funds for the service and send mailings to students about the service."

On May 13, the school's attorney replied: "The school made an additional announcement last week that the baccalaureate was not a school-sponsored function, attendance was voluntary and whether or not a student attended would have no effect on anything at the school. . . . I believe having a member of school faculty involved and running money through the school accounts was done to assure the parents that everything would be handled properly. Nevertheless, these practices are going to stop, and the account will be closed at the end of this school year."

The school will also stop mailing baccalaureate invitations to students.

'Expelled' expelled from classrooms

Science students at Adams Central High School, Monroe, Ind., will no longer be watching a documentary movie promoting "intelligent design," a theory put forth by religious fundamentalists to counter evolution. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel first wrote the school district about it on behalf of a local complainant in October 2013.

The movie is Ben Stein's "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed," which has drawn FFRF's attention since its 2008 debut. FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor panned the movie mercilessly after seeing it on its opening weekend and accurately predicted the future:

"Even though 'Expelled' isn't exactly an overnight blockbuster, the harm is in its half-life: the DVDs to follow, those half-truths, untruths, manipulations and distortions available forever to stir up contempt for the scientific method and community, atheists and progressive thought."

The late film critic Roger Ebert called it "cheerfully ignorant, manipulative, slanted."

FFRF was informed that two Adams Central biology teachers were using the movie as well as teaching from "Icons of Evolution," a popular creationist textbook. "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 astrology with astronomy or alchemy beside chemistry."

A school attorney promptly responded. In his letter, Adam Miller wrote it "would be a disservice to students" to not mention the "controversies" and added, "Hitler and the Nazis [sic] claims of Aryan racial superiority are clear abominations of Evolution and Darwinism."

After Seidel's follow-up letter, Miller still denied that creationism or intelligent design were being taught or that there was any "hidden agenda" on one particular teacher's part. "However, I directed that he should not show the movie 'Expelled.' . . . [W]e appreciate your organization's concerns and will continue to monitor the situation."



Coach Jeremy Toungett praying with his team in Hernando, Miss.

FFRF stops coach-led pregame prayer stopped in Miss.

Olive Branch High School in Hernando, Miss., will no longer permit its football coach to organize pregame Christian prayers with his players. Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent a letter May 15 as a follow-up to a 2011 violation, in which stadium prayers were recited over the loudspeaker.

A resident who regularly attends dog games then reported after the loud-speaker prayers were stopped, the

coach, Jeremy Toungett, was leading players in prayer despite the previous warning.

On June 9, Principal Allyson Killough replied that Toungett “has been instructed not to pray with his team.”

FFRF has also sent complaint letters to DeSoto County Schools about religious promotion on Southaven Intermediate School’s website.

State/Church Bulletin

Permanently enjoined from prayer in Mo.

The American Humanist Association on June 12 announced a consent decree settling its lawsuit against the Fayette, Mo., School District for Establishment Clause violations. The suit was filed in November on behalf of a student and former student over devotional exercises allegedly held in the classroom before school. The teacher was adviser for the Christian student club.

From the AHA press release: “[T]he school is permanently enjoined from promoting prayer and religious activity, and religious clubs will be given no special privileges that other clubs do not enjoy. The school district also agreed to amend its announcement policies so that they will not identify any religious activities taking place at student group meetings. Also, faculty sponsors of student groups will not be permitted to participate in religious

activities of the groups. School employees will also no longer be allowed to keep religious materials in places in open view.”

The district must pay \$41,000 in legal fees to the plaintiffs.

Texas students pray using ‘statements’

Three Texas high schools in the Ector County Independent School District were able to insert religion into graduations June 6 by calling the invocations and benedictions “opening” and “closing statements.”

The district originally said prayer wouldn’t be allowed after getting a letter from Americans United for Separation of Church and State. After about 50 protesters showed up at district offices, officials decided to leave it up to the students. “Basically, we have the right to pray, because all of this was created by Him,” said Nathan Coudding, 8, who came to the protest.

Odessa High School’s 629 graduates heard senior class president Domi-



Declare and share your nonbelief in FFRF’s online “Out of the Closet” campaign! ffrf.org/out

Freethought Hall ‘rebirth’ continues, thanks to generous members



Photo: Dan Barker

FFRF attorneys (left) Patrick Elliott, Sam Grover, Rebecca Markert, Elizabeth Cavell and Andrew Seidel are shown in the new building under construction. One could say they are a breath of fresh air countering religion’s stale dogma.

Below are new donations to FFRF’s Building Fund received from May 12 to June 18. The list below is not cumulative, except for the total. FFRF will not publish a donor name without express permission (so please let us know).

- Harry Lonsdale, California, \$100,000
- The Harry Lonsdale “No Hell Below Us” Administrative/Sales Wing**
- Bruce Hilpert, North Carolina, \$5,000
- Anonymous, Alaska, \$500
- Philip Sine, South Carolina, \$500
- David Hillman, New Jersey, \$250
- Mr. Richard L. Konold, Oregon, \$250
- Steve Lindsey, Texas, \$250
- Dana Wichmann, Minnesota, \$200
- Michael O’Brien, Michigan, \$100
- Robert J Rabin, New York, \$100
- Anonymous, Ontario, \$100
- Anonymous, Oklahoma, \$100
- Stephen Gray, California, \$50
- Stefanie Moritz and Vince Jenkins, Wisconsin, \$50
- Anonymous, Wyoming, \$50
- Anonymous, Wisconsin, \$50
- Dave Reingold, Oregon, \$50
- Mr. Kip Winter, Connecticut, \$50
- Robert J. Wolf, Texas, \$50
- Jay Huemmer, Wisconsin, \$40

- Anonymous, Michigan, \$10
- Brian Dearman, North Carolina, \$5

Subtotal from 5/12/14 to 6/18/14: \$107,755

Cumulative Total: \$1,878,459.64
Goal: \$2,000,000

Note: Robert Hunt, Jr., who donated \$50 at the end of March, was inadvertently listed anonymously instead of named. Marion Goodale gave a \$50 donation to the Building Fund.

The name of a donor giving a donation of \$5,000 or more will be engraved on a separate lobby plaque.

Handmade, hand-etched vestibule tiles to appear in the pretty new vestibule can still be purchased for a donation of \$2,500. These bear a name-only or name in memoriam. Paving stones with names or messages are also still available for \$1,000 (6x12 inches) or \$2,000 (12x12). Visit ffrf.org/donate for details.

Wings named for major donors

Only one wing remains to be named: the Editorial Wing. Names of the 18 most generous donors will be engraved on a wall of honor in the lobby.

Warmest gratitude goes to:

- Charles Brooks**, \$434,385.44
Auditorium & grandfather clock dedicated to Anne Nicol Gaylor
- Steve and Diane Uhl**, \$255,500
Diane Uhl Legal Wing; “Friendly Atheist” Stephen Uhl Recording Studio; Concert grand piano bearing Diane Uhl plaque
- Brian Bolton**, \$125,000
Executive Wing
- Harold Erickson**, \$125,000
Public Relations Wing
- Joel Landon & Wanda Beers**, \$100,000
Library
- Harry Lonsdale**, \$100,000
“No Hell Below Us” Administrative/Sales Wing
- Rose Zerwick Memorial**, \$50,000
Courtyard & Garden
- “Very Kind Donor”**
No Heaven Above Us Cupola

Plaques, tiles named for/by you available

State/Church Bulletin

Longer window for Establishment Clause

In *Tearpock-Martini v. Borough of Shickshinny*, the 3rd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals held June 23 that certain Establishment Clause claims are not subject to a statute of limitations defense. At issue was a sign on municipal property in a Pennsylvania town (pop. 838): "Bible Baptist Church Welcomes You!" It has a directional arrow with "1 BLOCK" on it and depicts a gold cross and a white bible.

A neighbor sued. The district court held that her claim was barred because the statute of limitations started when the sign was posted. The appeals court ruled that state statutes limitations don't apply to claims challenging a still-existing display.

Gay marriage advances in Utah, Indiana

The 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Denver on June 25 struck down Utah's constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in a 2-1 decision. It's the first time a federal appeals court has struck down a gay marriage ban since the Supreme Court's decision last summer. The decision can be appealed to the Supreme Court.

Also on June 25, U.S. District Court Judge Richard Young in Indianapolis struck down Indiana's ban on gay marriage.

"It is clear that the fundamental right to marry shall not be deprived to some individuals based solely on the person they choose to love," wrote Young.

A statement from Indiana's Catholic bishops decried the decision, saying it ignores the "fundamental and natural truth of marriage and opens its definition to the whims of public opinion."

Judge's discrimination ruling upheld

The Colorado Civil Rights Commission on May 30 upheld an administrative law judge's earlier ruling that Lakewood baker Jack Phillips discriminated against Charlie Craig and David Mullins by refusing to make them a wedding cake in 2012 because of his religious objections.

The Denver Post reported that the commission ordered Phillips to submit quarterly reports for two years to show how he's changing his discriminatory practices. He must also disclose the names of any clients he turns away.

"Not all of life is fair," Phillips said after the decision. "I will stand by my convictions until somebody shuts me down."

ACA mandate gets more court action

The 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals denied on June 11 the Michigan Catholic Conference's request for a preliminary injunction to exempt Catholic charities from the contraception mandate of the Affordable Care Act. The 3-0 decision includes a similar challenge to the ACA from the Middle District of Tennessee filed in Nashville.

"The court sided with federal officials, who argued the actions required

of the charities under the law were actions they regularly take to avoid providing insurance coverage for contraception, and therefore did not represent a burden to religious freedom," MLive.com reported.

In *Eternal Word Television Network v. Burwell* on June 17, an Alabama federal district court denied the Catholic media network's challenges to the ACA's contraceptive coverage mandate, ruling: "Legally (if not morally) speaking, there is a world of difference between a law that compels EWTN to provide contraceptive coverage directly and one in which the government places that burden on someone else after EWTN opts out."

In *Colorado Christian University v. Sebelius* on June 2, a Colorado federal district court granted a preliminary injunction stopping enforcement against the school in Lakewood of the mandate compromise as it applies to coverage for drugs, devices or procedures that may destroy a human embryo or fertilized egg.

Religion Clause reported the court held that completing the exemption form for coverage directly by the health plan's third-party administrator imposes a substantial burden on the school's religious exercise.

In *Dordt College v. Sebelius* on May 21, an Iowa federal district court granted a similar preliminary injunction to Dordt College (Christian Reformed Church) and Cornerstone University (Baptist) to stop enforcement of the mandate.

The court said it planned to wait for the U.S. Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision to issue an opinion.

EEOC sues over 'Onionhead' religion

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission announced a federal lawsuit June 11 in New York alleging United Health Programs of America Inc. of Syosset violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on religion.

EEOC alleges United has coerced employees to participate in religious activities since 2007. The practices are part of a belief system that the defendants' family member created and calls "Onionhead." When employees balked at taking part or did not participate fully, they were fired, the suit says.

