

Freethought Today

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FFRF's solid court victory ends prayer in Pismo Beach, Calif.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation has ended all prayer before the city council in Pismo Beach, Calif., with a settlement reached April 15. That victory has become all the sweeter following the Supreme Court's unfortunate May 5 decision "blessing" sectarian governmental prayer. (See related story, this page.)

FFRF's victory will hold, since the lawsuit was brought in state court and did not invoke federal law.

Following the filing of the lawsuit, the Pismo Beach City Council, which had dug in its heels after locals complained about its prayer practice, surprised observers by totally capitulating to FFRF requests. The council voted to stop all prayers at official meetings and to abolish a city chaplain position that had anointed a Pentecostal preacher to intone long sermons to begin meetings.

FFRF and Dr. Sari Dworkin, a Pismo Beach resident and FFRF member, sued the city Nov. 1, 2013, in Superior Court in San Luis Obispo, alleging the official prayers and chaplaincy violated the California Constitution.

Before each council meeting, city Chaplain Paul Jones or one of his religious substitutes delivered a Christian prayer. Prayers often included egregious factual mistakes, including manufactured theocratic quotes attributed to America's founders. Jones' prayers pressured citizens to live a Christian or biblical lifestyle, to vote for "righteous" leaders and make decisions that "honor" his god.

The city agreed to pay the plaintiffs nominal damages and attorney fees totaling about \$47,500 and to end the practice of praying at meetings and abolish the chaplain position. The settlement carries the force of law and will be accompanied by a court order.

"This is a significant victory that FFRF intends to build on," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

Pismo Beach established an official city chaplaincy in 2005 and appointed Jones to the post. He's affiliated with the International Church of the

Continued on page 3



It's not in 'His' hands

Marni Huebner-Tiborsky, director of FFRF's chapter the Northern Ohio Freethought Society, is pictured with Sam Salerno, Sharon Woznicki, Mark Tiborsky, Suzy Wernet and Eric Tawney in front of Sharon's billboard, one of 11 featuring Cleveland-area FFRF members in its newest "Out of the Closet" campaign. The campaign got 5,000 likes in less than 24 hours after being posted on the Facebook page of the Richard Dawkins Foundation. FFRF's Facebook page saw similar approval. For more photos and images, see page 14.

Announcing 'Nothing fails like prayer' award

FFRF fights back against SCOTUS prayer ruling

"If the Supreme Court won't uphold the Constitution, it's up to us — it's up to you" is the Freedom From Religion Foundation's homily in response to the high court's May 5 ruling approving sectarian prayer at official government meetings. The ruling is a personal blow to the stature and rights of U.S. nonbelievers and non-Christians, as well as to secular government.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* that governments can not only host prayers, those prayers can be pervasively sectarian: "To hold that invocations must be non-sectarian would force the legislatures that sponsor prayers and the courts that are asked to decide these cases to act as supervisors and censors of religious speech." First Amendment champion Ellery Schempp, FFRF Lifetime Member from Massachusetts, who began the protest that led to a landmark 1963 U.S. Supreme Court ruling against recitation of the Lord's Prayer in public schools, emailed on the day of the ruling: "FFRF is vital after the awful Greece decision. This is why we

need FFRF!"

FFRF, the nation's largest association of freethinkers, with more than 20,000 atheist and agnostic members nationwide, has responded to the hostile court ruling by announcing a

Continued on page 3



Linda Stevens

Inside This Issue

Papal visit effort raises constitutional violations



www.PopeToGreenBay.com

Page 6



FFRF, Minn. Atheists, sponsor 'Aints' game

Page 17

Letters: Sweetie Hypatia is a state/church watch dog



Pages 20-21

Meet a Musical Trekkie Member

Name: Christine Eldridge.

Where I live: East Providence, R.I.

Where and when I was born: Woonsocket, R.I., 1969.

Family: My husband, Darryl, and I share our home with a cat, Lola, and two dogs, Isabella and Kirk. I am child-free by choice and love being an auntie to my nieces and nephews.

Education: B.S. in music education, Rhode Island College. Clarinet is my main instrument, and I play with a chamber music ensemble. I also study piano, having resumed lessons two years ago after about a 20-year hiatus, and started playing the ukulele this year.

Occupation: Nonprofit arts administration.

Volunteer work: Humanists of Rhode Island (vice president), Secular Coalition for Rhode Island (co-chair), active in community service as well as secular, social justice, arts advocacy and animal welfare causes.

How I got where I am today: Help and support from family and friends, random luck, various personal choices and hard work.

Where I'm headed: I plan to continue to learn, to help others and to enjoy the journey.

Person in history I admire: Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, for his staunch convictions about and advocacy for freedom of conscience and separation of church and state.

A quotation I like: "I'm an atheist, and that's it. I believe there's nothing we can know except that we should be kind to each other and do what we can for each other." (Katharine Hepburn).

"Heresy makes for progress." (Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner). "We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty Humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes." (Gene Roddenberry). "The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here. The way to be happy is to make others so." (Robert Ingersoll).

These are a few of my favorite things: "Star Trek" (I'm a costume-wearing, convention-attending, life-long Trekkie), octopuses (they're such fascinating animals!), music, reading, stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking.

These are not: Cruelty, bigotry, pseudoscience.

My doubts about religion started: I was raised Catholic and attended Catholic school. My first doubts came as a child, when I tried to reconcile a loving



Christine Eldridge works hard to get the word out about atheism and humanism.

God with the wrathful being portrayed in the bible, the problem of evil and the concept of hell.

Ways I promote freethought: With the Humanists of Rhode Island and the Secular Coalition for Rhode Island, I am active in working to keep religion out of government and to raise visibil-

ity for atheists, humanists and other nonbelievers.

I identify openly as an atheist and a humanist and hope to demonstrate by my words and actions that it is indeed possible to live a life that is ethical, happy and fulfilling without belief in a deity.

Meet a Legal Intern

Name: Alexis Palmer. I go by Lexi.

Where and when I was born: Burnsville, Minn., May 1992.

Family: My parents still live in the house that I grew up in back in cold Minnesota. I have a sister, Payton, who is a year younger than I am. She goes to school in a much warmer state, Arizona.

Education: I'm a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (and could not be prouder to be a Badger). I'm completing my legal studies and political science majors.

My religious upbringing was: I grew up as a Lutheran, so working for FFRF has really opened my eyes to an entirely different side of law and different way of helping people.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: Naturally, I was looking for some legal experience, and I became interested in the work that FFRF does.

What I do here: My day-to-day work usually differs depending on the week; generally I assist the staff attorneys with drafting letters of complaint or help research specific issues involving reli-

gion.

What I like best about it: Assisting people who turn to this organization as a source of hope when they feel discriminated against. The first day I truly realized the impact of the work that FFRF does was the day a complainant responded to one of my emails thanking me over and over again for the work that we do and the difference that we make for people like him.

My legal interests are: I don't dream of becoming famous. I just want to become a lawyer so I can help people who can't help themselves and truly see the difference that I am making for them.

These three words sum me up: Charismatic, compassionate and determined.

Things I like: My favorite thing in the world is my cat, Gucci, who lives with my parents. I am definitely a cat person. I also really love trying new and authentic food. Every member of my family is definitely a "foodie," and we love to go out and try all types of restaurants.

Things I smite: Shopping of any sort,



"You are here," Lexi Palmer could be saying (but probably wasn't) at the Louvre in Paris.

unless it's shopping for other people's gifts. I don't make decisions very quickly, so shopping is not an easy task for me. Another thing that I smite is the show "Keeping Up With the Kardashians," for hopefully obvious reasons.

My loftiest goal: To travel to every country in the world and spend at least

a week in each one before I die. I have traveled throughout much of Europe and spent my last spring semester in Spain studying Spanish. The next continent on my list is South America.

I strongly believe that everyone should travel and see the rest of the world!

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A Note to Members

Your address label shows the expiration date of your membership in FFRF, which includes your subscription to Freethought Today and "Private Line." If it says May 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.org/donate

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May 2014

The only freethought newspaper in the United States

'Nothing fails like prayer' award FFRF fights back against SCOTUS prayer ruling

Continued from front page

"Nothing Fails Like Prayer Award."

The award will be given to citizens who succeed in delivering secular "invocations" at government meetings. The individual judged to give the "best" secular invocation will be invited to open FFRF's annual convention with said "invocation," receiving an all-expenses-paid trip to FFRF's 37th annual convention at the Los Angeles Biltmore and an honorarium of \$500.

Linda Stephens, the atheist plaintiff in the *Greece* challenge brought by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, is a longtime member of FFRF, who became a Lifetime Member following the ruling. Both she and co-plaintiff Susan Galloway will be named Freethinkers of the Year and accept the award at FFRF's convention Oct. 24-26. (See more, back page.)

Justice Anthony Kennedy, considered the "swing vote," not only voted in lockstep with his four ultra-conservative Catholic brethren but wrote the *Greece* ruling.

"Once again, the lopsided conservative majority has proudly announced that it is on the wrong side of history," commented FFRF Co-President Dan Barker, quipping about Kennedy: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

The one silver lining in Kennedy's decision was this reference: "The town at no point excluded or denied an op-

portunity to a would-be prayer giver. Its leaders maintained that a minister or layperson of any persuasion, including an atheist, could give the invocation."

"Freethinkers: It's time to crash the party, to ask for equal time to give our own atheist homilies and freethought invocations at local board meetings," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, who, with Anne Nicol Gaylor, cofounded FFRF in the late 1970s to successfully protest prayers at their local governmental meetings.

Already, a member of FFRF in Greece has received permission to give an atheist homily before the city meeting in July.

Government prayer remains one of the most common complaints FFRF receives from its members and members of the public.

Gaylor noted that despite the approval of sectarian governmental prayer by five Supreme Court justices, government bodies are not required to open with prayer. "We'd like to see secular citizens flood government meetings with secular invocations that illustrate why government prayers are unnecessary, ineffective, divisive, embarrassing and exclusionary of the 20-30 percent of the U.S. population today that identifies as nonreligious, as well as of other non-Christians," Gaylor said.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, who suggested the award, notes that



many of our nation's most influential founders opposed governmental exercises of religion, including revolutionary Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, who refused in his two terms to issue days of prayer, and James Madison, fourth president and primary architect of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Secular invocations for the contest could be sincere and eloquent, such as state Rep. Juan Mendez's invocation before the Arizona House last year, for which he won FFRF's Emperor Has No Clothes Award. You may wish to "invoke" secular "founding fathers," your own life philosophy or take a more facetious route (think Flying Spaghetti Monster). The goal is to represent the nonreligious point of view and show that government bodies have no need of a prayer to imagined gods, or religion or superstition, to govern. The answers won't come from above and government needs to be guided by reason.

"Government officials need to get off their knees and get to work," said Barker, adding, "Be a Paine in the government's Mass."

FFRF plans to make the contest an annual event until the *Greece* decision is overturned. All eligible secular invocators will receive a certificate suitable for framing, and FFRF will post the invocation on its website.

Read full contest rules at: ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer-award-contest

For "inspiration," download a free copy of Barker's songs "Get Off Your Knees and Get to Work" (from FFRF CD, "Adrift on a Star") and "Nothing Fails Like Prayer" (from FFRF CD, "Beware of Dogma") at FFRF's website (select CD, then scroll play list to find free downloads): ffrf.org/shop/music/.

Read various early May FFRF blogs about the ruling, at ffrf.org/news/blog/.

Register for 25th annual Lake Hypatia July 4 confab

Join Pat Cleveland, director of the Alabama Freethought Society, and FFRF's Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor for the 25th annual "Glorious Fourth" celebration put on by the chapter July 3-5 at Lake Hypatia, Ala. (near Talladega). Events begin at 10 a.m. Thursday, July 3, and end after

brunch Saturday, July 5.

There are four inexpensive group meals (lunches and dinners) served on the cool lakeside pavilion (plus a free lunch hosted by members on July 3). Your meal order must be received no later than June 25. No meals may be ordered at the door.

Events take place in FFRF's air-conditioned southern Freethought Hall. Speakers include Jerry DeWitt, former Pentecostal minister and author of "Hope After Faith," and Janet Heimlich, award-winning journalist and author of *Breaking Their Will: Shedding Light on Religious Child Maltreatment*. A panel of former religionists will be moderated by chapter activist Anna Aldrich. Michael Scott, director of the new Metro Atlanta chapter, will speak.



Jerry DeWitt

Other events include Freethought Jeopardy, hosted by Martin and Cheryl Lewison, the "atheists vs. agnostics" volleyball match and "debaptisms" in Lake Hypatia, abutting Talladega National Forest.

See your spring Private Line for details, or go to ffrf.org/outreach/lake-hypatia for full details, maps, lodgings, camping opportunities, schedule, costs and online registration. Credit cards are accepted 9-5 Central weekdays via FFRF office at (608)256-8900.

Solid court victory ends prayer in Pismo Beach

Continued from front page

Foursquare Gospel, which emphasizes "speaking in tongues."

Jones delivered 112 of the 126 prayers scheduled by the council between Jan. 1, 2008, and Oct. 15, 2013. All but one of the 126 prayers was addressed to the Christian god.

FFRF warmly thanks local plaintiff Sari Dworkin, litigation attorney Pamela Koslyn and FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, who built the solid case. Seidel transcribed many of the prayers and joked that such work was "cruel and inhumane" for an atheist attorney. Atheists United of San Luis Obispo and its members helped initiate the lawsuit.

FFRF will receive \$27,000 for Seidel's services and plans to recycle the fees to go after other California governmental prayer.

Include FFRF In Your Estate Planning

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

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

FFRF
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*Freedom Depends
on Freethinkers*



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

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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

Sermons in Stones

Yesterday I saw them all:

a pigeon limping here, pecking there,
a maple tree dropping precious leaves,
a squirrel risking one hop at a time,
ivy clinging to a crumbling wall.

*The storm blew in at noon and raged for hours,
howling till after dark . . .*

This morning in the sunshine
They're back again: the pigeon,
The balding maple, the squirrel, the ivy,
all holding on, holding on,
not feeling sorry
for themselves.

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Freethought Today is honored to publish this new poem.

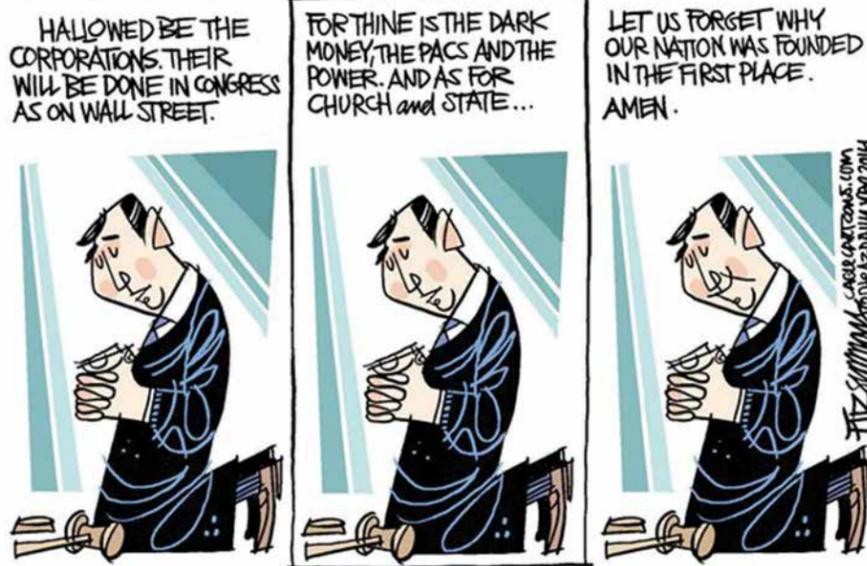


Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include *Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible* (2012), *Darwin's Ark* (new 2009 edition) and *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie* (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used *Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, and the *Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population*.

His poetry and fiction have won many awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Yale Review*.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both "Afterlife" Members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Phil's books: ffrf.org/shop.

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS PRAYER BEFORE GOVERNMENT MEETINGS



Overheard

The tendency to promote the majority faith is strong, and the court's decision could be taken by some as an invitation to do only the minimum to respect other beliefs. And that's too bad, because such practices honor neither the Constitution nor the Golden Rule.

USA Today editorial board, disagreeing with the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* that allows sectarian prayer

USA Today, 5-5-14

The East [High School] students I talked to couldn't be distracted from homework any longer, and this "non-controversy" did not interest them. But one of my anonymous sources had this to offer: "It's not about patriotism; it's about religion."

Reporter Catherine Capellaro on two students who allegedly substituted "peace" for "God" while saying the Pledge of Allegiance over the intercom in Madison, Wis.

Isthmus, 5-2-14

For many years the country had quieted down after the initial shock of the ruling . . . and people agreed [separation of church and state] was a good thing and went on with their lives. Somehow, with the rise of the Religious Right and evangelical Christians, the issue has bubbled back to the surface in a real way — a threatening way, in my opinion.

Ellery Schempp, plaintiff in *Abington Township v. Schempp*, in which the Supreme Court in 1963 banned prayers and bible reading in public schools

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, 4-7-14

For a lot of people, religion is the little lie that people believe so they can believe the big lie of justice, mercy and fairness.

Chris Kluwe, agnostic and former Minnesota Vikings punter, who was basically forced out of pro football for supporting marriage equality

Salt Lake Tribune, 4-19-14

Rather than wrestling with ways to make the invocations meet the letter of the law, we strongly urge the council to discontinue the spoken invocations.

Newspaper editorial, "Dropping public prayer was right call," on settlement of a lawsuit in FFRF's favor against the city council in Pismo Beach, Calif.

San Luis Obispo Tribune, 4-18-14

Readers of The Blade come from many

faiths and no faith. Atheism is one element in religious orientation, and it shouldn't be ignored just because atheists say there is no God.

TK Barger, religion editor, defending a news feature on Camp Quest, "Readers criticize religion page story on atheist camp"

Toledo Blade, 3-30-14

Some of us feel some of these televangelists have taken advantage of the fact that churches have little regulation by government and few reporting requirements.

Paul Streckfus, tax attorney and editor of the Exempt Organization Tax Journal, "Can a Television Network Be a Church? The IRS Says Yes"

National Public Radio, 4-1-14

This is an attempt to reclaim a word [atheist] that has been turned negative.

Julia Bruce, president, Harvard College Humanists, Agnostics and Atheists, on "Atheist Coming Out Week"

Harvard Crimson, 4-2-14

The simple fact of the matter is that prayer belongs in churches and in homes. It does not belong in government meetings. Perhaps the Christians will show a little charity to those of us who don't agree with their views and separate their beliefs from the government business at hand.

Roy Birk, Glen Burnie, Md., letter to the editor, "An atheist's view of public prayer"

Baltimore Sun, 4-13-14

I just had to keep my mouth shut about being an atheist at those meetings. I felt dumped on when I mentioned it. Like I wasn't really a member of their club.

George S., participant in one of two secular 12-step programs delisted by Alcoholics Anonymous for being God-free in Vancouver, B.C.

Vancouver Sun, 4-3-14

I know his beliefs. When he ran one of his commercials he said, "I need your prayers" and I asked, "When did you get religious?" He said, "When I needed votes." He broke out the religious card, and he's about the most nonreligious person I know.

Heath Peacock, on U.S. Rep. Vance McAllister, R-La., who was caught on tape passionately kissing Peacock's wife, a staffer for McAllister, who is married with five children

CNN, 4-8-14



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

YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

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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**

In Daley Plaza — Chicago’s public square

FFRF, Chicago chapter counter Catholic Easter display



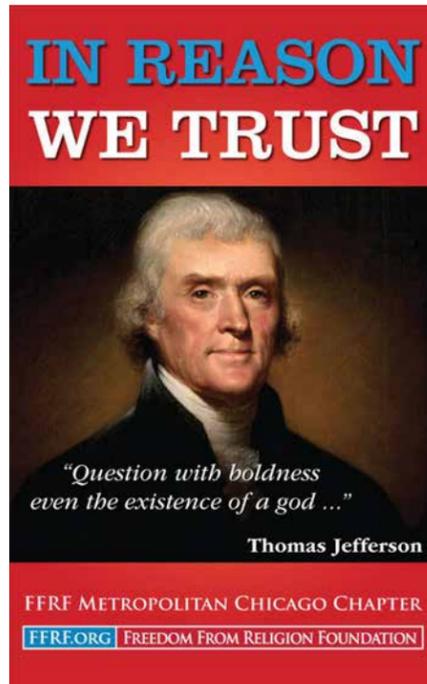
FFRF staff and Chicago chapter members gather in front of the educational display

FFRF placed a patriotic red-white-and-blue secular display to counter an enormous Catholic Easter display at Daley Plaza in downtown Chicago in April.

Two colorful 8-foot banners on a 12-foot structure promoting the secular views of founding fathers were placed

with the help of the FFRF Metropolitan Chicago chapter and three FFRF staff attorneys — Patrick Elliott, Andrew Seidel and Sam Grover. The trio drove to Chicago from Madison, Wis., to install the display with chapter help on a wooden structure they built for the back-to-back banners.

One banner reads: “In Reason We Trust” and pictured Thomas Jefferson,

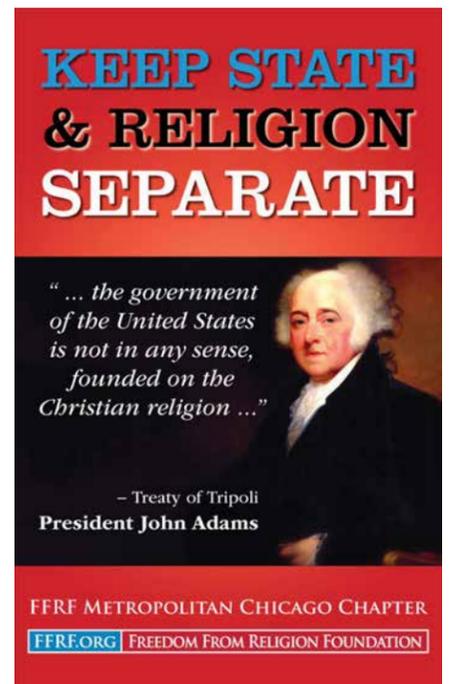


displaying his famous advice to a nephew, “Question with boldness even the existence of a god.” The other side proclaimed, “Keep State & Religion Separate,” and pictured President John Adams, who signed the Treaty of Tripoli, which assured “. . . the government of the United States is not in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”

The display countered religious displays and evangelism in Daley Plaza by the Catholic Thomas More Society, which has evangelized in the plaza every Easter for several years. The group’s aim, through its “Divine Mercy Project,” is to seek the “conversion of Chicago, America and the Whole World.”

Rather than place such displays on church grounds, the society explicitly seeks to take over public property for its purposes, claiming that at Daley Plaza it encounters “militants, feminists, Satanists, radical Muslims, just about everybody.”

The society placed a 10-foot-tall painting of Jesus that it claims was miraculously inspired, with the statement “Jesus, I trust in you,” as well as a 14-foot cross. In past years, supporters have also held 24-hour prayer vigils, distributed thousands of prayer cards



and hosted anti-abortion rallies in front of the Jesus painting.

FFRF additionally had two smaller posters affixed to each side of its display, explaining its purpose, written by Tom Cara, Chicago chapter director: “Not looking to convert? Neither are we,” protesting use of government property to endorse the beliefs of a specific religious group. Another poster questioned the “divine mercy” of the bible, upon which Catholicism is predicated.

FFRF and its Chicago-area chapter in December placed an 8-foot lighted “A” (for atheism and agnosticism) and banner celebrating the “birth of the Bill of Rights” to counter a huge nativity display erected annually for decades.

FFRF thanks Patrick Elliott, who initiated the project, as well as Andrew Seidel and Sam Grover for building the display with Patrick, and Tom Cara and other chapter volunteers for their help in erecting, dismantling and storing the newsmaking displays.



Tom Cara shows Daley Plaza security the permit for the secular display

Stop the press! Broadcast news!



The new 30-second TV spot for FFRF recorded by Ron Reagan made a splash, airing May 22 on both Jon Stewart’s “The Daily Show” and “The Colbert Report” on Comedy Central. If you missed the shows, view it here:

Your tax-deductible donation (to ffrf.org/donate) will help us take this ad to other networks soon!

Religion entrenched in Clemson football

The Freedom From Religion Foundation's complaint to Clemson University over serious entanglements between its football program and religion created a national firestorm in April. FFRF's administrative staff took abusive calls tying up the lines for a week and half after the complaint broke on wire stories, sports news sites and Fox TV.