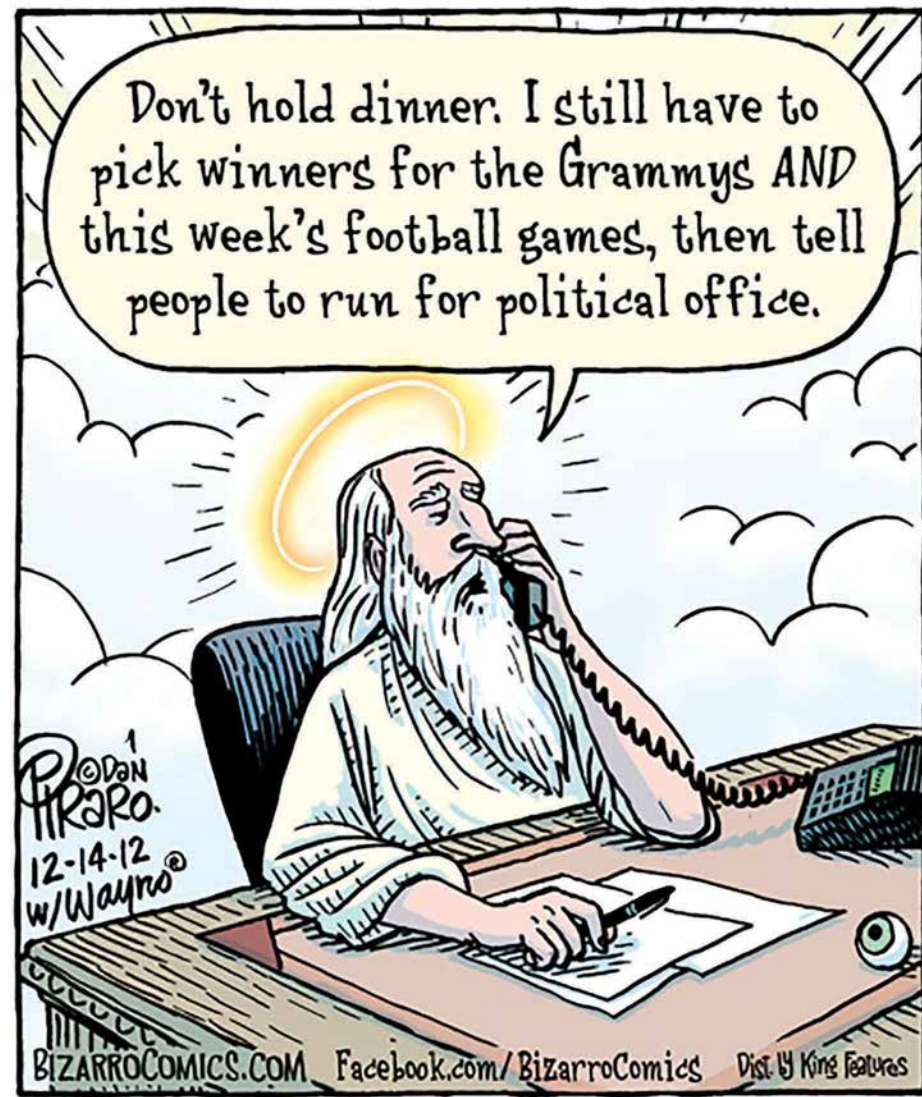
Onionhead ("Peel it, feel it, heal it") is promoted through the Harnessing Happiness Foundation, which acts as an unofficial church entity.

Private schools seek voucher advantage

Six new religious private schools will be added to Wisconsin's voucher program in 2015, the state Department of Public Instruction announced May 20.

According to The Associated Press, about 3,400 students applied to receive a taxpayer-funded voucher to attend private and religious schools in the second year of the program, more than triple the enrollment cap of 1,000. The six new schools are in Appleton, Bonduel, Sheboygan, Menasha-Neenah and Fond du Lac.

Of the eligible student applicants, 75 percent are already paying to attend private school. If they're among those randomly selected to get the voucher,



taxpayers will pay for their private school education. The overwhelming majority of vouchers are going to students at parochial schools.

In Raleigh, WRAL reported May 14, the North Carolina Supreme Court stayed Superior Court Judge Robert Hobgood's February injunction that has stopped the state from holding a lottery to award taxpayer-funded vouchers for students in private schools. About 5,500 students have already applied for "Opportunity Scholarships," annual grants of up to \$4,200 per child.

The North Carolina Association of Educators and the School Boards Association have filed separate suits against the law. About 2,400 vouchers were to be awarded for the 2014-15 school year.

Judge upholds denial of Jesus Tattoo ad



Would this ad make you run toward or screaming away from Christianity?

U.S. District Judge Sam Cummings ruled May 29 in favor of the Lubbock Independent School District in its case against Little Pencil, a Texas company that sued the district earlier this year for rejecting its Jesus Tattoo ad, which the district said was proselytizing. David Miller, a Lubbock businessman and former Texas Tech administrator, founded the company to promote Christian beliefs through the media.

The Arizona-based Alliance Defending Freedom, an evangelical law firm based in Arizona, represented the company. The district refused to allow the ad on a stadium Jumbotron because of its religious content and because the district code of conduct calls for all tattoos to be covered.

Neb. mayor goes off on Omaha atheists



Faith & Freedom Day

Why was the city of La Vista, Neb., promoting and hosting a Faith and Freedom Day event, Omaha Atheists board member Robert Fuller asked Mayor Douglas Kindig on May 25, the day it was held? Kindig later publicly responded: "Take me to fucking court because I don't care. Minorities are not going to run my city."

Secular groups protested June 2 at City Hall and asked Kindig to "publicly explain his offensive comments." A Baptist group came to support him.

"I hope we get some visibility for concerns of nonbelievers and religious minorities," said atheist Tom Gray.

Police said it was La Vista's first-ever protest.

Godly judge gets appeals reprimand

A Catawba County [Newton, N.C.] trial judge was reprimanded June 3 by the state Court of Appeals for injecting religion into a defendant's sentencing. Superior Court Judge Richard Boner told Max Earls, who was sentenced to 45-55 years in prison for sexually abusing his children: "I think children are a gift of God, and I think God expects when he gives us these gifts that we will treat them as more precious than gold, that we will keep them safe from harm the best as we're able and nurture them, and the child holds a special place in this world."

Boner quoted from Matthew 19 and told Earls he'd have to answer someday to "another judge far greater than me." His sentence was upheld.

Ethical Dilemma



Is pointing out Jewish criminal behavior bigoted?

Joan Reisman-Brill, who writes "The Ethical Dilemma" advice column at *The Humanist.com* (and is an FFRF member who contributes to "Ask a Skeptic"), shares a recent Q&A.

I am an atheist from a Jewish background. When I go through my copy of Freethought Today (the newspaper of the Freedom From Religion Foundation), I find myself skimming the "Black Collar Crime Blotter" section (a listing of religious leaders charged with crimes) looking for the Jewish entries — maybe three out of about 75 listings each month — and showing the juicy-

est ones to my wife, who is, alas, a practicing Jew.

She says doing this makes me anti-Semitic. Other Jewish acquaintances have called me that or even worse — a self-hating Jew — whenever I take issue with the religion's beliefs or practices. I don't in my heart believe that's true, but then I'm not sure what those terms really mean, so perhaps they do mean me.

— **Just Pointing Out Crimes, Not Inventing or Committing Them**

Dear Just Pointing:

When you get your alumni magazine, do you zero in on the years you attended and the people you knew, and pay little to no attention to the rest? When you read wedding announcements or obituaries, do you look for names you recognize and ignore the others?

This is the same thing: You are picking out the stories you relate to because they are closest to home — the religious home you were raised in and still share with your spouse and people you associate with. I doubt you've been spraying swastikas on your wife's pillow, barring Jews from your social life or discriminating against them at work, so I don't think you qualify as an anti-Semite. We'll get to self-hating in a moment.

I believe these terms aim to chill criticism of things Jewish and tamp down internal disputes — rightly when the criticisms are false, inflammatory

I've never heard of people who blow the whistle on pedophile priest cover-ups referred to as self-hating Catholics.

or hateful, wrongly when they shut down acknowledgement of genuine issues. Just as the Catholic Church has systematically hushed up reports of pedophiles, there is a code in Judaism that prohibits making incriminating statements to outsiders.

It's understandable that a group with such a history of persecution wouldn't want to air its dirty laundry (and thereby provide ammunition) to the general public, which according to a recent survey [commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League] is very anti-Semitic. There are Jewish factions that apply those terms to each other, depending on which side of an argument they are on.

And in some extreme sects where members are required to report crimes to their rabbi and not to the police or the U.S. courts, the community will shun those who disobey and speak out about the crimes, while supporting those accused of the crimes (even if they may be guilty).

I think the term "self-hating Jew" is a projection by Jews who are not alto-

gether comfortable with their identity themselves. A self-hating Jew would be someone who was embarrassed by or hid his own Jewish identity and discriminated against others for theirs. Some apply the term to any Jew who disavows Judaism in favor of another religion or no religion, but I disagree.

If a Jewish person (or formerly Jewish person) comments on something amiss within the group, that action doesn't reflect on the commenter (other than demonstrating objectivity) as much as the derogatory label reflects on the one doing the labeling. To stoop to the same juvenile and irrational level, consider "It takes one to know one" and "I'm rubber, you're glue."

I've never heard of people who blow the whistle on pedophile priest cover-ups referred to as self-hating Catholics, but if a Jewish person argues that synagogues have no right to block public sidewalks in front of their buildings for holiday celebrations, he's apt to be called a self-hater.

So just take the high road and continue to call 'em as you see 'em, and let others call you whatever enables them to turn on you while turning a blind eye to what you're criticizing. As you note, it's not just one group that earns entries on FFRF's crime blotter.

Every group has its predators and frauds. But how the groups address or suppress that determines whether they are interested in cleaning house or just circling the wagons around their problems while pretending none exist.

They Said What?

When a woman has a husband who acts in a certain way, it is easy for her to feel angry and resentful towards him. But once she understands why he acts that way — and that almost all men act that way — she no longer feels badly towards him.

Pastor Mark Gungor, Green Bay, Wis., on his "Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage" seminar he'll present at the Cannes Film Festival

Christian Post, 5-19-14

Marriage is rooted not only in the history of man, but also in his very biological being. Nature and Nature's God cannot be usurped by the edict of the courts. Just as the country has never accepted the Supreme Court's declaration of a "right" to destroy unborn human life in *Roe v. Wade*, we will never accept the Court's assertion of a "right" to change the definition of our most fundamental social institution.

Tony Perkins, Family Research Council president, on a federal judge's decision striking down Pennsylvania's Defense of Marriage Act

frc.org, 5-20-14

Take me to fucking court because I don't care.

Mayor Douglas Kindig, La Vista, Neb., responding to Omaha Atheists' objection to city sponsorship of Faith and Freedom Day on May 25

The Friendly Atheist, 5-26-14

God acted through people on my behalf. It's an unbelievable miracle.