"Christian worship seems interwoven into Clemson's football program," wrote Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott in his letter to the general counsel of Clemson University, a public university in Clemson, S.C.

Elliott warned of a "a culture of religious coercion within the university's football program," after reviewing evidence gleaned from his open records request, showing:

- In 2011, coach William "Dabo" Swinney personally invited James Trapp to become "team chaplain" for the Tigers. This is in violation of the Constitution and even Clemson's own "misguided and legally dubious 'Guidelines For Athletic Team Chaplains.'"
- Trapp was regularly given access to the entire team to conduct bible study between drills.
- The chaplain has an office at the



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor spoke April 18 about FFRF's secular "Easter" display in Daley Plaza in Chicago, as well as FFRF's complaint about entangling football and religion at Clemson University, on "Fox & Friends" on the Fox News Channel. She's pictured with anchor Ainsley Earhardt and Virginia Galloway of the Faith and Freedom Coalition. On the same day, FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott defended FFRF's Clemson University complaint on Fox's "The Real Story with Gretchen Carlson." To watch videos while links remain live, visit ffrf.org/news/media and scroll to appropriate video links for April 18.

Jervey Athletic Center, displays bible quotes on a whiteboard and has organized and led sessions on "being baptized" in the athletic building.

- Swinney confirmed that the entire team would attend a Fellowship of Christian Athletes breakfast Dec. 31, 2011, wherein three players would "testify."

- Three privately funded buses (116-seat total capacity) were used to take the team and coaches to Valley Brook Baptist Church on Aug. 7, 2011,

and on other occasions for worship on "Church Day."

- Swinney schedules team devotionals. Records indicate that between March 2012 and April 2013, approximately 87 devotionals were organized by Trapp, approved by Swinney and led by coaching staff.

"Mr. Trapp, as a paid employee of a state university, may not proselytize or promote religion and may not use his university office to do so," Elliott wrote. Trapp also serves as a Fellowship

of Christian Athletes representative and as a football recruiting assistant. A website lists him as campus director of ministry/life coach, and he refers to himself as a minister.

"Mr. Trapp's legal duties and obligations as a state employee prohibit him from using state resources (i.e., his office in the Jervey Athletic Center) and his official position as a recruiting assistant to proselytize."

FFRF wants the school to direct Swinney and Trapp to immediately stop team prayers, sermons, bible studies and "church days" for players and train staff about their First Amendment obligations and monitor compliance.

In 2012, FFRF sent a letter to Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., alerting officials to similar violations in its football program. The university agreed that the program's religious entanglement was coercive and had no legitimate place in the athletic program.

A January 2014 Sports Illustrated story said Swinney had recently signed an eight-year contract for \$27.15 million.

While denying wrongdoing, the university has responded that it is investigating the allegations.

FFRF blasts Hobby Lobby bible curriculum

FFRF is strongly criticizing Hobby Lobby's public school bible course approved April 14 by Mustang Public Schools in Mustang, Okla.

FFRF has been eyeing the bible course since November, when Hobby Lobby's billionaire owner Steve Green personally pitched it to the school board. The board voted 4-0 with one absence to approve the curriculum entitled "The Book, the Bible's History, Narrative and Impact of the World's Best-selling Book" as an elective course.

Board member Jeff Landrith abstained, saying "I think the public should be able to look at this before we vote on it."

"I am amazed that any school district would think this is appropriate for public schools," said FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, who got a sneak preview of the proposed text in April. "This just confirms the suspicions we had about the class. Hobby Lobby and the Greens are trying to convert children to their particular brand of Christianity. There is nothing scholarly, fair or balanced about the curriculum."

In its April 24 letter to the school district, FFRF noted that the "the draft materials MPS intends to use unequivocally fail to meet the legal standards required by our Constitution. The materials show a clear Christian bias, treat the bible as historically accurate and true in all respects and make theological claims."

Alarming entries include asking and answering such questions as, "What is God like?" The Hobby Lobby text lists

only positive attributes ("Faithful and good," "gracious and compassionate," "orderly and disciplined," "full of love") or theologically Christian attributions, such as "ever-present help in times of trouble" and "righteous judge."

The biblical deity's negative aspects go unmentioned, such as the injunction in Exodus 20:5, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

Ironically, the textbook criticizes the "historical half-truths" of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, a work of fiction, yet fails to apply that same critical lens to the bible. The text states: "[W]e can conclude that the Bible, especially when viewed alongside other historical information, is a reliable historical source." The text makes the absurd, long-reputed claim that the writer of Genesis is "thought to be Moses."

Hobby Lobby, a national chain store, is challenging the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive mandate, with a Supreme Court decision imminent. Green opposes the idea of his women employees using the IUD and birth control pill, and says his corporation's "religious freedom" is offended if workers have access to the contraceptive of their choice.

FFRF has combated Hobby Lobby's annual July 4 advertising blitz, in which the chain runs hundreds of full-page "In God We Trust" newspaper ads promoting religion in government.



www.PopeToGreenBay.com

City of Green Bay staffers solicit pope on city time

City documents received by FFRF through an open records request show that Mayor Jim Schmitt and his staff have planned and coordinated a campaign on city time to bring the pope to Green Bay, Wis.

FFRF objected in March to Schmitt's invitation in his official capacity as mayor sent on city letterhead to Pope Francis to "make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help." Emails reveal the mayor and his chief of staff, Andy Rosendahl, coordinated the initiative and organized weekly "Pope to Green Bay Committee" meetings throughout the workday.

Emails by city staff show they planned and scheduled meetings (dubbed "the Pope Mobile Commit-

tee" by the mayor), reviewed wording on the popetogreenbay.com website and created meeting agendas.

City Policy Chapter 24.4 requires "a distinction between sharing personal and official City views" and disclaimers for personal views and opinions — that were not employed by the mayor or his staff.

"Just as paid staff time may not be used for campaign activity, it's equally inappropriate and unseemly to promote Catholicism and this religious pilgrimage on city time," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

FFRF says the mayor and city staff must stop working on the papal visit during city time while using city property and follow its disclaimer policy.

Overheard

I want us to be a community that really gives back. I don't want it to be just a big Sunday party, I also want it to be something outside of that.

Helen Stringer, atheist executive director of Kansas City Oasis, a freethought group that features live music and discussions every Sunday
Religion News Service, 4-11-14

The human wreckage he leaves behind him gets to file out of court. Where's their rehabilitation program?

Australian Judge Frank Gucciardo, on the victims of serial predator priest Frank Klep who walked out of Klep's presentencing after he was convicted of molesting 15 schoolboys from 1973-84
Sydney Morning Herald, 4-3-14

On the issue of religious symbols on public property, Gaylord Dean Smith of Wisconsin wrote: "I strongly believe that religious freedom should be protected under the First Amendment, but I don't think that includes allowing religious symbols on government property. Violation of the separation of church and state is a slippery slope. The Mount Soledad cross has been a bone of contention for many years and

constitutional litigation often takes many years. I hope that the cross is removed (not blown up) and moved to welcoming private property, where it belongs."

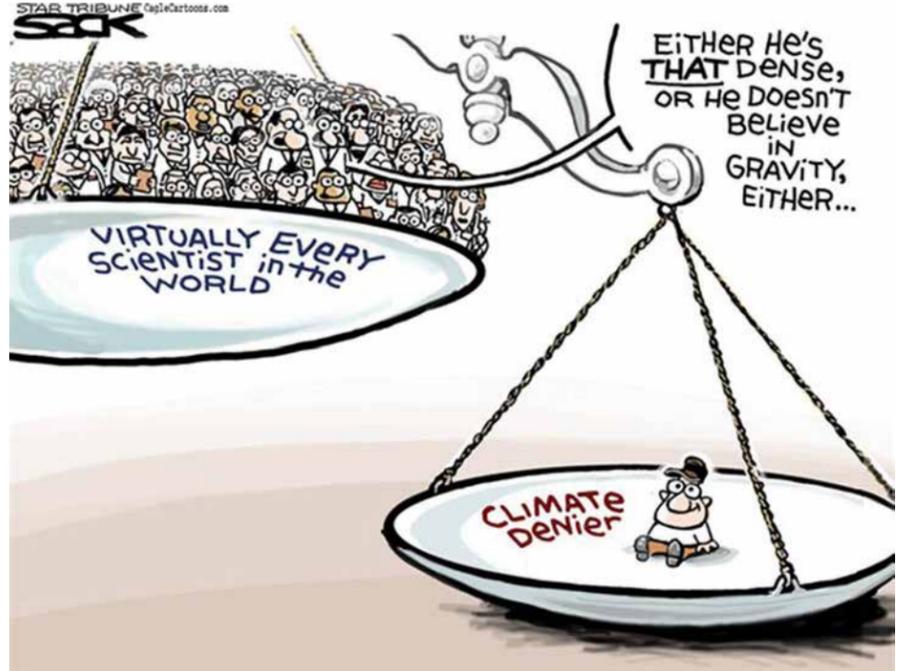
Reader comment on "Crosses Spark a Constitutional Fight"
Wall Street Journal, 4-15-14

When the song ends, the congregation sits. [Pastor Mike] Will prays, then begins his children's sermon, even though not one of the dozen in church this particular Sunday is younger than 50. Will, 53, is almost always the youngest in the room. "That doesn't mean that the children aren't here," he tells them. "They're just not easy to see. We all have a child inside of us."

News story, "Columbia pastor balances two Sturgeon churches with declining memberships"
Columbia Missourian, 4-18-14

What happens when a student asks, "Wait, how is salvation supposed to work? God came to Earth to sacrifice himself — to himself — to save humanity from being punished — by himself?" Pity the teachers stuck in this impossible spot.

Scott Rhode, Alaska radio news an-



chor/reporter, "Teaching the Bible: Careful What You Pray For"
650keni.com, 4-24-14

In a historic match-up of papacies past and present, Pope Francis and emeritus Pope Benedict XVI will honor Popes John XXIII and John Paul II in the first-ever canonization of two popes.

Associated Press news story
Time.com, 4-26-14

A young man has been fatally crushed after a statue erected in honor of Pope John Paul II in northern Italy fell on top of him. Marco Gusmini, 21, died instantly and a second man was taken to hospital after the 100-foot sculpture fell on top of him.

News story, "Pope statue collapse called bad omen"
Irish Times, 4-25-14

FFRF Flashback

Peggy Porter Koenig, friend of FFRF, writes: "While I was growing up, this statue, which we referred to as 'Jesus on the Ball,' was smack dab in the middle of a public park [in Marshfield, Wis.]. Then FFRF got him his own private park. Thank goodness for the Freedom From Religion Foundation."

FFRF and the late Clarence Reinders of Marshfield sued in 1998 over the display with its "Christ Guide Us On Our Way" wording and prevailed nearly three years later when a federal appeals court ordered U.S. District Judge John Shabaz to oversee erection of a wall or fence with a prominent disclaimer in the park.

Shabaz initially dismissed FFRF's suit after the city sold a parcel in the park to a group formed to save the statue. The appeals court ruled Feb. 4, 2000, that the sale didn't remedy the constitutional violation.