David Brat, who upset U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor in the GOP primary in Virgin-



ia's 7th District

Fox News, 6-10-14

Evolutionists use dinosaurs to reach children more than anything to promote their worldview. Our museum uses dinosaurs to help tell their true history according to the bible.

Ken Ham, Answers in Genesis founder and Creation Museum owner, on the Kentucky museum's new allosaurus exhibit

New York Post, 5-25-14

People need God . . . and it is good to see the separation of church and state breaking down.

Christopher Wiles, Church of Christ pastor, Washington, Ind., offering the first prayer in decades to open the Daviess County Commission meeting after the Supreme Court ruling in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*

Washington Times Herald, 5-27-14

For a rattler bite, it wasn't bad at all. I told the Lord that I wouldn't go to the hospital.

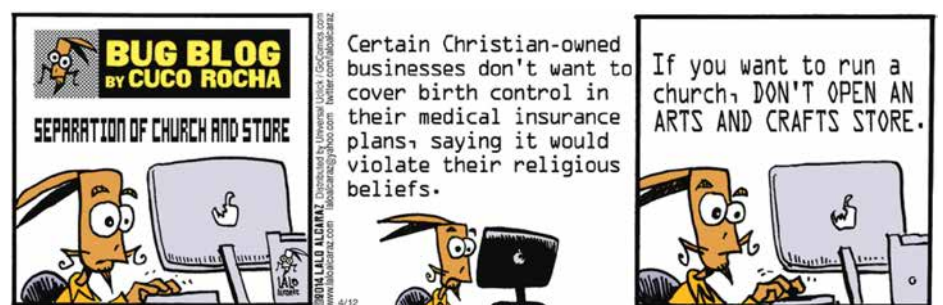
Cody Coats, 21, Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus' Name pastor, on being bitten by a snake in the church where his father was fatally bitten in February

NPR, 5-28-14

[Non-Orthodox Jews] have become oblivious, and they've fallen into the pit of intermarriage and assimilation. They have no future; they almost have no present. They will be relegated to the dustbins of Jewish history.

Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, leader of the ultra-conservative Agudath Israel of America, banquet speech in New York City

New York Observer, 5-30-14



Basically, we have the right to pray, because all of this was created by Him.

Nathan Coudding, 8, Odessa, Texas, protesting Ector County Independent School District's graduation prayer ban at Odessa and Permian high schools

KMID Midland, 6-3-14

Just in case you're interested, during my moment of silence, I gave thanks to God for these great students, their parents, their teachers, and for this community. I'm not finished. I asked God to protect these students as they go their separate ways into the world. I asked God to avail Himself in every possible way. And I asked God to watch over them, to protect them and to bless them with self-fulfillment, with compassion, inner peace and personal prosperity.

Kevin Lowery, principal of Lebanon High School in Missouri, remarks [which FFRF formally protested] at the public school's graduation

The Raw Story, 6-2-14

What's wrong in the heart of that young man, I don't believe is going to be fixed by government. It can only be fixed by God.

Tim Donnelly, GOP gubernatorial candidate, on the California man who went on a shooting rampage

Los Angeles Times, 6-2-14

I'm not sure if I did or didn't.

Catholic Archbishop Robert Carlson,

answering a lawyer who asked if Carlson knew while he was auxiliary bishop in St. Paul, Minn., that a priest having sex with a child was a crime

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 6-10-14

God, who played the cosmos into being, please help England rediscover their legs, their eyes and their hunger: that they might run more clearly, pass more nearly and enjoy the game more dearly.

Nick Baines, Anglican bishop of Leeds, prayer for England's [very unsuccessful] soccer team in the World Cup in Brazil

The Telegraph, 6-13-14

What age did Noah's father, Lamech, live to be?

Show host Jeff Foxworthy, championship round tiebreaking question on "The American Bible Challenge" [answer: 777]

al.com, 6-12-14

At the risk of appearing predictable, the bible was and remains the biggest influence on my thinking. I was raised reading it, memorizing passages from it and being guided by it. I still find it a source of wisdom, comfort and encouragement.

Hillary Clinton, naming the one book "that made you who you are today"

New York Times, 6-15-14

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Hector C. Gonzales, 46, Davis, CA: 3 counts of unlawful sexual intercourse and oral copulation with a person younger than 18. Gonzales, associate pastor of St. James Catholic Parish, is accused of having sex with a 17-year-old girl from the church over an 8-month span starting in September 2013, including at a residence, in a vehicle and at the church rectory. *Source: Sacramento Bee, 6-6-14*

Robert L. Cox, 35, Manteca, CA: Murder and fugitive from justice. Cox, worship and youth pastor at The Place of Refuge, is charged in the death of Link Ellingson, 55, who died Dec. 15 of blunt head trauma after a fight with Cox outside a Las Vegas bar in June 2013. Cox was on a ministry trip to Texas with his wife and several church interns.

Witnesses said Cox grabbed Ellingson after he'd been verbally abusive to the group and both fell to the ground. Ellingson hit his head on the pavement and died 6 six months later. The death was ruled a homicide. *Source: AP, 6-5-14*

Deric W. Peacock, 30, Chesterfield, VA: 5 counts of using a communication system to facilitate certain offenses involving children. Peacock, youth pastor at South Hopewell Church of God, is accused of soliciting a person believed to be a 12-year-old girl online in May. It was actually a sting.

He asked the alleged victim to fondle herself, the complaint said.

Peacock is married with 6 children. Several are foster children. *Source: Roanoke Times, 6-5-14*

Eduardo Cordova Bautista, San Luis Potosi, Mexico: 19 counts of sexual assault of a minor for allegedly molesting a 16-year-old boy in 2012. Cordova, whose whereabouts are unknown, fled after the Vatican stripped him of his duties. It's the first time in Mexico that the church has turned a priest in to authorities.

Cordova worked more than 25 years in Catholic institutions for youth.

Ex-priest Alberto Athie, an early accuser of the disgraced **Fr. Maciel Marcial Degollado**, the deceased founder of the Legionaries of Christ, said there may be as many as 100 victims. *Source: Catholic News Service, 6-5-14*

Allen L. Lehmann, 75, Valparaiso, IN: 7 counts of 1st-degree sexual abuse with a victim younger than 12 and 2 counts of 1st-degree sodomy with a victim younger than 12. Lehmann, who retired as senior associate pastor in 2010 from Living Hope Church, is accused in Kentucky of molesting 3 female relatives, as young as 6, from 1993 to 2000. *Source: nw-times.com, 5-20-14*

Paul Endrei, 53, Avon, OH: 2 counts of sexual battery and 4 counts of gross sexual imposition. Endrei, pastor of the Christian Church on the Rise ("a church for the whole family"), is accused of molesting a girl starting in 2005 when she was under age 13 and continuing through 2013.

Jordan Endrei, 26, assistant pastor and Paul Endrei's son, was indicted for unlawful sexual conduct with a minor for allegedly having sex with the same girl when she was 14 between June 2010 and June 2011. *Source: Chronicle-Telegram, 6-5-14*

Trevon Boone, 39, Chesapeake, VA: Rape. Boone, currently pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Outreach Center in Suffolk, is accused of raping a girl age 17 between September 2012 and January 2013. She alleged she spent the night at Boone's home, where he came into the room during the night and raped her.

Portsmouth Detective Misty Holley said there may be more victims. Boone previously was youth pastor at New Mount Joy Food for Living Ministries. *Source: WAVY, 5-29-14*

Joseph R. Hall, 62, Gastonia, NC: 1st-degree rape of a child, 1st-degree sexual offense of a child, 2nd-degree rape, 2nd-degree sexual offense, 4 counts of indecent liberties with a child and 3 counts each of statutory rape and statutory sexual offense. Hall, men's ministry leader at Restoring Hope Foursquare Church, is charged with alleged incidents taking place in 1994-98, starting when the victim was 12. *Source: WBTV, 5-29-14*

Another 4 **Orthodox rabbis** were charged federally with kidnapping and conspiracy in New York and New Jersey for allegedly forcing Jewish men to grant their wives "gets" (religious divorces). Several are among a larger group previously charged.

Indicted were Rabbi **Mendel Epstein** and his son, **David Epstein**, and Rabbis **Martin Wolmark**, **Jay Goldstein** and **Binyamin Stimler**. *Source: AP/Jewish Voice, 5-26-14*

Aaron Brodeski, 44, Batavia, IL: 2 counts of public indecency. Msgr. Brodeski, pastor of Holy Cross Catholic Church, allegedly exposed him-



self inside the Road Ranger convenience store and while seated in his car in the parking lot. A witness wrote down his license plate number.

Brodeski has coordinated Rock 2000, a summer event for youths and young adults centered on the sacraments, and is associate diocesan director of vocations. *Source: Northwest Herald/Kane County Chronicle, 5-23-14*

Daniel McCormack, 45, Rushville, IL: Aggravated criminal sexual abuse. McCormack, a defrocked Catholic priest who was sentenced to 5 years in 2007 on similar charges involving children, is accused of molesting a 10-year-old boy in 2005 at a Chicago Catholic parish.

He has been confined since 2009 at a state mental health facility pending resolution of a petition to keep him committed indefinitely under the Sexually Violent Persons Commitment Act.

In February, 3 former students filed suits against the archbishop and archdiocese related to alleged abuse by McCormack in 2000-05. A \$3.15 million settlement was announced in January in another suit. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 5-22-14*

Francis Hoefgen, 63, Columbia Heights, MN: 2 counts of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct for allegedly molesting a boy who was between 9 and 12 years old in 1989-92 in Hastings, where Hoefgen was pastor at a Catholic parish.

The complaint alleges the abuse occurred "on several occasions over an extended period" and involved anal and oral sex and fondling of the altar boy in a room behind the altar. Police took the man, now in his 30s, to the church to corroborate details of his allegations. *Source: Pioneer Press, 5-22-14*

Reginald W. Miller, 65, Marion, SC: Forced labor. Miller, president of Cathedral Bible College, allegedly requiring numerous foreign students to work for nothing or low wages at the school and at his home and providing substandard living conditions.

Federal investigators said students "described a pervasive climate of fear in which their legal status as non-immigrant students was in constant jeopardy, at the sole discretion of Dr. Miller, who threatened expulsion and therefore termination of their legal presence in the United States for noncompliance with his demands," the complaint said.

One student alleged he soon noticed after arriving that classes "were not real and they are set around a work schedule, which is set by Miller."

The school moved last year from the former Myrtle Beach Air Force Base to the old Marion Hospital, a move facilitated by a \$644,000 grant from the Marion County Healthcare Foundation.

Miller was charged in 2006 with lewdness and prostitution for an alleged incident with an undercover officer in a state park. The charge was dismissed after Miller joined a pretrial intervention program. *Source: Star & Enterprise, 5-22-14*

Robert Ours, 65, Syracuse, NY: 6 counts of possessing a sexual performance by a child. Ours' last assignment as a priest was at St. Rita's Catholic Parish, now closed, in Chenango Forks.