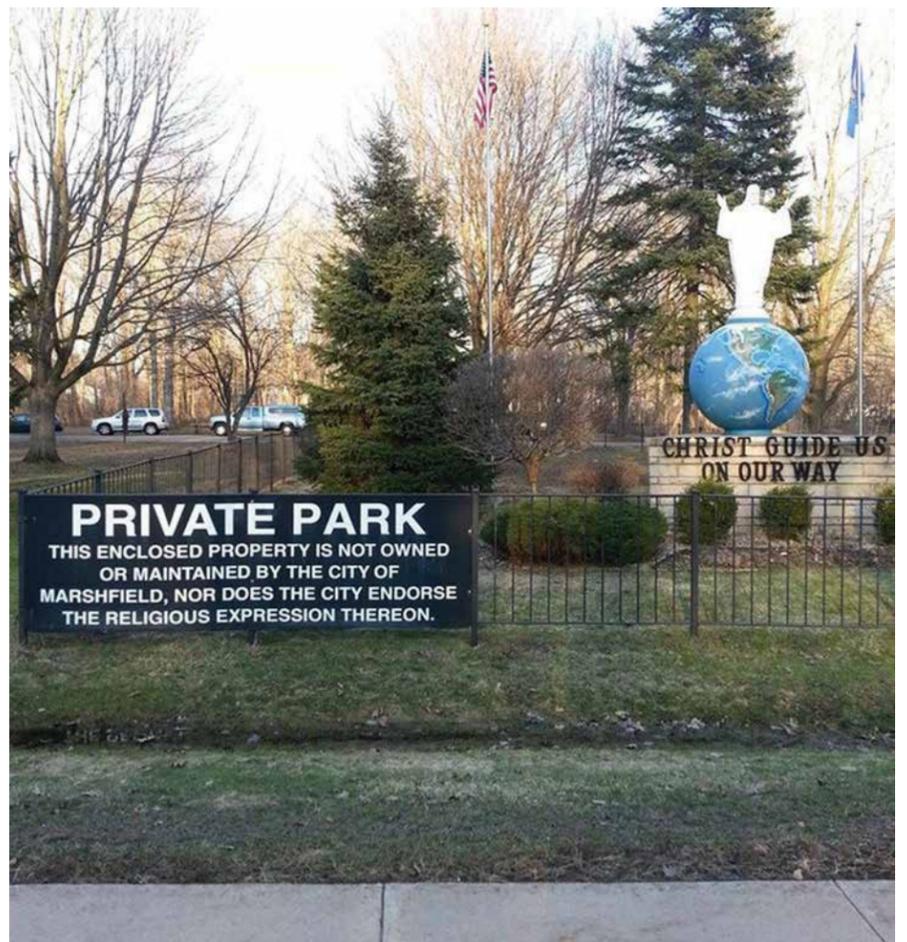
The Catholic Knights of Columbus, a men's group renowned for try-

ing to turn America into a theocracy, had donated the statue to the city in 1959. Losing the suit cost the city about \$60,000 in legal fees and fencing and sign costs.

Reinders, an FFRF Life Member who died in 2012, wrote at the time that leaving "the religious idol" in the park and fencing it off was the best outcome, though he was initially disappointed it was allowed to stay. "Whenever anyone looks at the idol in its newly imprisoned setting, they will see the fruits of our labors in defense of the First Amendment. With the fence and disclaimer signs, we have left our freethought mark of state/church separation for posterity."

Go to ffrf.org/legal for more on FFRF's litigation and to ffrf.org/legal/other-legal-successes for other legal victories.

FFRF recently received a \$17,000 bequest for its legal work from the Reinders' estate. Clarence lives!



It's pretty clear that Marshfield Jesus has a lot on the ball. (Photo: Peggy Porter Koenig)



Amazing, Grace

"This church is my local polling place," says Ohio member Nancy Dollard. "I find their sign very ironic."

Correction

An April news brief on a Salvation Army settlement in New York with former employees who alleged they were religiously pressured wrongly called the case *Lowe v. Salvation Army*. It is Lown, not Lowe. (Lead plaintiff Anne Lown is an FFRF member.)

Recruit a member:

Send \$2 with the name and address of each person you wish to receive a sample copy of Freethought Today to:

FFRF, P.O. Box 750, Madison WI 53701

Freedom depends upon freethinkers

(Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)

FFRF legal victories

Legal staffers successfully resolve multiple violations

Proselytizing coach ends up resigning

FFRF has halted a pious coach's practice of proselytizing students in Spokane, Wash. According to the complainant, Rogers High School head football coach Matt Miethé and other coaches had not only been baptizing players at Pentecostal churches, but the assistant coach was leading the team in prayers during "chapel time" and before games.

The coaches reportedly also pressured players to attend church. According to news reports, Miethé "offered players three opportunities to gather for church and encouraged them to attend."

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a complaint letter to the school district Dec. 17: "Even if Miethé is simply suggesting [church] attendance, his position as head coach in charge of playing time impregnates any suggestion with force. Playing time leads to scholarships and college; it should be a question of merit only, not religion. No student should be deprived of the opportunity of playing football because they, as a matter of personal conscience, feel unable to participate in a religious ritual or attend church."

On March 17, the district responded: "Rogers High School principal Lori Wyborney spoke with the football coach and confirmed activities that she had not been aware of."

"Ms. Wyborney took immediate action to ensure that the activities described ceased. She reminds her coaching and athletics staff as well as her administrative staff of the need to separate the role of school and religion. Additionally, and for unrelated reasons, Coach Matt Miethé resigned his position as head coach for Rogers High School."

Rampant religiosity out at Arizona elementary

Oakwood Elementary School in Peoria, Ariz., will no longer allow religious icons, bibles and proselytizing "gifts." This is not the first violation from the Peoria School District that FFRF has acted on.

FFRF was informed that a kindergarten teacher has been pressuring families to attend a specific church and had decorated her classroom with religious iconography, bible verses, crosses and Christ Church of the Valley propaganda such as "I love Jesus" clothing and mugs. She had also distributed inappropriate religious gifts to students, including bookmarks featuring the holy sites of Christianity.

A parent alerted FFRF about another violation: a Thanksgiving program last year which included a call and response in which teachers sang questions and kindergartners responded. At the teacher's prompting, the student "turkeys" would gobble, the Native Americans would say "big and brave" and the preachers would say "praise the Lord."

The student "preachers" wore school-owned costumes with Latin crosses on them. According to a complainant, this program has been per-

formed for at least 15 years.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a Dec. 5 letter of complaint to the district, which acknowledged in an April reply that the complaint's allegations were accurate. The district assured FFRF that the religious icons and bibles were removed and that religious conversations and activities have been eliminated from the classroom. "The Thanksgiving performance is being revisited for content, but rest assured that the crosses will be removed and the choral response will be reworded."

Church graduations will go secular

FFRF complaint letters led two Ohio school districts to drop churches as high school graduation venues.

Canton Local School District in Canton will no longer hold church graduations starting in 2015. Canton South High School plans to hold this year's ceremony May 27 at Canton Baptist Temple.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter to the district Feb. 17 to explain that it's illegal to force graduates, families and friends to enter a church that might espouse an ideology or belief to which they might not adhere.

The superintendent responded April 8, "While it is not possible for the district to find an alternate location for graduation [this year], I have spoken to the board and they have agreed to find a secular site for the 2015 graduating class."

Northwest High School in Canal Fulton, part of Northwest Local Schools, made a similar response April 8 to a Feb. 17 letter from Markert about its graduation May 24 at Akron Baptist Temple.

'Religious value' claim out of handbook

Poplarville School District in Poplarville, Miss., will no longer use religious rhetoric in its student handbooks. FFRF received a complaint that the "Strategic Plan" section of the 2013-14 handbook states that one of the district's beliefs is "[a] relationship with God is critical to a meaningful life."

The statement of belief has reportedly appeared in the handbook for many years.

Staff Attorney Elizabeth Cavell sent a letter to the superintendent Feb. 13: "The value statement in the student handbook sends the message that the district not only prefers religion over nonreligion, but the Christian god over all deities."

The district responded May 6 that "the Board of Trustees voted to remove the above-referenced language from the strategic plan and handbook beginning with the upcoming school year."

Praying Ohio coach 'crossed the line'

A high school in Middletown, Ohio, will no longer let coaches lead athletes



Within an hour of receiving a letter of complaint April 16 from FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert, the public utility in Sun Prairie, Wis., removed the "crown of thorns" imagery from its website. FFRF will pursue its complaint that the utility illegally closed on Good Friday in violation of a federal court ruling won by FFRF in 1996. The ruling overturned a law declaring Good Friday a state holiday.

in prayers. According to a local complainant, the varsity football coach provided food for players after practice, then told them to bow their heads before leading them in prayer.

The coach also is alleged to have encouraged players to attend his church and be "saved," invited them to church events during football practice and provided rides.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert's letter to the superintendent explained the multiple reasons why such proselytizing is illegal in a public school.

On April 25, the district responded: "[The principal and athletic director] expressly informed [the coach] that his actions had crossed the line and were impermissible. He was expressly informed that he was required to respect others' religious beliefs, that his conduct could be viewed as a government's endorsement of religion, and that he was not permitted to engage in any of the conduct listed in your letter (or similar conduct, for that matter)."

School: Teacher owes student an apology

Atlanta High School in Atlanta, Texas, will no longer allow episodes from the series "The Bible" to be played during class. A concerned student reported that an economics teacher aired Episode 6 of the series, which depicted the "virgin" birth of Jesus, his baptism by John the Baptist and the angel Gabriel telling Mary she's pregnant with "the Son of God."

When the student told the teacher that it was inappropriate to show "The Bible" in economics class, the teacher called the show "factual." After confronting the teacher a second time, the student was told he could go to another classroom during future showings. As a result, the student missed a week's worth of economics classes.

In FFRF's letter to the superintendent, Staff Attorney Sam Grover strongly objected to such illegal and egregious behavior.

On April 22, Superintendent Roger Hailey responded that "[The teacher]

has agreed to apologize to your complainant and has been instructed to align his instruction with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Standards established by the Texas Legislature for the subjects he teaches."

Wrestling team drops religious endorsements

The Parkersburg South High School wrestling team in Parkersburg, W. Va., will no longer display the motto "Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." The motto was adopted at least 10 years ago and has appeared on the team's website, on team T-shirts and in the high school gym.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter April 11 to Wood County Schools to explain the constitutional violations. He advised the school to end all endorsement of Christian messages.

In response to the complaint, the bible verse that was posted inside the gym was painted over and the motto was taken off the website.

Coach-led prayer ended in Georgia

A coach at Thomas County Central High School in Thomasville, Ga., will no longer lead a football team in prayer before practice. The coach's involvement was confirmed by a news story in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, which included a photo of the coach praying with the team with heads dutifully bowed.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent the district a complaint letter Aug. 5.

On April 19, the school superintendent responded: "I have carefully considered your concern and have reviewed the team's practices regarding prayer. I plan to address your concern by taking steps to end any coach-led prayer that may be occurring during football practices or games, while ensuring that religious students and staff may exercise their First Amendment rights to speak, associate and participate in religious activities."

Tragedy doesn't excuse trampling Constitution

E.C. Reems School of Technology and Arts in Oakland, Calif., has concluded an investigation into a religious assembly and agrees with FFRF that it was "inappropriate."

A complainant contacted FFRF about the assembly, which included kindergartners as young as 4. It was intended to honor Jahi McMath, a 13-year-old schoolmate declared brain-dead after surgical complications in December 2013. She remains on a ventilator.

At the assembly, about 250 students were given purple T-shirts emblazoned with "#TeamJahi" and "Keep Calm and Pray On."

According to a local news report, "The academy's chief operating officer Lisa Blair said she has tried to honor Jahi's family's wishes by telling students that their classmate may still be alive, even though doctors say she is legally and clinically dead."

Blair is also on record as saying, "Most kids are Christian here, and they believe that if you continue praying there's always a possibility. The students understand the debate. They're just choosing spirituality over science."

In a letter to the school board, Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel said, "What happened to Jahi is a terrible tragedy and all hearts go out to her suffering relatives and friends. No child's life should be cut short before it can truly

begin. But such tragedies are not an excuse to violate the Constitution. Public school employees cannot tell students that, if only they pray hard enough to a particular god, their classmate will come back to life. Public school employees cannot force their personal religious beliefs on students."

On March 14, the district responded that "the statements made by Ms. Blair were inappropriate and the decision by administration to distribute shirts to the school was inappropriate." Administrators "will receive training regarding requirements for compliance regarding religion in public schools."

School scratches Mormon museum trip

When Westvale Elementary School, West Jordan, Utah, sent permission slips home April 24 for a fourth-grade field trip to the Church History Museum, which is run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, some parents were immediately wary. West Jordan is just south of Salt Lake City, headquarters for the LDS Church.

The slip told parents the trip would "supplement regular curriculum programs and [would] take place during the regular school day." FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, on behalf of several district parents, sent a letter May 1 to Superintendent Patrice Johnson.

Seidel pointed out that the museum

It really can pay to complain

This is a letter to FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel that the local complainant agreed to share (with identifying information removed to preserve anonymity) after FFRF legal staff successfully resolved several state/church violations. A teacher was disciplined and the school adopted a policy requiring staff to sign an acknowledgment that they must remain neutral toward religion at work.

FFRF really relies on its members and supportive nonmembers to keep us in the loop about potential violations.

Dear Mr. Seidel:

You can't imagine how *excited* and *relieved* I am to read your email! I don't think I can truly express it in words, but I'm going to try.

Being one ordinary parent at a small school in a conservative state, I didn't have much hope initially that your group would take on our cause. To my knowledge, this is the very first time in [this school's] history that a staff member has been disciplined for foisting religious beliefs on students. You are correct that victory is the only word that fits!

This victory is one that I hope will send a message loud and clear — to those on staff and in our parent community who feel they have tacit permission to violate the rights of others because they suffer no consequences for doing so — that [the school] will not tolerate the violation of the law and the rights of students.

I am happy to report that I attended a school music program on Tuesday night held in [the auditorium now owned by a church], and I saw that it was prepared in the manner it should have been prepared all along. All religious images were covered, all religious signs and literature were out of sight, and for the

first time I felt that the venue was a neutral space that showed respect for all parents and students in attendance. This is *huge!*

The progress shown in that area, and the fact that [the teacher] will be held accountable and disciplined for his actions, speaks volumes to parents who have become discouraged and simply numb to the prevailing culture at [the school]. Our school community has lost many families who have given up on seeing any change or who were ultimately worn down from a continual battle that got them nowhere ([my friend and her] family among them).

I hope what you have accomplished on our behalf will stop other good families from walking out the door. When issues are addressed swiftly and decisively, parents can feel confident that their concerns will be heard and the rights of their children respected.

This whole issue forced me to become more outspoken and more involved than I ever planned or wanted to be at my kids' school. It forced me to fight against the urge to be a "pleaser" and avoid making waves. It illustrated to me that avoiding conflict at the expense of doing the right thing is not a strategy I can accept.

I have long been resigned to "going down swinging" for this cause. You can't imagine how good it feels to experience a win for a change. Although the words are inadequate, on behalf of many other parents who shared my concern, we give you our most sincere thanks. You are awesome!

**Best regards,
[Satisfied complainant]**



Photo: Lauryn Seering

Legal hands that help are so much better than lips that pray. FFRF's current valuable crop of legal interns, pictured at the Wisconsin Capitol, includes (back, left) Aaron Loudenslager, Maddy Ziegler, (front) Olivia Mote and Lexi Palmer. Pictured below is Jarvis Idowu.

"presents an unscholarly, uncritical, nonobjective view of the LDS Church" and noted that the New York Times has described the museum as "created by believers, for believers."

One section of the museum section called "Learn Truths" depicts the "stories of ancient prophets found in the Book of Mormon." Another named "The Gospel Blesses My Life" displays artwork from children who share "how knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ blesses their lives."

After taking a personal tour, Gregory Clark, a University of Utah associate professor of bioengineering, described how one museum docent "claimed that black skin was a curse from God." Clark writes that the museum "is replete with religion, not history. It's the Utah equivalent of Ken Ham's Creation Museum."

In response to mounting evidence that the museum was much less about Utah history and more about prophecy and church doctrine, Kayleen Whitelock, a member of the Jordan School District Board of Education, said on May 6 that "students will no longer be attending this field trip."

Seidel commented, "We hope that the Board of Education uses this opportunity to pick a more appropriate, educational location for a field trip. No one needs to play the martyr here."

He added, "The Board of Education should have realized that this was an inappropriate location for a field trip from the beginning. If any Westvale fourth graders are disappointed, that's on the board."

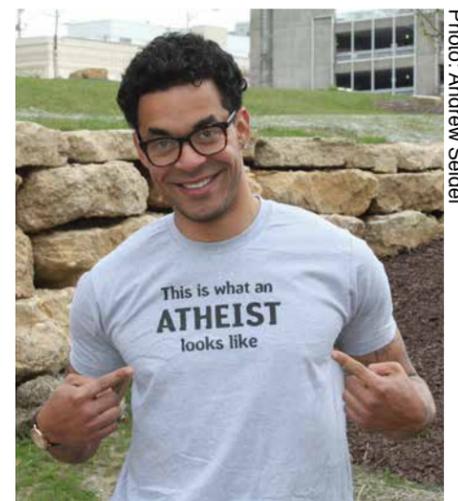


Photo: Andrew Seidel

Principal's 'witnessing' to students banned

An administrator at Andalusia Middle School in Andalusia, Ala., will no longer be allowed to "witness" to students.

FFRF received a complaint that the assistant principal regularly proselytized students in his office and used social networking to advertise the message that the school allows sectarian prayer before sporting events.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a March 4 letter to Superintendent Ted Watson to detail the constitutional violations.

Watson responded on March 24: "[T]hank you for making us aware of this situation," and added, "[Your letter] has facilitated a review of the law as it pertains to the Establishment Clause within our school system. We strive to teach our students to be law-abiding citizens and it starts with the example we as adults set."

FFRF welcomes new 'After-Lifer,' 38 Lifetime Members

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is grateful to announce that its newest After-Life Member is fittingly Wayne Hensler, who generously sponsors an annual FFRF billboard that says "Enjoy Life Now: There Is No After-life."

FFRF is also delighted to welcome as new Lifetime Members:

Chris Bayley, John and Mary Boenke, Hypatia "Sweetie" Boyko (beloved companion of Gene Boyko, already a "Lifer" — see Gene's touching letter, page 21), Scott Chellberg, Philip Colburn, Dan Courtney, Alberto De La Torre, Jennifer DeBoodt (gift from Trey Reed), William Dougherty, James L. Ehernberger, Paul Ellcessor, David Farber, John Fayant, Bob Fischer,

Brenda Germain, J. Edward Golay, Richard Gradkowski, Roy Heron, Larry Holland, Sue Kocher, Arthur Lauer, John D. Long, Sandy Lynn, Martin J. Marvinny, J. Frank Mercer, Mary Ann Meyers, James Miller, James Newkirk, Victor Nicolescu, Douglas Parfait, Jonathan Phillips, Jay Slupesky, Tamara Smith, Linda Stephens (yes, *the* atheist plaintiff in the *Town of Greece* Supreme Court case), Janet Thew, Robert Richard Walter and Jeffrey Wooldridge.

Twenty states are represented: Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Become an individual Lifetime Member for \$1,000, and never receive another renewal notice! All dues and donations to FFRF are deductible for income-tax purposes.

After-Life Memberships are \$5,000, and are a tongue-in-cheek way of offering membership support that will live on.

Our warmest thanks to all these generous FFRF supporters!

Announcing new 'Immortal'

Chuck Berry, who seems to spend

all of his time thinking of ways to help FFRF, is our newest "Immortal" — meaning a member who has made provision for FFRF in his estate planning. Chuck runs FFRF's Nittany Freethought chapter in State College, Pa., and is also in the "top 18" category as a benefactor of FFRF's ongoing building project.

The category was suggested by a California couple as a way to encourage others to plan for "FFRF Forever!" FFRF will only name such benefactors if express permission is given.

Sincerest thanks to Chuck for everything he does.

In Memoriam

Linda M. Dunse, 1947–2013

Linda Margaret (Siemers) Dunse, 66, Windsor, Wis., died surrounded by her family at home Nov. 29, 2013, from complications of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

She was born in Marshfield, Wis., and graduated from Columbus High School. She worked at Gateway Trucking Co. in Madison and retired from FedEx after many years of employment.

Linda loved reading, gardening, following politics and was a proud member of the Freedom from Religion Foundation. She collected American

girl dolls and left her collection to the DeForest Library.

She was preceded in death by her husband Ray, her parents, a sister, a granddaughter, and Terry Schultz, the father of her children.

Survivors include two children, Kimberly Daley of Austin, Texas, and Clinton Schultz (Kelly) of Wausau; four grandchildren; a sister and four brothers.

A celebration of Linda's life was held at Obrich Gardens in Madison. FFRF offers its sincerest condolences.

State/Church Bulletin

Judge's bible handout brings rebuke

Osceola County Judge Hal Epperson Jr. will no longer be allowed to distribute Gideon bibles from a table in his courtroom in Kissimmee, Fla. After an attorney complained anonymously, Orange-Osceola Chief Judge Belvin Perry told the Orlando Sentinel on April 25 that he'd spoken to Epperson and the practice "is no longer in existence."

"To, in open court, offer criminal defendants who, at his will, could serve years in jail any endorsement of any religion . . . erodes the trust of the justice system that those of differing faiths have," the attorney's comment said.

Perry told the reporter, "As you know, we have a separation of church and state in this country." Giving out non-court-related literature, "whether it's the bible or Sports Illustrated, is something that we don't do," Perry added.

Mayor rejects reason but accepts prayer

Mayor Jim Fouts of Warren, Mich., rejected local atheist Douglas Marshall's proposed Reason Station in the City Hall atrium to counter a Prayer Station because of his FFRF membership. The Reason Station was meant to promote separation of church and state and inform people about freethought and logic. FFRF has contested governmental religious entanglement several times in Warren.

In an April 15 letter to Marshall, Fouts claimed FFRF isn't protected by the Establishment Clause because atheism is not a religion. "Also, I believe it is your group's intention to disrupt those who participate in the Prayer Station which would also be a violation of the freedom of religion amendment."

"I do view this as a violation of my free speech rights," Marshall told the Detroit Free Press. "It seems to me that the mayor allows free speech in the atrium as long as he agrees with the speech."

FFRF is monitoring the situation.

Church in school loses another appeal

A panel of the 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in New York City ruled 2-1 on April 3 against the Bronx Household of Faith, a congregation that has been battling since 1994 over its efforts to hold weekend services in a public school.

The decision said the First Amendment's "free exercise clause does not entitle Bronx Household to a grant from the [school district] of a subsidized place to hold religious worship services."

It's the sixth opinion on the case by the 2nd Circuit, reported Education Week. In his dissent, Judge John Walker Jr. invited the Supreme Court to take the case, which it has twice declined to do, in 1998 and 2011.



Art Naebig's Ford Escape is clearly beyond belief.

Meet a 'No BS' B. Ed.

Name: Arthur J. Naebig Jr.

Born: 1937, Chicago, Ill.

Currently living in: La Valle, Wis. [about 25 miles west of Wisconsin Dells]. I moved here for the bicycle trails.

Education: Sacred Heart Grammar School, Chicago Vocational High School, Woodrow Wilson Jr. College, Chicago Teachers College (B. Ed.).

Occupation: Retired from teaching automotive technology for 21 years at Kennedy-King College in Chicago.

How I got where I am today: Thanks to a free college education available to residents of Chicago back when corporations and the rich actually paid taxes.

Where I'm headed: Who knows?

Person in history I admire: Ben Franklin, a genius who knew how to enjoy life.

A quotation I like: "When religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support

it so that its professors are obliged to call for help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one." — Benjamin Franklin

A few of my favorite things: Science, the natural world, good food.

These are not: Fast food, climate change deniers, religion and other kinds of scams.

My doubts about religion started: At age 8 or 9 when the nuns were telling us outrageous things we were supposed to believe.

Before I die: I hope the Fountain of Youth will finally be discovered.

Ways I promote freethought: I write letters to newspapers to refute lies and misinformation in letters they have printed from other readers — usually, but not always, of a religious nature.

I wish you'd have asked me: "What would you tell young people?" Don't believe anything you're told unless you have checked it out for yourself. Don't be afraid to call bullshit what it is.

Meet a Legal Intern



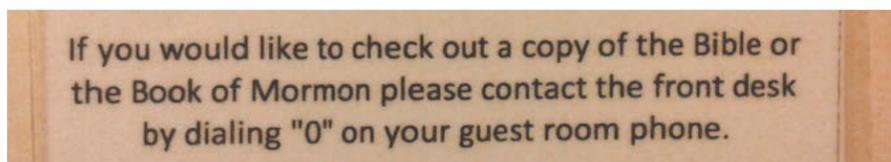
Photo: Andrew Seidel

Olivia Mote hails from Indiana. Ruby is named after a Rolling Stone's song.