The diocese reported child porn allegations to the district attorney several months ago, said Communications Director Danielle Cummings. Ours lives in a facility with about 12 other priests. *Source: syracuse.com, 5-21-14*

Frank P. Hreno, 50, Florham Park, NJ: Terroristic threats. Hreno, a Catholic priest who's director of the Vocationist Fathers Retreat and Conference Center, is accused of threatening to kill Emeka Okwuosa, another priest, in a dispute over use of a vehicle. A police report said Hreno

leases the vehicle but Okwuosa thinks it's community property.

Okwuosa, 37, alleged Hreno stabbed him in the arm with a metal staff adorned with a crucifix, which Hreno denied. He wasn't charged with assault. *Source: Asbury Park Press, 5-21-14*

Sheik Mostafa Elazabawy, 60, Brooklyn, NY: 2nd- and 3rd-degree grand larceny. Elazabawy, imam at Masjid Manhattan ("the Castle of Islamic Knowledge in Downtown Manhattan"), allegedly swindled the state out of at least \$140,000 while moonlighting as a tax preparer between 2005-09 for Queen of Sheba, an Ethiopian restaurant in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood.

He also worked at the New York City Housing Authority for 27 years before retiring as an analyst Jan. 31. *Source: NY Daily News, 5-17-14*

Damien K. Bonner Sr., 32, Owasso, OK: 8 counts of lewd molestation. Bonner, senior pastor of Galilee Baptist Church, is charged with assaulting a 14-year-old congregation member at his apartment. He allegedly bought the girl gifts to entice her into having sex.

Two other alleged victims, both girls, came forward after Bonner was arrested. *Source: Tulsa World, 5-15-14*

David Auzenne, 47, Elsa, TX: Driving while intoxicated, evading arrest on foot and in a vehicle and hitting a parked car. Auzenne, co-pastor with his wife Jackie at Silver Dove Christian Ministries, allegedly failed to stop at a stop sign about 1:30 a.m. and led police on a 2-mile chase. A passenger in his car, Mary Galindo, 33, received minor injuries. *Source: Valley Morning Star, 5-15-14*

Donald Lafferty, 69, Quechee, VT: Attempted murder, armed criminal action, 1st-degree arson and financial exploitation of the elderly. Lafferty, a pastor and former school board member in Bloomfield, MO, is accused of conspiring with a couple to kill his wife Mildred while she slept in their Bloomfield home in January 2013.

Lafferty is also charged with stealing about \$87,000 from his mother, 89. A family member went to police.

His alleged mistress and her husband — **Brandy Lee Hicks**, 33, and **Christopher D. Hicks**, 34, Dexter, MO — face similar charges. It's alleged Lafferty agreed to pay the couple, whom he met through the church, to burn the house down, with the amount paid depending upon the "outcome of the fire." *Source: Valley News, 5-14-14*

Israel B. Berrios, 58, Naranjito, Puerto Rico: 2 counts each of sex trafficking of children and transportation of a minor with intent to engage in prostitution and criminal sexual activity. Berrios, a Catholic priest, is accused of molesting an altar boy, 14, starting in 2007. He also took the boy on a Bahamas cruise. *Source: CNN, 5-14-14*

Samuel Hiller, 56, Queens, NY: Hiller, an Orthodox rabbi, and 3 other men were named in a 42-count indictment for grand larceny, offering a false instrument for filing, identity theft and falsifying business records. It's alleged that Hiller diverted about \$8 million to numerous religious schools and camps, including \$3 million to B'nos Bais Yaakov Academy, a private all-girls school where he's principal. The money came from public funds meant to provide special education services to preschoolers as young as 3. It's alleged that \$12.4 million in city and state funding was diverted between 2005-12.

A civil action against all 4 defendants seeks the forfeiture of \$11.5 million. *Source: queens-da.org, 5-13-14*

Larry M. Berkley, 34, Harrison, AR: 1st-degree sexual assault, 5 counts of 2nd-degree

sexual assault, 3 counts each of knowingly furnishing alcohol to a minor and contributing to delinquency of a minor, sexual solicitation and 2 counts of loaning pornography to a minor. The investigation started in March while he was pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church. He was arrested while officiating at a funeral in Tennessee.

Alleged victims are all males ages 14-18. Berkley is accused of furnishing marijuana and alcohol and walking around naked with the boys. He allegedly took some to a funeral home once to see a dead body.

A church employee said at least \$4,400 is missing from Shiloh Baptist, money that was supposed to go for a mission trip. *Source: WREG, 5-6-14*

Vincent Ciccone, 64, and **Karen Thomson-Ciccone**, 60, Kitchener, Ontario: Fraud over \$5,000. The husband and wife are accused of bilking investors out of \$21 million between 2006-10 by using faith-based "affinity fraud" similar to a Ponzi scheme.

The couple started meetings with prayers, said police Inspector Todd Gilmore. "We had victims say things like, 'He was Christian, of course I would believe him.'"

Ciccone was fined \$750,000 in 2012 by the Ontario Securities Commission for misleading investors and ordered to return \$15 million. That sanction is part of the ongoing case. *Source: CBC, 5-7-14*

Gerald Torres, 43, Carpinteria, CA: Suspicion of DUI. Torres, executive pastor at Reality Church in Santa Barbara, hit a fence and sign with his motorcycle, injuring himself and his 8-year-old son Judah.

"Sadly, Pastor Torres had consumed alcohol and is currently being investigated by law enforcement for driving under the influence," said a recorded statement to parishioners. "It was a terrible mistake, and it is sin on his part. Pastor Torres is deeply broken and repentant because of his actions." *Source: Noozhawk, 5-6-14*

Andrew Pittman, 43, Lufkin, TX: Assault causing bodily injury/family violence. Pittman, senior pastor at First Baptist Church, is charged with pushing his wife Shauna into a door at 7:30 a.m. during an argument. Police didn't say if their 3 children witnessed the incident. *Source: KETK, 5-6-14*

Tyrone Banks Sr., 58, Pleasant Grove, AL: Rape by forcible compulsion and 1st-degree sodomy. According to Randy Christian, Jefferson County chief deputy, Banks is charged with taking a 13-year-old girl to the church where he was a minister and raping her in the kitchen. Authorities declined to name the church. Banks, a friend of the girl's mother, had volunteered to watch her as a favor. *Source: WSFA, 5-6-14*

Gerald Clark, 51, Westminster, CO: Sexual assault on a child in a position of trust with a pattern of abuse and 4 counts of misdemeanor unlawful sexual assault. Clark met the alleged victim and her family at Victory Church when she was 13. When he moved to Jericho Ministries International, the family went along.

After the alleged victim came forward, 3 other women made similar allegations, dating to 2005. *Source: CBS4, 5-2-14*

Lawrence M. Dowdy, 52, Wagram, NC: 1st-degree murder and felony child abuse. Dowdy, a former minister at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, was charged with the death of his 7-month-old daughter Peyton. She lived with her mother but died at Dowdy's home of head injuries.

Family members called 911. "There were older signs of abuse on the child also," said sheriff's Capt. Jon Edwards.

Dowdy was appointed in 2010 as the state's faith-based outreach coordinator and has a doctorate in ministry from Dayton University in Ohio. *Source: The Robesonian, 5-1-14*

Lenell McGee, Jackson, MS: Forcible rape. McGee, pastor at Greater Livingston Missionary Baptist and Greater Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist, also worked as a custodian at Forest High School but resigned in March.

He's accused of taking a girl from the high school to a hotel and raping her. *Source: WAPT, 4-28-14*

Raju Kokkan, 44, Thrissur, India: Rape. Kokkan, pastor at St. Paul's Catholic Parish is accused of raping and photographing nude a 10-year-old girl 3 times in April in the church. He fled after her parents went to police.

Kokkan allegedly had the girl take her clothes off on the pretense of seeing if her First Communion robe would fit. A medical exam confirmed she was raped, police said. *Source: India Today, 4-26-14*

James M. Taylor, 30, Niskayuna, NY: Knowingly acting in a manner likely to be injurious to the physical, mental or moral welfare of a child less than 17 years old. Taylor, associate pastor at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Parish, allegedly had inappropriate contact with a girl, 15, for 7 months from October 2013 until recently.

There may be additional victims, said Dis-

Letterbox

Natural laws counter 10 Commandments

Thanks to FFRF for being there. The things you are doing are so important.

Ridgecrest is a conservative community. People used to say that there are more churches than gas stations. I don't know if that's true today, but I do know that there are quite a few homes with Ten Commandments signs out front.

Attached is a picture of the sign I countered with. There are way more than 10 natural laws, and it was hard to choose just 10. My freethinking visitors get a chuckle, and so do many religious ones.

I was raised religiously. Approaching adulthood, I became interested in science and studied physics as an undergraduate. I discarded the concept of "god." But, for the usual reasons, I just couldn't discard the notion that "something must have happened" around 4 billion years ago; we just haven't learned what it is yet.

I guess that made me an agnostic. But accepting that "something must have happened" is having a belief based on exactly zero data (no observations) and is not supported by known natural laws, not exactly a scientific attitude.

As far as I'm concerned, people can believe what they want as long as they don't ask me to believe it, too. But when their beliefs result in actions which affect me in ways I don't like, that's where the line needs to be drawn.

Of course that's also where FFRF comes in and is why I so strongly support what you're doing. [Check for Life Membership enclosed.]

Bob Rockwell
California

Firmly against the concept of God

I have only been a member for a year but admire FFRF's efforts to help keep the U.S. from becoming a theocracy.

From my teen years I identified as an atheist. But then a friend told me that "atheist" meant "against God" and asked me how (if I didn't believe that God or gods existed) could I be against something that didn't exist.

I thought that over and agreed that he was right. But I decided that religion certainly existed, and my beef was against any and all religions, so now I consider myself "areligious." That's a term that we might all approve of.

In that spirit I have enclosed a check for \$1,000 to become a Life Member.

Rik Richter
California

Editor's note: Thanks from someone else against God! Many sources say atheist comes from the Greek for "without god(s)." Be careful calling yourself "areligious" around ex-Catholics like me, because we're easily confused! A "religious" (noun) in the Catholic Church is a person such as a nun or monk who takes public vows and lives a fraternal life.

Tornado alley, bible belt overlap

Thank you for all the excellent work you do as a vibrant and valuable voice for atheists, agnostics, secular human-

ists, freethinkers and other nonbelievers nationwide. I understand we are the fastest-growing "denomination" in the country and even get occasional honorable mention in President Obama's speeches and press briefings.

With the recent violent weather across the South, I was reminded of a fact that I discovered some 15 or 20 years ago. I find it truly fascinating that the so-called "tornado alley" in the Southern U.S. pretty much overlaps with the so-called "bible belt." Maybe it's "God's way" of trying to tell these people something, like "get my name out of your silly political debates and opinions," or "leave me out of your pathological obsession with ending woman's reproductive rights" or "don't get me involved in your sick effort to dictate who can get married to whom."

All of these topics have to do with human freedom, liberty, individuality and equality and nothing to do with the "great big giant invisible man in the sky."