Name: Olivia Mote.
Where and when I was born: Indiana (the Land of Casseroles), 1986.
Family: Two lovely, doting parents and two equally lovely siblings.
Education: DePauw University, Greencastle, Ind., B.A., religious studies and political science; Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, M.A., comparative religion; University of Wisconsin-Madison, J.D. candidate.
My religious upbringing was: United Methodist.
How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: I learned about FFRF at a law school event, found the organization's mission compelling, attended its fall convention, sent an "I'd like to participate" email — and here I am.
What I do here: Draft/edit letters for staff attorneys and absorb as much First Amendment "stuff" as possible. I also try not to upset the copy machine.
What I like best about it: Even though I'm still learning the ropes, I feel like the projects I work on here truly matter. I'm also learning a lot

about advocacy, and from a different perspective than I get in class.
Something funny that's happened at work: Every day has its entertaining moments!
My legal interests are: Constitutional law, state/church separation, business and nonprofits, education policy, comparative law and probably other areas to be determined.
My legal heroes are: Attorneys who think empathy is important in the practice of law.
These three words sum me up: Enthusiastic, curious, freckled.
Things I like: School (still!), cooking, making lists of all the places I want to eat in Madison, playing outdoors, my fluffy dog Ruby (her name's a tribute to the Stones' "Ruby Tuesday"), NPR (especially "The Diane Rehm Show").
Things I smite: Meanness.
My loftiest goal: I'm not good at picking favorites. One of them — graduate from law school with (some kind of) honors.

Nah, not worth the bother



"I found this in my hotel room nightstand in Kennewick instead of the Gideon," writes Washington member Frank Mercer, calling it a sign of progress.



Photo: Andrew Seidel

That's Dan Barker with his trademark gesture.

Freethought Hall addition makes progress, thanks to you

This listing reports donations received from March 28 to May 11. It's not cumulative except for the total. Donations received before May 11 were listed in previous issues. Freethought Today will list subsequent donations in future issues. Contributors aren't named unless they give express permission.

- \$10,000+**
Betsy and Chuck Berry, PA, \$12,105.98
- \$1,000–\$9,999**
Mr. Douglas Walty, MA, \$5,000
Anonymous, NY, \$2,000
Anonymous, AK, \$1,000
- \$200–\$999**
Anonymous, MN, \$750
Edward Lainsbury, AL, \$275
Rich and Coral W Powers, WA, \$200
Anonymous, MO, \$200
- \$1–\$199**
Stefanie Moritz and Vince Jenkins, WI, \$100
Linda Jackson, MN, \$100
Art Naebig, WI, \$100
Dr. Christopher M Swan III, VA, \$100
Anonymous, ID, \$100
Anonymous, CA, \$100

- Anonymous, ID, \$100
- Anonymous, CA, \$100
- Robert Kerr, TX, \$50
- Anonymous, NJ, \$50
- Anonymous, FL, \$50
- Anonymous, NY, \$50

Subtotal: \$22,530.98
New Cumulative Total: \$1,770,654.64
Goal: \$2,000,000

As yet unnamed: "No Hell Below Us" Administrative/Mailing Wing, Editorial Wing and courtyard fountain. Names of the 18 most generous donors will be etched on a wall of honor. Those giving \$5,000 or more will be named on a plaque in the lobby. Handmade tiles bearing names (or names in memoriam) are still available for \$2,500. Paving stones with names or messages are available for \$1,000 (6x12-inch) or \$2,000 (12x12). Visit ffrf.org/donate/ for details or phone Dan or Annie Laurie about naming rights at 1-800-335-4021. Thank you to all!

Museum posts warning about evolution

The CuriOdyssey science museum in San Mateo, Calif., removed a disclaimer from a poster for one of its presentations after public outcry. The poster for the Animal Connections show, which featured live animals, contained this line: "This program may discuss the topic of evolution."

Adam Rogers, an editor at Wired, tweeted a picture of the sign and wrote, "Apparently evolution is something they warn you about now, like smoke effects in the theater."

A museum spokesperson said some religious visitors had earlier expressed surprise that evolution was mentioned because it didn't "align with their personal beliefs."

Noah

By Philip Appleman

This classic poem from Philip Appleman's collection "Let There Be Light (The Bible Retold for Grownups)" is being reprinted by Freethought Today in response to the Darren Aronofsky Hollywood movie starring Russell Crowe as Noah. Phil and his wife Margie, a playwright, recorded a not-to-be-missed audio version of this poem, which includes musical accompaniment, for FFRF's music CD "Beware of Dogma," which features Dan Barker and friends. (Go to ffrf.org/shop/.)

Seed of Methuselah,
already six hundred years old,
more than a little weary
from all that virtuous living—then
a finger out of the clouds pokes down at him,
and a Voice full of blood and bones
bullies the stony hillsides:
"Make thee an ark of gopher wood . . ."
Details follow, in that same
bossy baritone: "The boat shall be
four hundred fifty feet long
seventy—five feet wide
three decks
one window
one door."

And then
the Voice tells him why.

His sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, just
cannot handle this news.
"He's going to drown them all?" Japheth whispers,
"Every last woman and child? What for?"
Noah's mind is not what it used to be; lately
it strays like a lost lamb, his ancient voice
a bleat: "Ahh—
wickedness, I think that's
what He said—yes, wickedness."
Too vague for Japheth: "But wicked how? I mean,
what are the charges?"
The old brow wrinkles again. "Evil, that's
what He said. Corruption. Violence."
"Violence! What do you call
this killer flood? He's going to murder
the lot of them, just
for making a few mistakes? For being—human?"
Now Japheth is really riled. Being the youngest,
he still has a lot of drinking pals around—
Enos and Jared, and sexy Adah
and his pretty young neighbor,
Zillah—together they'd put away
many a goatskin of red wine
under the big desert stars. Besides,
being a kid, a mere ninety years old,
he still likes to stump his father
with embarrassing questions. "Listen,
Dad, I thought you said He
was omniscient—well, then,
wouldn't He have foreseen all this? And if He did,
why did He make us the way we are
in the first place?"

"Ours not to reason why," says Shem, the firstborn
and something of a prig. "Ours but to build the ark."
"That's another thing," Japheth scowls. "Just
what is an ark? I mean,
we're desert people, after all—nomads,
living out here in this miserable dry scrub
with our smelly goats and camels—
I never saw a boat in my life."
"I saw one once," Noah quavers,
"but I don't remember it very well,
that was four hundred years ago—
or was it five, let's see . . ."
"It can't be that hard," says Ham,
always the practical one. "An ordinary boat,
we'll mock one up. You need a keel, that's it,
you begin with a keel of gopher wood,
and the rest is easy—ribs, then planks,
pitch, decking. Don't worry, Dad,
I'll handle it."

So finally they have themselves an ark,



and God says, "Good work, Noah, now
get the animals—clean beasts, seven of a kind,
unclean, just two, but make sure
they're male and female, you got that straight?
And hurry it up, so I can get
the drowning started."
Noah was hoping the animals
would be easy, but Japheth
knows better. "Dad,
did He say *every* animal?"
"Every animal," Noah repeats,
quoting Authority. "Every living thing
of all flesh—fowl,
cattle, creeping things. Plus
food enough for a year."

Think of it—they're living out there
in that gritty wilderness, and all of a sudden
they're supposed to come up with two elephants.
Or is it more?
"Shem," Japheth calls. "Is the elephant
a clean or an unclean animal?
If it's clean, that means seven of them
and the ark is in trouble. And how
about rhinos? And hippos? What do we do
about the dinosaurs? How do we get a brontosaurus
up the gangplank?" Japheth
loves raising problems that Noah
hasn't thought of at all. "Pandas—kids
love pandas, we can't let them die out,
but how do we get two of them here
in a hurry, all the way from China?
And, oh, by the way, Dad,
how are we going to keep the lions
away from the lambs?"

It's not just a headache; it's a nightmare.
Just think of poor Ham, after all of his angst
and sweat getting the ark assembled, and then
having to trudge off to the Congo and the Amazon
to round up all those tricky
long-tailed leapers, there in the jungle greenery—
gibbons, orangutans, gorillas, baboons, chimps,

howler monkeys, spider monkeys, squirrel monkeys,
capuchins, mandrills, tamarins . . .

And Shem, dutiful Shem, in charge
of the other mammals—the giraffes,
the horses, zebras, quaggas, tapirs, bison,
the pumas, bears, shrews, raccoons, weasels,
skunks, mink, badgers, otters, hyenas,
the rats, bats, rabbits, chipmunks, beavers—
thousands of species of mammals . . .
And Japheth out there on the cliffs and treetops
trying to snare the birds—the eagles,
condors, hawks, buzzards, vultures, and every
winged beauty in the rain forests—and bring them
back,
chattering, twittering, fluttering around
on the top deck, thousands upon thousands
of hyperkinetic birds . . .

Two by two
they come strolling through:
antelope, buffalo, camel, dog,
egret, ferret, gopher, frog,
quail and wombat, sheep and goose,
turtle, nuthatch, ostrich, moose,
ibex, jackal, kiwi, lark,
two by two they board the ark.

Well, it's pretty clear, isn't it,
that there's a space problem here: a boat
only four hundred fifty feet long, already
buzzing and bleating and squeaking and mooing
and grunting and mewling and hissing and cooing
and croaking and roaring and peeping and howling
and chirping and snarling and clucking and growl-
ing—
and the crocodiles aren't back from the Nile
yet, or the iguanas from the islands,
or the kangaroos or koalas, or
the pythons or boas or cotton-mouth moccasins
or the thirty different species of rattlesnake
or the tortoises, salamanders, centipedes, toads . . .

It takes some doing, all that,
but Ham comes back with them.
And wouldn't you know,
it's Japheth who opens up, so to speak,
the can of worms. "Dad, there are thousands
of species of worms! Who's
going digging for them? And oh, yes,
how about the insects?"
"Insects!" Shem rebels at last,
"Dad, do we have to save *insects*?" Noah,
faithful servant, quotes the Word:
"Every living thing."
"But Dad, the cockroaches?"
Noah has all the best instincts
of a minor bureaucrat—he
is only following orders—the roaches
go aboard.

Japheth ticks away at his roster. "So far
we've got dragonflies, damselflies, locusts, and
aphids,
grasshoppers, mantises, crickets, and termites . . .
Wait a minute—termites?
We're going to save termites, in a wooden boat?"
But Japheth knows that arguing with Noah
is like driving a nail into chicken soup. He shrugs
and carries on. "We've got lice,
beetles—God knows how many beetles.
We've got bedbugs, cooties, gnats, and midges,
horseflies, sawflies, bottleflies, fireflies.
We've got ants, bees, wasps, hornets—
can you imagine what it's going to be like
cooped up with *them* for a whole year?
But Dad, we haven't even scratched the surface.
There must be a million species
of insects out there.
Even if we unload all the other animals,
the insects alone will sink the ark!"

Ah, but the ark was not floating on fact,
it was floating on faith—that is to say,
on fiction. And in fiction, the insects
went aboard—and a year's supply

of hay for the elephants, a year's bananas
for the monkeys, and so on.
"Well, that's that," Japheth says,
"but you still haven't answered my question—
what will the meat-eaters eat?"
"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it,"
Noah replies, in history's
least appropriate trope,
"All aboard, now, it's starting
to sprinkle."

So the fountains of the great deep
were broken up, and the windows of heaven opened,
and the rain was upon the earth
forty days and forty nights,
and the ark was lifted up
and went upon the face of the waters—
and the drowning began.
Noah pretended not to know,
and so did Shem and Ham, so
it was only Japheth who keened
for Enos and Jared, still out there
somewhere, and for Adah and beautiful Zillah.
He was the first to peek
out of the one small window, and yes,
there it was, just the way fear
had been painting it on his eyelids ever since
that divine command: people fighting
for high ground, crazed beasts goring
and gnashing, serpents dangling from trees.
Finally, Shem, Ham, and Noah
and the four nameless wives
couldn't resist—they looked out the window, too,
and watched their friends
hugging in love and panic until
they all went under. Japheth caught
one final glimpse, and of course it had to be Zillah,
holding her baby over her head
till the water rolled over her
and she sank, and the baby
splashed a little, and then
there was silence upon the waters,
and God was well pleased.