J. Lonczak
Connecticut

'Cosmos' great show for Reagan ad

The Ron Reagan spot appeared on Fox TV (channel 5 in New York City) at 9:40 p.m. Sunday, June 8, during the final segment of the new "Cosmos" series. The ad was terrific and "Cosmos" was a perfect place to show it. I sent a contribution for "summer projects" toward this.

"Cosmos" was such a superb series, with its overall message that science is the source of knowledge. That's the opposite of what various religions would have people believe. A pep talk to those at the October national convention on people's power and responsibility to keep alive this message, on the primacy of science as a counterbalance to religion, would be very welcome.

I have mailed in my convention form, reserved my room and gotten my airline ticket for the convention in Los Angeles.

Fairfid Caudle
New York

'Freaky' clear winner over 'Good' Friday

I had a mind-boggling and hilarious experience on Friday, April 18. On my way to a medical office, I shared an elevator with a friendly young man who wished me a happy Good Friday. Astonished, I said, "Are you kidding me? That's the most horrifying day on the Christian calendar! How can it possibly be happy?"

He hemmed and hawed and stammered, finally saying he had thought it was the right thing to say. This atheist daughter of a Baptist deacon and a Baptist Sunday school teacher taught him otherwise. It seems that religious education is in a state of serious decline when an atheist must step in.

Kathleen Yagelo
Michigan

Glad to be doing good without gods

I was happy to see a photo of the billboard with Roni and Elliot Berenson [May14] with the words "Doing



Newton's laws of motion have much more relevance at the Rockwells than any allegedly handed to Moses.

good is our religion." I was born and spent most of my life in the Cleveland area.

I don't know the rules the IRS uses to define a "religion" for tax-exempt purposes, but wouldn't it be a good idea for humanists to organize and apply for IRS recognition as a religion, if for no other reason than to change society's automatic mindset connecting religion with charity? (Charity? Over 80% of contributions go for church purposes.)

Wouldn't it be enlightening for people to know there are others whose "religion" is "doing good" and doing it "without god," with recognition by the U.S. government? Wouldn't it change the dialogue of what "religion" means and take away the powers of the dogmatic religions?

As one of those members, I would offer my own example with a list of secular charities to which I regularly contribute as examples of my "religion."

Carl Scheiman, Life Member
Maine

Feeling refreshed by Raleigh meeting

Thank you for the convention this past weekend in Raleigh, N.C. It was refreshing to hear about clergy coming out as atheists, and also just to meet other people who are passionate about separation of church and state. I listen to your podcast and I appreciate all the hard work that you do for this cause.

Ramiro Rodriguez
North Carolina

•••

After attending your regional FFRF convention in Raleigh, N.C., it was disheartening to say the least to read about the recent Supreme Court decision on prayer at public government functions. Where is their reasoned interpretation of the U.S. Constitution? I hope you are not as discouraged about this as I am.

George J. Saunders
New York

New member likes respectful activism

A funny thing happened while I was venting my displeasure in a letter to the editor of the Raleigh News & Observer about the SCOTUS prayer ruling. A couple of days later, I saw the Ron Reagan spot on "Colbert," was impressed with his message and looked into FFRF, again. I had considered joining a few years ago, I think, but was too lazy to do anything.

My wife is a mild theist, so we had a

lively discussion on the sofa last night when she saw me reading Freethought Today. I started by mentioning that although FFRF members are "activists in their cause," there was not a single cutting remark about theists, personally. I found that to be refreshing because, since we are so overwhelmingly outnumbered, we atheists must make our point with some savviness.

She tried to point out that religious people don't impose their beliefs on others, so why am I so militant and hateful about religious people by writing that letter and reading Freethought Today? Ha! Yes, it all begins at home, doesn't it? I haven't told her yet that we have a household membership (yikes).

I look forward to reading subsequent editions.

Tom McIndoo
North Carolina

Nothing fails like roadside crosses

Those abominable white crosses along interstates, state roads, etc., are on public rights-of-way. Two just south of Tucson include fake flowers, balloons, a wreath, and one even has two little benches. There's also a large purple cross (thank Mother Nature that the purple has faded over the years) on the mountain pass between Livingston and Bozeman, Mont.

I have an alternative, based on my recent trip to New Zealand. Throughout the country, I found quite effective their smallish billboards promoting safe driving:

"Speeding ticket" (image: corpse with a toe tag in a morgue). "Dead tired" (corpse covered on a gurney). "Speed is lethal" ("bullet" car — pointed shell with four wheels on it). "You're dead a long time — what's the hurry?"

Neysa Dickey
Arizona

Buck Knife warranty has Jesus invite

I recently purchased a Buck hunting knife from a sporting goods store. I was astonished and dismayed when I got home and read the back of the warranty card inside the box. Had I known that the purchase involved being proselytized, I would have purchased a different brand.

This is pretty small stuff compared with other things FFRF deals with, but you may want to pass this along so members can be informed before making a purchase from the "Buck Knives family." From the warranty card, which



San Juan protest

Dr. Victor M. Rivera-Jimenez, a surgeon and FFRF Life Member, writes that Humanistas Seculares de Puerto Rico has been very active, including court action to stop a religious ceremony in the Capitol rotunda, which was paid for with public funds. From left are Antonio Torres, Mario Muñoz, Luis Ramos, Eva Quiñonez and Marianna Nogales. While the legal action was ultimately unsuccessful, the attempt got extensive publicity and resulted in tripling of Humanistas Seculares Facebook "likes."

Dr. Rivera's daughter, Ana M. Rivera, and her husband Julio Lopez are atheists and both are Tulane University Law School graduates working now as civil rights activists in Connecticut. He adds, "We want to thank FFRF for all its help in the past, and hope you may some day assist us in moving forward with a major lawsuit in federal court, as this seems to be the only way to have the government stop preaching to the Christian choir!"

includes John 3:16:

"The fantastic growth of Buck Knives Inc. was no accident. From the beginning, we determined to make God the Senior Partner. In a crisis, the problem was turned over to Him, and He hasn't failed to help us with the answer. . . . If any of you are troubled or perplexed and looking for answers, may we invite you to look to Him, for God loves you."

I hope to see you at the convention in Los Angeles.

Don Smith
California

FFRF speaks for those too scared to

I write to tell you from my own experience how important your work is in removing religion from the public school. I grew up in the Bronx, New York City. My parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe, very Jewish culturally, but atheists. I was brought up as a Jewish atheist, as were my friends.

In the 1940s however, though the children in our public elementary school were 95% Jewish, and many were atheist, the Christian teachers taught us to sing the Christian hymns and carols at all holidays. This caused us children great conflict, as we knew we should not be singing these songs. Not singing, just making believe, did not work as the teacher could tell you had to sing.

My friends and I decided we just had to put up with this. We agreed not to tell our parents as we feared our parents complaining to the school would get us in trouble with the teachers. This continued for several years until a new principal, a woman, came in and ended the practice.

Marcia Bernstein
New York

Helping blind see via Freethought Today

For the last eight years, I have narrated each issue of Freethought Today for the Utah State Library for the Blind, seven of those years from inside the Utah State Prison. They are on file at the library.

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading every article, interpreting the cartoons

and photos and making the newspaper available for the visually impaired in Utah and Wyoming. I am very thankful for your efforts to strengthen the wall between state and church. Having lived in Utah nearly my whole life, I have felt the weight of the religious majority in every facet of life here.

I tell many people about the ideas discussed in the articles, hoping to lighten the cultural oppression. Let individuals believe what they want, but don't burden everyone else with their theistic rites and cultural needs.

I have removed the reins from my life that kept me living pretentiously and unauthentically, and I'm much happier.

Gary Armstrong
Utah

God doesn't win trust, but Father does



Chloe Hirschowitz

My name is Chloe Hirschowitz. I am 20 years old and live in New York City. My family reads Freethought Today every month when it comes. My dad and I especially love reading the crank mail. In my spare time I enjoy writing poetry and was inspired by some of the poems I have read in Freethought Today. "Father" was written with Father's Day (June 15) in mind. Thank you.

Father

My father is the Tooth Fairy
And, as it turns out, he's Santa too
So, does that make my father God?
I'll have to think that through.

They both have lots of stupid rules
And they claim they're being nice
No friends over when Dad's out
No strangers at my animal sacrifice
(Exodus 29:33)

And their punishments are rough
Dad sends me to my room with no t.v.
And God stones me and sends me off
To burn in Hell eternally (Mathew 13:50)

But they both love me unconditionally
At least I think that's true
Although, God says he will disown me
If my praises are too few (Luke 12:9)

And when I say to God "I need you!"
He never follows through
But when I say the same to Dad,
He answers, "What can I do?"

And when life leaves me confused,
God just seems to make me drearier
So are my dad and god the same?
No. My dad is far superior.

Sharing the Crank Mail

Repent or perish, say this month's crank mailers, in so many words, printed as received.

Communism: I am praying for you ! You people will need it one day ! Quit pushing your agenda on the rest of us! GOD BLESS!!!! — *Iarrifancher*

JESUS CHRIST: To believe that prayer does not work should be a crime! I am a living example of how prayer works and I serve an AWESOME GOD!!! — *Sandy Greeman, Neenah, Wis.*

Good news: STAY THE HELL OUT OF WV. I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!!! AND I AM A GOOD SHOT TOO — *Bryan Epperley, W. Va.*

Abortion Clinic: Please let the Gaylors know that I prayed with a couple outside of an abortion clinic in Charlotte, NC on Friday. The Holy Spirit comforted them and they have decided to keep the baby and not kill it. Isn't it great your parents decided to keep you Gaylors and Pastor Dan. — *Glenn Graves*

Logic: When you study the Bible (the real one, not that Mormon or Roman Catholic crap), you come to realize it has no errors whatsoever. Therefore, because the God of the Bible is necessary for logic to work, any argument against Christianity presupposes Christianity is true. — *Vincent Nunnally*

Greece v. Galloway: There's a lot more of us than there are of you...suck it up and step off. — *Joseph Havard*

stupidity: know of a wonderful place in Africa you piss ants can relocate your clan to, free. this country was founded on a belief in God, how the hell were you planted on this earth, did a bird shit on a fence post and you were hatched? — *pete smolan, villa park, calif.*

Praying for you: I have watched a video of yours, give the pain you feel up. Jesus alone is worth the fight. We do not have to rely on sex, alcohol, car rides, video games, or other coping mechanisms to be momentarily happy. Just let Him in. — *Louis Kropf*

Religion: Atheism, and all others are a religion. All are bogus. Christianity is a reality and proven by fact and truths. Have a good day. Jesus Christ is Lord! — *Donald Burd, Coal Township, Pa.*

Freedom: I believe ur a bunch of idiots of people want to pray that's their business u need to get real jobs and leave us alone ur over bearing — *bobby grubb*

Intolerance is ignorance: As a Veteran of war, I have fought for America's principles, Free Speech and religious liberties among them. We are tired of the bullying tactics being used by your organization. As the saying goes, "Paybacks can be a bitch!" — *Chuck Nickel, Arizona FLUSH [Jeez, Chuck fought for free speech but harps when we use it.]*

BANNING T-SHIRTS WV WRESTLING TEAM: Man so our service men and women are dying at this very minute to assure that you can attack anyone who doesn't CONFORM to your beliefs. GOD knows they're only fighting for your FREEDOM. — *A. Lawrence, Ohio FLUSH [Again, just don't use it!]*

religion in school: If you don't want to be in a country that was founded on Religious principles then defect and go to Africa, Ukraine, Russia. I am sure someone would sign for you to defect. — *Ann Barnes, Simpsonville, S.C.*

Your salvation: I just don't understand how anyone can be so far off. But of course the Devil

is very convincing. Now if your one of those that thinks you come from a fish or an ape, then good luck. — *Johnny Phillips, S. Carolina*

Your Disingenuity: Your Atheism is itself a religion. The 1st Amendment guarantee of freedom of religion applies to all forms of religion, including yours. — *Clay Rentro, Calif.*

your attitude toward being assholes: I'd like to know why you "assholes" have to ruin stuff for other people? You belong in the Great American Asshole Club. — *Jonn Demirjian, Las Cruces, NM*

Jesus Statue Whitefish, MT: I'm sure you have bigger fish to fry in Wisconsin, like cheese shaped crosses. Here's a tip for you fanatics, don't take one step into Montana. You'll be playing with fire. — *Lisa Bauman, Missoula*

Worthless: How many times a day do you "folks" worship Satan? All day is my guess. Vile, disgusting rodents! Burn brightly lil embers! — *Ray Holloway*

Shamful: Without religion kids think its okay to just freely kill people like in video games this is all your fault. your organization has death on your hands you're totally to blame because of your wacky ideas. — *17738951256@tmomail.net*

Muslim religion: I'm not crazy about being forced to convert to the muslim religion or die so could you please start ridding our nation of this religion? — *Paula Fehrenbach*

GRADUATION: YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TELLING ME MY SON CANNOT GRADUATE IN A CHURCH IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILD OUT OF CHURCH KEEP THEM HOME, AND KEEP YOUR ANTI-CHRIST BELIEVES IN WISCONSIN. TO THE FAMILY THAT CONTACTED YOU, TELL THEM TO KEEP THEIR CHILD HOME IF THEY DON'T LIKE IT. DON'T PUSH YOUR SATIN BELIEFS ON US. — *ARLENE DIEHL, CANTON OHIO*

advise: I was surprised to see that you are warring against God. Please don't make such a fatal mistake. It's better to close your organization and website as soon as possible if you want to avoid God's wrath. Go to nearby Church and repent your sin. Please tell this to your boss. — *Doug Kim, McLean, Va.*

Go to Hell: If you don't believe in god you are stuped to have a brane. — *B.Lewis*

stop picking on christians: you people need to stop trying to ease Christian morals from the united states and I'm sending you some Christian catalogs. — *ronnie copley, kermil, wva*

I can do all things through CHRIST who strengthens me: It's people like you that are ruining this country to go through the trouble of complaining about a school in West Virginia about a saying, yet it is ok to teach evolution in schools. — *Jesus Christ, West Virginia*

Sorry for you: Explain to me how you exist as a human being if there is no creator. If your answer is evolution then your free thinking is very erratic at best. — *FloDaddy*

T-shirts: You people need to stay in WI and leave our schools alone. I will be taking this to supreme court!!!! — *Melissa Southall, Parkersburg, W. Va.*

You bastards: I hope all you pieces of shit fall off the face of the earth for forcing you narrow minded views and unproven ideas on everyone in America again yes all of you each and everyone is just a pile of shit. — *Jr*

'You can determine a priest is not on duty when he is molesting a child, for example.' — Attorney defending the Diocese of Newark, NJ

edge" in the archdiocese that Perez "had a problem with alcohol."

The plaintiff was staying overnight at the rectory in April 2012 before a camping trip the next day. He allegedly awoke to find Perez, naked from the waist down, fondling his genitals and taking photos. The incident became notorious nationally after the boy fled and several witnesses reported seeing Perez in his underwear chasing him down the street.

"Defendants created a dangerous condition by allowing Fr. Perez to run a parish by himself in a small community when they knew or should have known that Fr. Perez was hosting boys overnight," the complaint said.

The archdiocese filed for bankruptcy in 2004 and has paid out \$51 million to settle clergy abuse claims. *Source: Portland Tribune, 4-23-14*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

Carl Keyes and his wife **Donna Keyes**, co-pastors of Glad Tidings Tabernacle in **New York City** (an Assemblies of God church), signed a legal judgment ending a probe by state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman into their financial transactions. The judgment requires the couple to pay \$1.23 million to Glad Tidings.

Three former church board members agreed to pay \$50,000 in penalties for neglecting oversight duties. Former executive director **Mark Costantin** agreed to repay \$482,000 he still owes the church.

"Carl and Donna Keyes and Mark Costantin abused the trust of their congregants and used Glad Tidings Tabernacle as their personal bank," said Schneiderman. *Source: AP, 5-16-15*

Legal Developments

Chris Naples, 42, New Gretna, **NJ**, is suing the Catholic **Diocese of Trenton**, alleging it was negligent in supervising **Fr. Terence McAlinden** in the 1980s. Naples says the priest molested him as a teen on overnight trips.

Naples was in court when a lawyer for the diocese claimed McAlinden, now 73, was not "on duty" during a trip to Delaware:

"How do we determine when a priest is and is not on duty?" the judge asked.

"Well," replied the lawyer for the diocese, "you can determine a priest is not on duty when he is molesting a child, for example. . . . A priest abusing a child is absolutely contrary to the pursuit of his master's business, to the work of a diocese."

The statement appalled Naples. "Any hope I had that the church was concerned about me as a victim or about the conduct of its priests was totally gone. They were washing their hands of it. I was shattered. I just couldn't believe that was one of their arguments." *Source: Star-Ledger, 6-1-14*

"After the 13-year-old girl helped finish off two, 1-gallon bottles of red wine from Rome, the Rev. Philip Altavilla gave her a ride home." Quite a start to a news story?

Altavilla, 48, Scranton, **PA**, was bound over for trial on charges of indecent assault, criminal attempt to indecent assault and corruption of minors. A woman, now 29, testified the now-suspended Catholic priest groped her in his car about 3 a.m. on the way home from midnight Mass in 1998. He'd told her parents he'd get her home safely.

Detective Vince Uher testified the priest "admitted he had a fetish with feet and panty hose" and that his actions were for his own sexual gratification. *Source: Times-Tribune, 5-28-14*

Ken Coughlin, 53, Grand Blanc, **MI**, has been accused of inappropriate touching of 2 students at Holy Family Catholic School. The Genesee County prosecutor is reviewing the evidence but no charges have been filed.

The parish has about 6,000 members and a K-8 school. Coughlin is on administrative leave. *Source: WNEM, 5-28-14*

Emails released in court documents show details of how **Barry Starr**, 64, Stoughton, **MA**, may have been blackmailed by the brother of a 16-year-old Starr was allegedly having sex with Starr, rabbi at Temple Israel, may have paid as much as \$480,000 to buy the man's silence, other documents said. Starr, a married father of 2, resigned after acknowledging the infidelity.

In the apparent first email Dec. 28, 2011, Nicholas Zemeitus, the 29-year-old alleged extortionist, wrote, "It's come to my attention

that you have been doing some things that are harmful to some teenage boys and I have found that you have done this several times. I am the older brother of a young boy you met recently."

Zemeitus allegedly had no idea who Starr was at the time. He found the emails and explicit photos while fixing his brother's laptop. *Source: Boston Globe, 5-20-14*

A Maplewood, **MN**, woman says she's gotten threats she thinks may be tied to the prosecution of **Mark Huberty**, former pastor of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, who's charged with criminal sexual conduct for his relationship with her. He says it was consensual.

The woman "has received at least five cards or other correspondences" from an anonymous sender, said prosecutor Therese Galatowitsch, saying they had "very disturbing references to the Bible, what an evil person she is, even her parents, how they spawned an evil child."

The prosecution wants DNA taken from Huberty, 44, to see if he's involved with the threats, a request the judge is considering. *Source: Pioneer Press, 5-15-14*

Scott Sechrist, 61, Bristol Township, **PA**, was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in his home a week before his trial on 30 sexual assault counts was to start. He was a Baptist pastor accused of molesting a girl from the church, starting in 1989 when she was 9 and continuing until 1992.

Prosecutor Jennifer Schorn said Sechrist left a note maintaining his innocence, adding there's a recording of a recent conversation between the victim and Sechrist in which he admitted to the assaults. The recording was played at his preliminary hearing. *Source: AP, 5-15-14*

Leo C. Koppala, 48, a Catholic priest in the Diocese of Winona, **MN**, was deported and turned over to authorities in his native India. He pleaded guilty in March to criminal sexual conduct for fondling a 12-year-old girl while eating dinner at her grandmother's house. *Source: AP, 5-14-14*

The files of **16 Diocese of Joliet, IL, Catholic priests** accused of molesting children were made public by victims' attorney Jeff Anderson, who said about 7,000 documents are included in the release. Anderson said 5 lawsuits have been filed against the diocese because it "failed to do the right thing." *Source: WLS, 4-29-14*

Allegations

Sername, the federal child protection agency in **Chile**, is investigating claims that unmarried, pregnant women were pressured by priests to give up their children and that those who refused were anesthetized during delivery and later told the child had died. The babies were raised by married couples in "traditional" Catholic families.

Most cases being investigated date from the 1970s-80s but some were reported in 2005. **Gerardo Joannon**, the priest at the center of the allegations, denies them and claims he was only working with doctors to stop back-alley abortions.

All abortion is illegal in Chile, even in cases of rape, incest and health of the mother, restrictions that President Michelle Bachelet, a former pediatrician, is trying to get rid of. *Source: The Guardian/Reuters, 5-16-14*

Michel Gugenheim, France's chief rabbi, and **2 members of his Paris rabbinical court** are accused of helping extort \$120,000 from a woman, age 28, who needed Gugenheim to approve a religious divorce.

Her family made a secret video recording of their March 18 court appearance. Gugenheim is heard endorsing the husband's demand for \$41,310. Another judge told the family to write a check for \$120,000 to the Sinai charity, which would reimburse the husband his share. *Source: L'Express, 5-8-14*

Removed / Resigned

Peter Artman, a Church of Sweden pastor in **Skaraborg**, was removed from active service after being taped by an investigative reporter posing as a gay man. Artman, a member of a conservative group opposing gay marriage, said, "If you want some kind of correction for your lust, then you can pray for that too." *Source: The Local, 5-28-14*

John Ehrich resigned in **Phoenix** as pastor at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish and school "for his own well-being and for the good of the parish," a letter from the diocese said. Parents had asked for his removal.

Ehrich had not been accused of abuse of a minor or any crime, the letter said.

Ehrich came under fire for saying publicly that St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center could no longer be considered Catholic because it had allowed a pregnancy-ending procedure to save a woman's life that did not fit church guidelines. *Source: The Republic, 5-28-14*

Chris Di Lella, pastor of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Parish, Wayne, **NJ**, was put on administrative leave and is not allowed to wear the clerical collar or present himself as a priest, said a Diocese of Paterson press release.