Margie and Philip Appleman doing a reading of Phil's poem, "Noah," at a past FFRF convention. (Photo by Brent Nicastro)

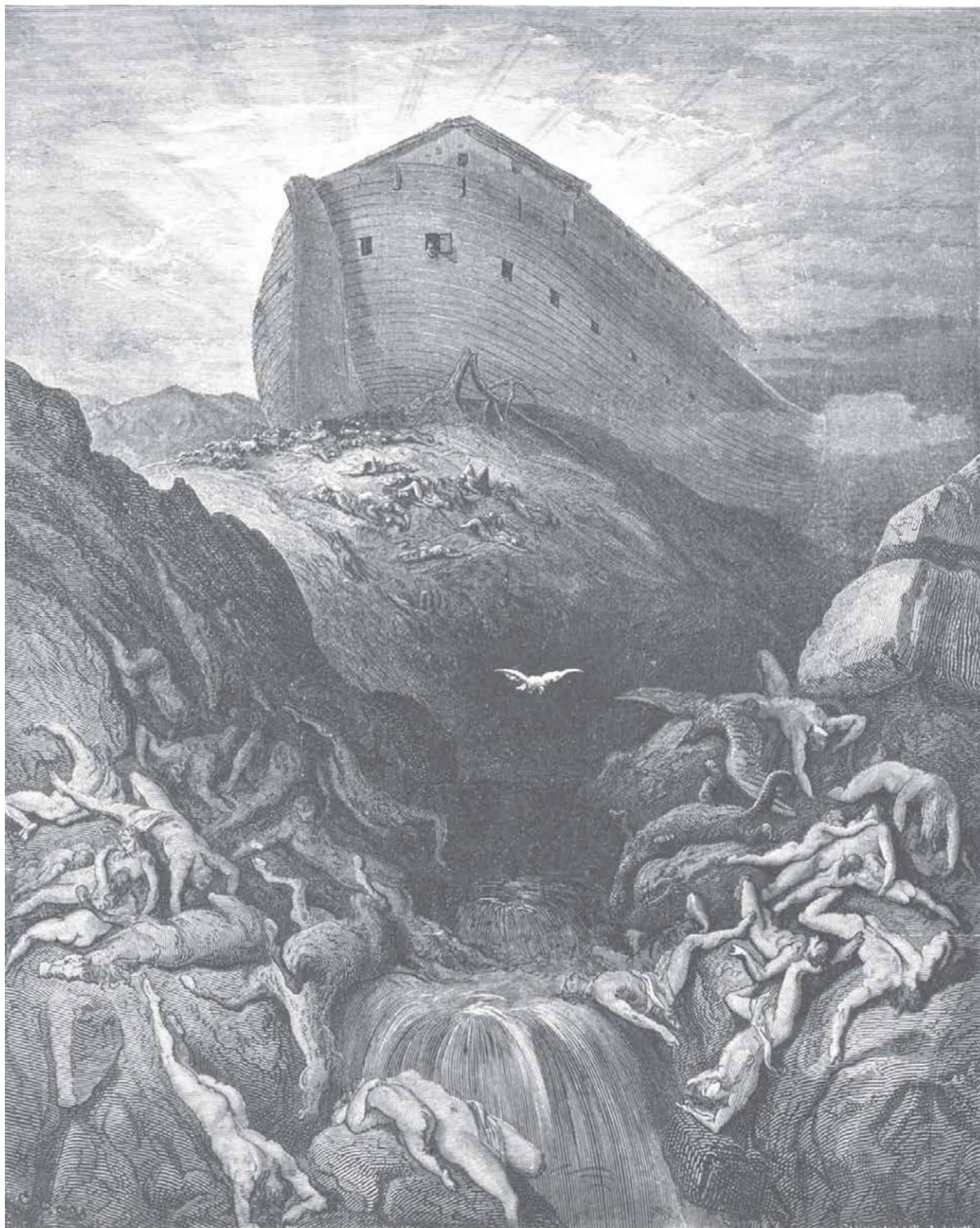
They all turned away from the window, Noah
and his sons and the weeping women,
and no one would look into anyone's eyes for many
days.

Twelve hard months that strange menagerie lived
in the ark, the sixteen thousand hungry birds
lusting for the two million insects,
and the twelve thousand snakes and lizards
nipping at the seven thousand mammals,
and everyone slipping and sliding around
on the sixty-four thousand worms
and the one hundred thousand spiders—
and Noah driving everyone buggo, repeating
every morning, as if he'd just thought of it,
"Well, we're all in the same boat."

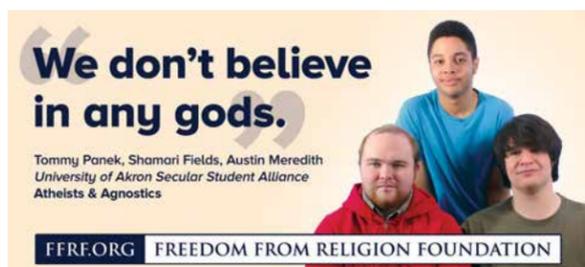
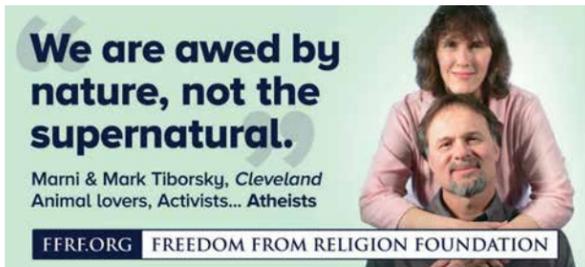
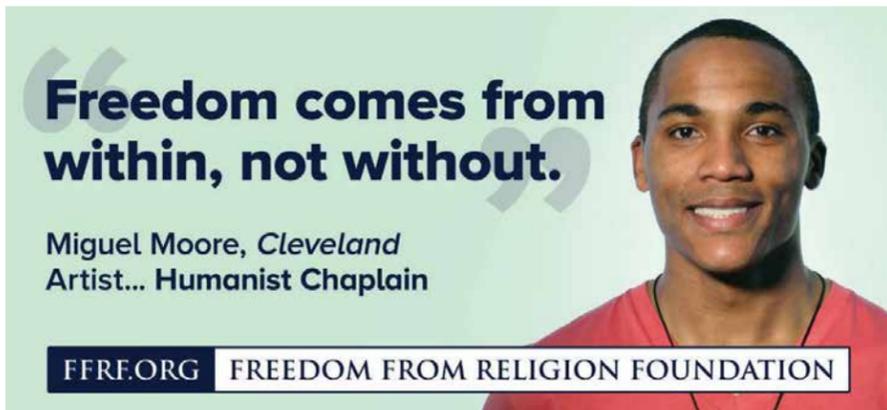
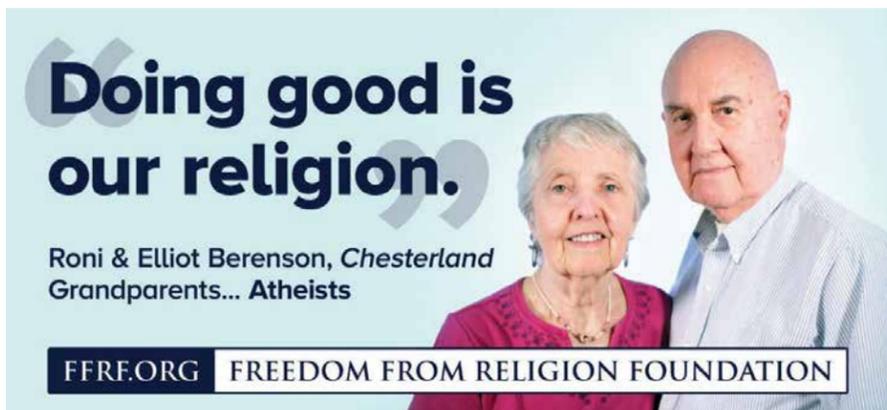
It was a long, long year
for those weary men and their bedraggled wives,
feeding the gerbils and hamsters, cleaning
the thousands of cages, keeping the jaguars
away from the gazelles, the grizzlies away
from the cottontails—everything aboard, after all,
was an endangered species.
But finally the waters subsided,
the dove fluttered off and never returned,
the gangplank slid down to Ararat,
and the animals scrambled out to the muddy,
corpse-ridden earth.

And Noah, burning a lamb on his altar
under that mocking rainbow, cannot forget
that he rescued the snakes and spiders, but
he let Enoch and Jubal
and Cainan and Lamech and
their wives and innocent children
go to a soggy grave.
And Noah knows, in his tired bones,
that now he will have to be fruitful once more,
and multiply, and replenish the earth
with a pure new race of people who
would never, *never* sin again,
for if they did,
all that killing would be for nothing,
a terrible embarrassment
to God.

"Noah" can be read in *New and Selected Poems, 1956-1996*, along with the collection it's part of, "Let There Be Light," by Philip Appleman (University of Arkansas Press). Appleman, a distinguished poet recently featured on "Moyers & Company" hosted by Bill Moyers, is also a Darwin scholar and editor of *Darwin: A Norton Critical Edition*. Appleman's currently available books of poetry are all irreverent: *Darwin's Ark* (illustrated by Rudy Pozzatti, University of Indiana Press); *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie* (Quantuck Lane Press, 2009); and *Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible* (Prometheus Books, 2011). All can be purchased through ffrf.org/shop/.



FFRF mounts Cleveland-area billboard blitz



Eleven friendly and thought-provoking billboards featuring members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation and its chapter, the Northern Ohio Freethought Society, went up in early May around Cleveland and Akron in a month-long campaign to introduce area atheists and agnostics to their communities.

The billboards feature their faces and personal freethought “testimonials.”

Mark Tiborsky, who is pictured with his wife, Marni Heubner-Tiborsky, chapter director, commented: “We just want to let other nonbelievers, or those on the fence about their religious be-

lieve, know they’re not alone and that the local nontheist community is both welcoming and growing.”

Roni and Elliot Berenson, who are octogenarians, describe themselves modestly as “Grandparents . . . Atheists.” Roni is well-known in the area and nationally as an activist for social justice, world peace and secular humanist causes. She became a freethinker at age 16 after escaping the Holocaust in her native Germany.

Students with the University of Akron Secular Student Alliance are featured on two billboards in Akron.

FFRF, with more than 20,000 members, has about 550 members in Ohio.

FFRF debuted the “Out of the Closet” campaign in Madison in 2010 and has taken the campaign to Columbus, Tulsa, Raleigh, Phoenix, Nashville, Portland, Spokane and Sacramento.

“Research shows that atheists and other nonbelievers are still at the bottom of the totem pole when it comes to social acceptance. One reason is that even though at least 20% of the population today is nonreligious in the United States, many Americans have never knowingly met an atheist,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

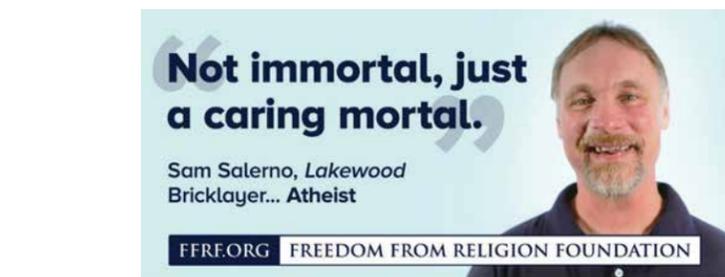
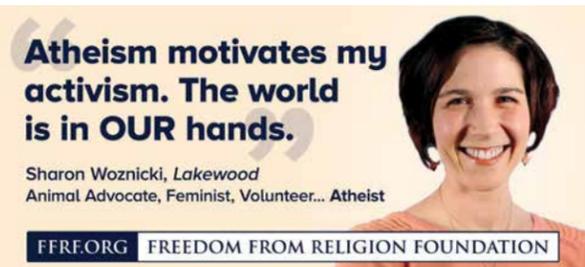
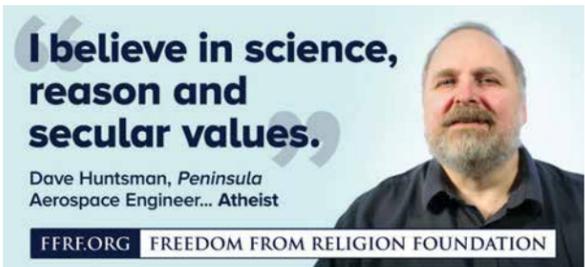
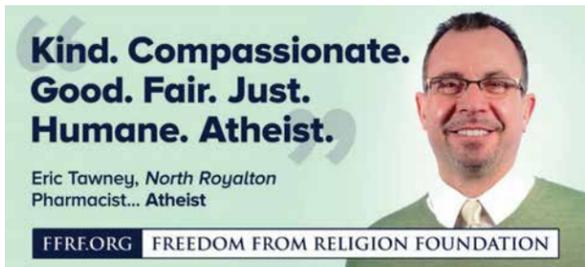
“Taking a cue from the gay pride movement, our campaign invites other nonbelievers to share their views and

‘Come out of the closet.’ ”

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker said, “The thoughtful, positive viewpoints expressed by Cleveland-area FFRF’ers — and their willingness to speak up so publicly — makes me so proud of FFRF members, the best advertisement there is for freethought.”