Msgr. Di Lella came under fire for letting **John Capparelli**, who was defrocked in March

for molesting children and hasn't worked as a priest for 20 years, attend the parish's annual Family Festival in May. When allegations surfaced in 2011, Capparelli was teaching in Newark public schools. *Source: northjersey.com, 5-23-14*

The Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, **PA**, has suspended **Michael Lewandowski** as pastor of Saint Anne Parish in Davidsville due to an allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor in the 1980s.

The Franciscan Order has reported the allegation to civil authorities. *Source: WTAM, 5-18-14*

Reggie Weaver, 33, senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, **NC**, was put on paid leave after admitting an extramarital affair with a woman who's not a member of the congregation.

"I have violated my ordination vows and my wedding vows," Weaver said in a letter. His wife is seeking a divorce. *Source: Fox 8, 5-18-14*

Thomas Mullen, former pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Dunfermline, **Scotland**, has been defrocked by the Vatican for "canonical offenses" related to alleged abuse of a man, now in his 30s, who accused Mullen of molesting him when he was 9. He was never charged criminally due to the statute of limitations. *Source: BBC, 5-16-14*

Joseph Hemmerle, pastor of 2 Catholic parishes in Marion County, **KY**, was put on leave for alleged sexual abuse of a male minor in the 1970s. Hemmerle was recently cleared of a similar allegation from a different person in the same period. *Source: Courier-Journal, 5-11-14*

Miguel H. Díaz, a theology professor and married father of 4 who was U.S. ambassador to the Vatican from 2009-12, likely engaged in "unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature" toward a married couple who were colleagues at the University of Dayton, **OH**, said a confidential letter written by the college provost.

Diaz allegedly suggested an adulterous encounter with the couple. *Source: Inside Higher Ed, 5-5-14*

Miraslov Stalmaschek, pastor at St. Barbara Catholic Church in Bridgeville, **PA**, resigned after a church audit found financial regularities. **Judy Brennan**, church secretary, was also asked to resign. The priest is a Polish native. *Source: KDKA, 5-1-14*

Mark Crow, co-founder of Victory Church, Warr Acres, **OK**, and 4 other locations, resigned "after confessing to marital unfaithfulness," said a statement from executive pastor Dale Swanson.

Crow, a televangelist, is widely known because of his connection to Oral Roberts University. He and his wife and fellow pastor, Jennifer Crow, started the church in 1994. According to her book *Perfect Lies*, they have 5 children and 3 grandchildren. *Source: Daily Mail, 5-1-14*

Other

Michael Neary, Catholic archbishop of Tuam, **Ireland**, said he was "greatly shocked" to learn details of how 796 children were buried in a concrete septic tank in Tuam at a home for unwed mothers run by the **Sisters of Bon Secours** ("Good Help"). The children, aged between 2 days and 9 years, died between 1925-61.

The remains were first discovered in 1975, when the deaths were attributed, without evidence, to a famine in the 1950s. The facility closed in 1961 and was among 10 similar homes across Ireland. Three others have "little angels" plots believed to hold remains of another 3,200 children.

It's also been revealed that more than 2,000 children were used as unwitting test subjects in vaccine medical trials in about 10 homes. The pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline made the revelation after it bought one of the labs involved, UK-based Burroughs Wellcome. *Source: BBC/Irish Mirror, 6-5-14*

Gerald Robinson, 76, a Catholic priest convicted in 2006 of murdering a nun, has been moved to a prison hospice unit in Columbus, **OH**, because he has a terminal heart condition.

Robinson was serving a life sentence at the Southeastern Correctional Institution near Lancaster. He was charged with stabbing Sr. Margaret Ann Pahl, 71, 31 times with a letter opener on Holy Saturday 1980 in the sacristy of the Toledo Mercy Hospital chapel, then presiding 4 days later at her funeral. *Source: AP, 6-3-14*

Vladimir Dziadek, 56, hanged himself with a leather belt inside the administrative offices of St. Joseph Catholic Church, Tampa, **FL**, where he was pastor. A medical examiner's report contained allegations Dziadek, a native of Poland, was depressed because parishioners believed he had embezzled \$200,000 and "gambled it away."

Liquor bottles and casino vouchers were found in his room, the report said. *Source: Tampa Bay Times, 5-15-14*

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's U.N. ambassador in Geneva, told a U.N. committee that since 2004, more than **3,400 credible cases of sex abuse by clergy** were referred to the Vatican, including 401 cases in 2013.

Tomasi said 848 priests were defrocked in the last decade and 2,572 priests were sentenced to a lifetime of penance and prayer or a lesser sanction.

It's the first time the Vatican has released such statistics. *Source: AP, 5-6-14*

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

They Said What?

I prayed for a building. I got strippers. **Erin Stevens**, a nondenominational pastor's wife who ministers to strippers in Mt. Juliet, **Tenn.**

The Tennessean, 5-31-14

This will likely be well-received by right-wing Christians. But imagine if a liberal did his or her own bible. There would be outrage about how God is being blasphemed.

Alan Colmes, talk show host, on *The Duck Commander Bible* released by the "Duck Dynasty" reality show cast

Crooks and Liars, 6-7-14

How do you think you would react if a member of your immediate family told you they were going to marry (1) an atheist or (2) a "born again" Christian? **Poll question, with 4% of respondents choosing "happy" about an atheist and 32% "happy" about the Christian**

Pew Research Center political polarization survey, 6-12-14

We're here to do the business of the city. I don't see prayer as the business of the city.

Bill Barth, opposing formal prayer at meetings of the city council in Chadron, **Neb.**, of which he's a member

Rapid City Journal, 6-17-14

Kill-a-gay laws, or laws that allow the flogging of women for abortion, violate international law and have no place in civilized society.

Mavis Leno of Feminist Majority, responding to shariah laws being instituted by **Hassanal Bolkiah**, sultan of Brunei, causing boycotts of the **Beverly Hills Hotel**, which he owns

New York Times, 6-1-14

Boys will be boys.

Mulayam Sigh Yadav, head of **Uttar Pradesh state's governing party in India**, after two teen sisters were raped and killed and left hanging from a tree

Associated Press, 5-30-14

They don't need a humanist or whatever the heck that is, You want a hug? I'll give you a hug. You want to go talk to a counselor, you can go talk to a counselor. What is the point of this? This doesn't make any sense to me.

Kimberly Guilfoyle, **Fox News commentator**, on the push for humanist chaplains in the military

"Outnumbered," 5-13-14

Satan loves this stuff. He and his demonic goons will do anything to attack the body of Christ and crush his teachings. But Pastor Bob will rebound from this.

Dwayne Clark, church member, on the resignation of **Bob Coy** as **Calvary Chapel pastor in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.**, for marital infidelity and a "problem with pornography"

Religion News Service, 4-8-14

The young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously looking for God.

Scottish novelist Bruce Marshall, quoted in "God's Design for Sex"

focusonthefamily.com, 6-18-14

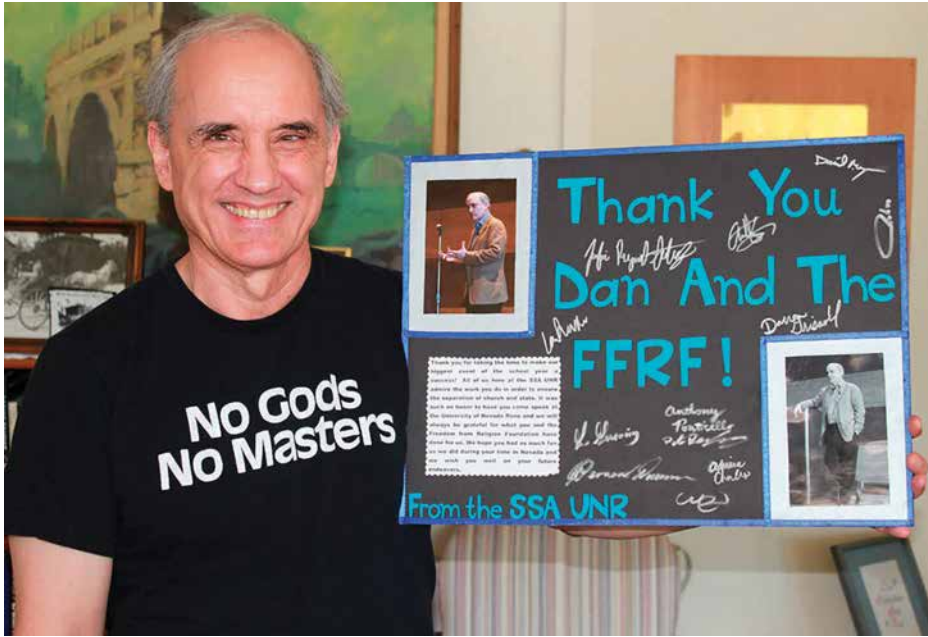


Photo: Andrew L. Seidel

In Memoriam:

Marvin Van Houten, 1924–2014

Freda Van Houten informed us of the death of her husband Marvin, Arizona FFRF Lifetime Member, on May 17, 2014. He was 90. Freda writes:

He had been battling cancer for some years. The last two years were especially difficult. I cared for him the last three months under the auspices of hospice. We were both brought up as very conservative Christians. I do not remember just how we heard about FFRF but over the years we became nonbelievers.

Freethought Today has been an inspiration for me. Just when I thought I couldn't continue I picked up the March issue. Paging through it, I saw the article "The Truth About Funerals: Follow the Money." I had Marv cremated and his ashes spread in the Santa Rita Mountains near Tucson. The fee

was very reasonable.

Sometime in the future I will have a memorial for him inviting those friends and relatives to share. So many people came this year to see him. It was like they knew he wouldn't be here very long. For that I am very thankful. Marvin was an educator for 35 years. We have been Life Members for quite a few years.

One thing I know, whether you are a believer or nonbeliever, when your life partner (60 years) leaves, there is a very big hole in your heart.

Editor's note: "We remember Marvin and Freda so fondly," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "They hosted Dan and me at their beautiful bed and breakfast in Flagstaff, and we got to know him. He will be missed. Our most heartfelt condolences to Freda."

Thanks for the memories

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker spoke April 20 to a large crowd at the University of Nevada-Reno on April 20. In appreciation, the school's Secular Student Alliance chapter sent this card signed by many of the members. It says: "Thank you for taking the time to make our biggest event of the school year a success! All of us here at the SSA-UNR admire the work you do in order to ensure the separation of church and state. It was such an honor to have you come speak, and we will always be grateful for what you and FFRF have done for us. We hope you had as much fun as we did during your time in Nevada and we wish you well on your future endeavors."



Better late than never

Dan Barker led "An Atheist Musical Holiday" attended by about 200 freethinkers Dec. 28 in Albuquerque, N.M., for FFRF's chapter there. Pictured with Dan (center) are (left) Cheryl Gatner, chapter assistant director; Ron Herman, director; Margaret Nahas, member; and Jim Travis, treasurer. The event featured Dan at the keyboard in an enlightening, humorous and inspiring performance with the Albuquerque Freethought Band that included Bill West on guitar and Mike Swick on bass. The band, which also featured a violinist, was organized for this event by Jim Travis.



8655 Explorer Drive

Ryan Dwyer, former FFRF legal intern who's now at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School, was in Colorado visiting friends and family and stopped in Colorado Springs for a coffee. "I took a few wrong turns and wound up at Focus on the Family's headquarters," Ryan says. "I think God is calling me back to the fold, or he really wants me to see their visitor center." (This is actually the main administration building, which is adjacent to the visitor center.)

Meet an Intern

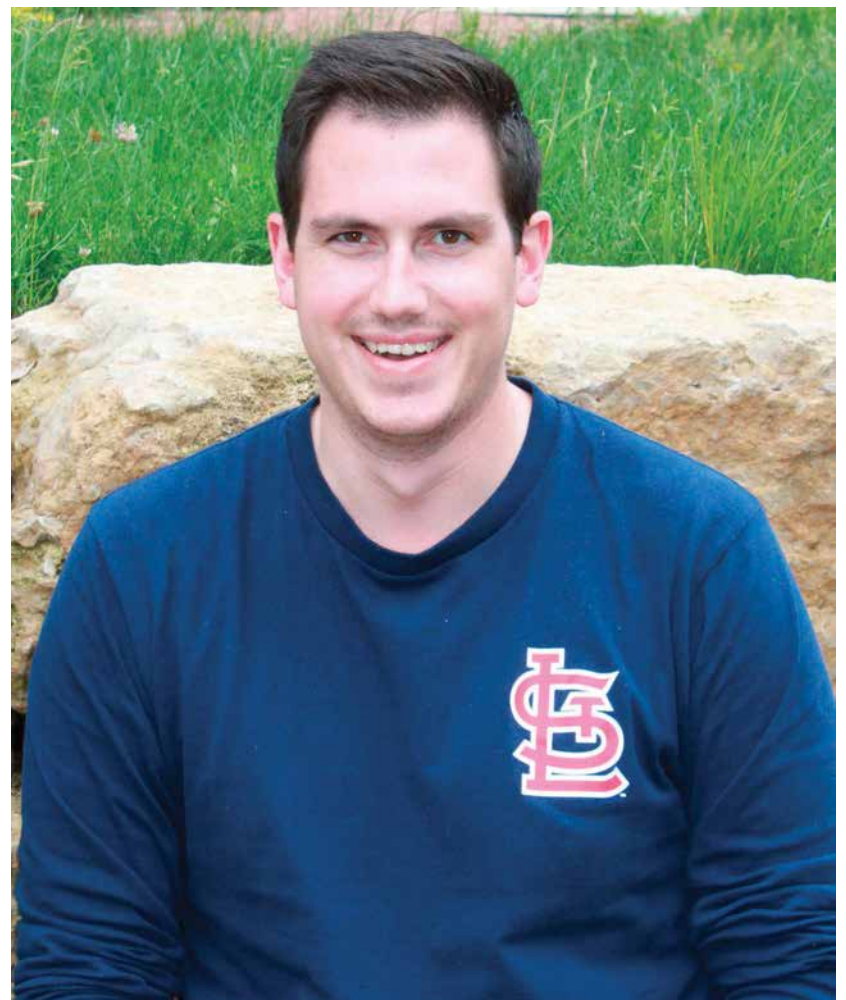


Photo: Andrew L. Seidel

Name: Neal Joseph Fitzgerald.

Where and when I was born: St. Louis, Mo., July 6, 1989.

Family: Mother, Terrie; father, Tim; sisters Jill and Jane; brother-in-law Mark; nieces Charlotte, 6, and Eleanor, 3.

Education: B.A. in history, University of Wisconsin-Madison; starting my second year at the UW Law School.

My religious upbringing was: Catholic, including K-12 Catholic schooling and an all-boys high school.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: On a bike! FFRF was actually an organization that factored into my decision to come to Madison for law school, and working here was one of my goals in law school.

What I do here: I draft letters on a wide variety of church/state violations and concerns for all five staff attorneys and Dan and Annie Laurie. I research a variety of topics, from legislative history to civil procedure.

What I like best about it: The victo-

ries. I like to see that the work I'm doing is having a positive effect.

Something funny that's happened at work: I received a response to a complaint that began, "Before I commence, I have to say how sorry I am that my assailant is an Irishman." The letter that followed was entertaining if not confusing. But all is well, as it was a victory.

My legal interests are: Constitutional law, the First Amendment, legislative drafting and administrative law.

My legal heroes are: Alexander Hamilton, Thurgood Marshall, Stephen Breyer and Josh Lyman [on "The West Wing"].

These three words sum me up: Family, friends, food.

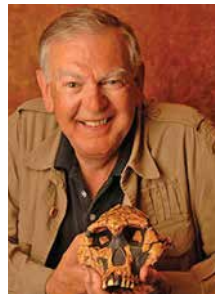
Things I like: Cooking, St. Louis Cardinals baseball.

Things I smite: Tardiness, "Libertarians."

My loftiest goal: White House chief of staff.

FFRF's 37th national conference, Los Angeles, Oct. 24-26

FFRF gears up for L.A. convention



Johansen



Carroll



Galloway



Hamilton



Stevens



Pinn



Johnson



Chemerinsky

The latest honorees joining the distinguished lineup at FFRF's 37th annual national convention in Los Angeles the weekend of Oct. 24-26 are the two co-plaintiffs who courageously battled governmental prayer in the Supreme Court case *Town of Greece v. Galloway*.

Linda Stephens, an atheist, long-time FFRF Member and new Lifetime Member, and Susan Galloway, who identifies as a cultural Jew, will both receive Freethinker of the Year awards.

The conference takes place at the luxury Biltmore Hotel, 506 S. Grand Ave. Rates of \$169 single or double, \$199 triple and \$229 quad are being held for FFRF through Sept. 23 (or as long as availability lasts).

Phone 1-800-245-8673 and identify yourself as part of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. You can reserve online by going to ffrf.org/outreach/convention/. Click on the link under "37th Annual National Convention - 2014" to reach the Biltmore's registration page.

Other state/church honorees include Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of the University of California-Irvine School of Law and author of *The Conservative Assault on the Constitution*, accepting a Champion of the First Amendment Award, and Marci Hamilton, Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, who'll receive a Freethought Heroine Award.

Hamilton, a constitutional scholar, is the author of *God and the Gavel: The Perils of Extreme Religious Liberty*, and wrote FFRF's amicus brief against the Hobby Lobby Supreme Court appeal.

Anthony Pinn, the first African-American to hold an endowed chair at Rice University, is professor of humanities and religious studies. His latest book is *Writing God's Obituary: How a Good Methodist Became a Better Atheist*.

Two distinguished scientists will accept FFRF's Emperor Has No Clothes Award, reserved for public figures who "tell it like it is" about religion: paleo-anthropologist Donald C. Johanson, discoverer of "Lucy," author of many books and director of the Institute of Human Origins at Arizona State Uni-

versity in Tempe; and physicist Sean Carroll, senior research associate in the Department of Physics at the California Institute of Technology. Carroll is author of *The Particle at the End of the Universe: How the Hunt for the Higgs Boson Leads Us to the Edge of a New World*.

New York-based photographer Christopher Johnson will give an uplifting presentation based on his fascinating new photo book *A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy & Meaning in a World Without God*.

Other speakers and honorees will be announced in future issues and online at ffrf.org/convention/.

The conference begins Friday afternoon with workshops featuring FFRF staff attorneys and an appetizer reception from 3-5. Registration opens up at 2 p.m. and continues through the convention.

The program begins formally at 7 p.m. Friday, including speakers, honorees and a complimentary dessert reception. Saturday starts with the non-traditional Non-Prayer Breakfast. An all-day program concludes after the evening keynote speech.

Convention highlights include the drawing for "clean" (pre-"In God We Trust") currency and irreverent entertainment at the piano by FFRF Co-President Dan ("The Singing Atheist") Barker.

The annual membership meeting and meeting of FFRF state representatives is Sunday morning, with the state rep meeting concluding by noon.

FFRF registration

Registration is \$65 for individual FFRF member, \$70 for nonmember/spouse accompanying member, \$110 for nonmember (or join for \$40 and save five bucks!). Student registration is only \$10.

Meals

Two optional Saturday meals are offered: The Non-Prayer Breakfast and the Saturday Banquet Dinner. The full breakfast (\$30 including 23% service charge and 9% sales tax) is freshly squeezed orange juice, muffin and Danish basket, fresh-cracked country scrambled eggs, thick-cut applewood bacon, herb-roasted red potatoes, freshly brewed regular and decaffeinated coffee and Harney & Son teas. Vegetarian is all of the above, but tomato slice is substituted for bacon.

Dinner (\$55 including 23% service charge and 9% sales tax) is a choice of chicken or halibut with potato, vegetable and dessert (or chef's choice vegetarian). Vegan and gluten-free meal options are available.

You may also register online: ffrf.org/outreach/convention/2014-convention

Sign up today!

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

Freedom From Religion Foundation's 37th Annual National Convention

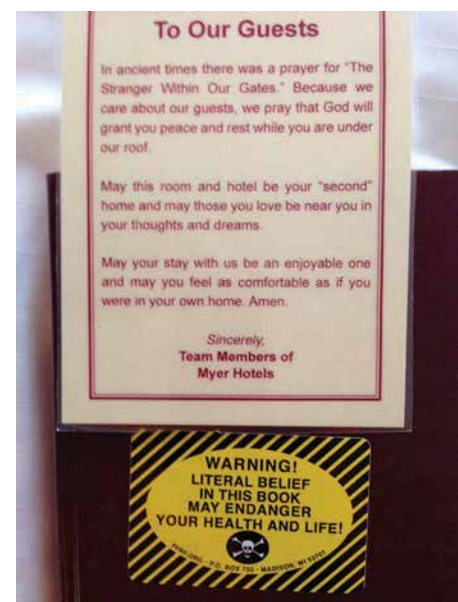
October 24-26, 2014

Los Angeles, California

Make checks payable to "FFRF"



FFRF Sighting



Randy Lifshutz spotted this work of the devil at the Holiday Inn Express in Branson, Mo. Stickers available at: ffrf.org/shop/.

Number registering

_____ FFRF member registration (s) @ \$65 per person	\$_____
_____ Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$70.....	\$_____
_____ Non-member registration (s) @ \$110.....	\$_____
(Save \$5 by becoming an FFRF Member)	
_____ Student registration (s) @ \$10	\$_____
_____ Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast @ \$30* per person	\$_____
_____ Classic _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan _____ Check if gluten-free	
_____ Saturday Night Dinner @ \$55* per person	\$_____
_____ Chicken _____ Halibut _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan _____ Check if gluten-free	
* Meal prices include 23% gratuity & 9% sales tax	
	Total: \$_____

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)