It’s easy and fun to make your own “virtual billboard,” useable for Facebook image, at ffrf.org/day/. Watch for launching soon of FFRF’s latest “speak up for freethought” video campaign.

Find locations for the billboards, in case you’re passing through the area, at: ffrf.org/news/news-releases/. Scroll to the to the May 8 release.



Members of the Northern Ohio Freethought Society, a chapter of FFRF, pay homage to the secular women — (top billboard row) Suzy Wernet, Lisa Mosham, Mardell Ward, (bottom row on billboard) Sharon Woznicki and Marni Huebner-Tiborsky — featured on the chapter’s billboard in Cleveland. The gentlemen free”thinkers” of the chapter pictured are (left) Eric Tawney, Mark Tiborsky, Randy Pelton, Ray Valenti and Sam Salerno.

FFRF chapter members Sam Salerno, Suzy Wernet, Sharon Woznicki, Mark Tiborsky, Marni Huebner-Tiborsky, Eric Tawney each give two thumbs up to this billboard in Cleveland featuring Joanna Polisena with her little boys, Willie and Channing, comprising a lovely and “loving atheist family.”



Sacramento Easter blasphemy

The Greater Sacramento Chapter of FFRF held a Flying Spaghetti Monster party Easter morning near downtown Sacramento. A spaghetti-themed potluck followed the fun and games, at which FFRF Co-President Dan Barker was a guest of honor. Pictured (back, left) are John Lucas, Tom Ikelman, Judy Saint (chapter president), Dan Barker, Andrea Griffith, Barri Babow, Mike Kirkland, (front) Ken Nahigian and Ruth Rezos.

An earlier Easter “Rise & Shine Extravaganza” in Folsom featured comedian Keith Lowell Jensen, The Mockingbirds (an atheist choir led by Andrea “Andi” Griffith) and Dan entertaining on a Steinway grand piano.



UC-Davis

The Agnostic and Atheist Student Association at the University of California-Davis hosted Dan Barker on April 17 to speak about “How to be good without God.”

FFRF on the Road



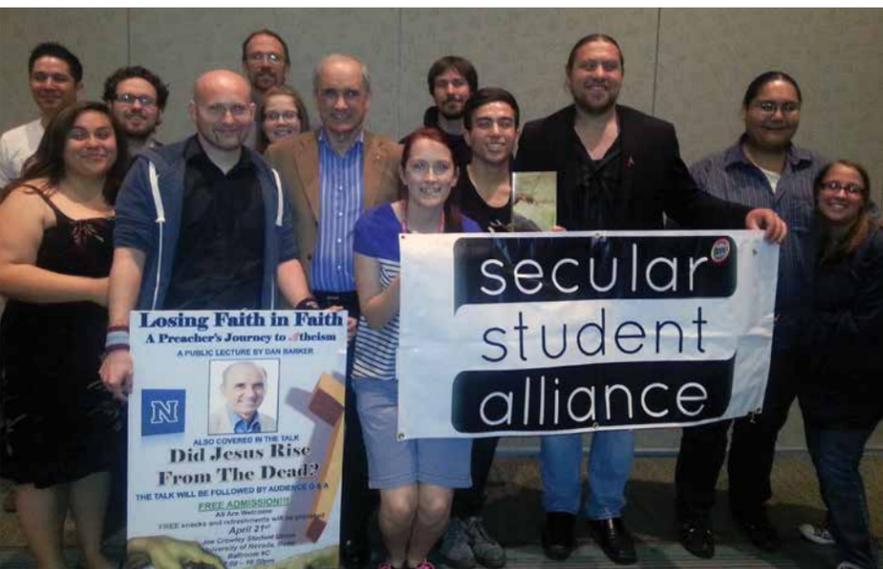
Darwin on the Palouse

Dan Barker was part of the annual freethought event held Feb. 7-8 at the University of Idaho in Moscow and Washington State University in Pullman. Dan spoke on “How Darwinism helps us be moral.”



Photos: Ingrid Laas

Atheists, Humanists & Agnostics, an official student club at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, held its third annual Freethought Festival on campus April 29-30. The event was kicked off Friday night with a talk by sex advice columnist and atheist Dan Savage. Pictured are speakers and student activists gathered for the all-day Saturday event. BACK, LEFT are students Mark Pan, Mendel Mayr, Nate Woods, Amanda Supak, Calli Miller (2013 FFRF student activist award recipient), Tyler Centers and Chris Calvey (who won FFRF’s 2013 graduate student essay competition); FRONT, LEFT are students Darcy Davis, Elle Russel, Sam Erickson, speakers Friendly Atheist blogger Hemant Mehta, FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker and “God Is Not on Trial Here Today” filmmaker Jay Rosenstein. Jay’s documentary is about the landmark Supreme Court challenge taken and won in 1948 by Vashti McCollum which stopped public school religious instruction.



Shot a myth in Reno

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker talked about his preacher-to-atheist life and the alleged resurrection of Jesus to a crowd of more than 150 students and community members April 21 at the University of Nevada-Reno. The event was sponsored by the Secular Student Alliance. From left are Anthony Gonzalez (member), Adriana Charles (secretary), Peter Blair (member), Bernard Drumm (outreach coordinator), Aine O’Reilly (member), Dan Barker, Darren Griswold (faculty sponsor), Lara Shaylor (graduate president), Dan Mayes (graduate organizer), Anthony Ponticello (undergraduate president), Gennadiy Gurariy (graduate organizer) and Jonathan West (member).



The Freethought Festival ended with a debate “Does God Exist?” between Matt Slick (left) and FFRF Co-President Dan Barker (second from right). Also pictured are debate moderator Kris Babe and AHA President Sam Erickson.

They Said What?

So this Easter Week, of course we recognize that there's a lot of pain and a lot of sin and a lot of tragedy in this world, but we're also overwhelmed by the grace of an awesome God. We're reminded how He loves us, so deeply, that He gave his only begotten Son so that we might live through Him.

President Barack Obama, remarks, White House Easter prayer breakfast
whitehouse.gov, 4-14-14

Now I am here in America all these years, and I am terribly disappointed religion is being interfered with. If they want me to go to jail, I will go to jail.

Rabbi Avrohom Cohn, 85, American Board of Ritual Circumcision chairman, on his refusal to stop performing metzitzah b'p'eh (orally sucking blood from the circumcision wound) despite documented health risks to the boy
Haaretz, 3-30-14

These toys can have a negative effect on children. They can destroy their souls and lead them to the dark side.

Fr. Slawomir Kostrzewa, news story, "Lego is a tool of Satan, warns Polish priest"
The Telegraph, 4-1-14

Calling for atheist thought in any form, or calling into question the fundamentals of the Islamic religion on which this country is based.

Provision in a new Saudi Arabian law defining atheism as terrorism
Human Rights Watch, 4-2-14

Fascism, Minnesota style. HF826 is simply another attack on the bible and conservative Christians.

State Rep. Mary Franson, R-Alexandria, debating a bill to toughen bullying laws
WCCO, 4-8-14

[The church] has asserted and continues to assert that trademark law and other intellectual property laws pro-

hibit Jonathan from using the word "Mormon" to promote, market, or otherwise advertise the dating website.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' lawsuit against Jonathan Eller, who owns dateamormon.com
Courthouse News Service, 4-10-14

I ask myself how I can sit at dinner and laugh at my husband's jokes, when, right at that very same moment, innocent babies are being aborted in droves? I read today that a 5-day-old baby was abducted from her home in Wisconsin, and now I can barely function. I want to remain on my knees permanently in supplication and beg the Lord to reunite her safely with her family.

Question to columnist Mark Shea on how to relax when someone else somewhere is suffering
National Catholic Register, 4-11-14

Activists like Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. used nonviolent methods having nothing to do with guns. Jesus is calling us to take it up a notch to the spiritual world.

Rev. Kenneth V.F. Blanchard, non-denominational Christian pastor and creator of the "Black Man with a Gun" blog and podcast
Human Events, 4-13-14

If my stupidity brings one person to the love of Jesus Christ, then I have served a greater purpose and the consequences are well worth it.

Luke Emory Oyler, 29, charged with defiant trespass for running shirtless around the infield after crashing the pierogi race at a Pittsburgh Pirates-Chicago Cubs baseball game
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 4-8-14

I don't mean that they're making up she's pregnant. But what great timing! I mean purely accidental, purely an act of nature, purely just left up to God. And God answered Hillary Clinton's prayers and she's going to have the



Saudi Arabia : death penalty for atheists

prop of being a new grandma while she runs for president. It just warms the heart, it brings a tear to my eye. It really does.

Newsmax host Steve Malzberg, speculating on Chelsea Clinton's pregnancy
"The Steve Malzberg Show," 4-17-14

Why do we freak out? We're human. We forget about the miracles.

Richard "Stick" Williams, Duke Energy vice president, speaking at the YMCA Community Prayer Breakfast at the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte, N.C.
Charlotte Observer, 4-24-14

Well, if I were in charge, they would know that waterboarding is how we baptize terrorists.

Former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, speaking at the NRA convention in Indianapolis
CBS News, 4-27-14

As long as they have [a biblical] worldview, then they'll be a good judge. If they have a secular worldview, where this is all we have here on Earth, then I'm going to be very concerned about how they judge.

Matt Whitaker, GOP U.S. Senate candidate, telling a Family Forum audience in Ankeny, Iowa, he would insist that judicial nominees "be people of

faith"
rightwingwatch.org, 4-28-14

The Creator will not hold us guiltless if we turn a deaf ear to the cries of his innocent babies. So come and get me if you must, Mr. President. I will not bow before your wicked regulation.

Rev. James Dobson, calling Barack Obama "the abortion president" at a National Day of Prayer event in the Cannon House Office Building
World Net Daily, 5-1-14

America, as did Israel in its blessing, has been turning away from God, driving him out of its public squares, bringing in idols in his place and calling what is evil good and what is good evil.

Rabbi Jonathan Cahn, speaking at the National Day of Prayer event
World Net Daily, 5-2-14

I believe there are certain qualities that may be worthy of rape. If a woman dresses proactively[sic], gets blackout drunk and is wearing really revealing clothing, then I would say that she is partially responsible for the rape.

Arizona evangelical preacher Dean Saxton, aka Brother Dean Samuel, shouting "Yoga pants are sin" and holding a sign saying "You deserve rape"
The Raw Story, 5-6-14

Sharing the Crank Mail

This month's most annoying theme (a recurring one) is why doesn't FFRF go after the Muslims more? Of course the cranks answer it for us: because only Jesus turns the other cheek! It's also common for sexist cranks who mention FFRF staff they've seen on TV to almost always attack women's looks but not men's.

Y'all are idiots! I don't understand how anyone can look at this world and not realize it was by design. Look at the intricacies of the human body alone! 2 miles closer to the sun and we burn up, two miles away from the sun and we freeze. Everything goes from array to disarray. If you really think there was a big bang and everything was perfect after that, I want you to take a stick of dynamite to a pile of scrap metal and blow me up a perfectly running Cadillac! GET REAL people! — *Scott Parrish, Butler, Mo.*

your atheist attitude: you will find much resistance here in small town america. sandpoint idaho will not be intimidated by you. this country was founded in god we trust. we dont trust the likes of you. this is only the first in many emails you will recieve from me. — *kraig lewis, idaho*

What ever: I'm fucking getting tired of having to give up my beliefs because you and groups like yours don't like or support them. You fucking people are so anti AMERICAN it's sickening. There's a place called North Korea or perhaps China who will gladly support your moronic beliefs, go there! Go over to Iran or Syria where they are no beheading non Muslims and preach your bullshit and let me know how that works out for you. — *GARY GUSTIN*

Fuck You Dumbasses: I don't see how some

one posting a bible verse on their twitter account offends you . If so don't fuckin read it . It's people like you that make this country a bunch of cry baby pussys ! The way I see it you getting offended by the bible verse offends me so should I be able to file a law suite against your crack pot cult ? — *d. janak*

Gov. Walker: I totally understand not wanting religion shoved down your throat, but I don't think Gov. Walker is trying to rape anyone with Jesus. Thank you. — *Laurie Anne Ayers, Florida*

Insulting billboard: Hey Christophobics, why don't you cowards attack the Islamists? Afraid they'll cut your heads off? Or what about the Jews, they're very powerful people in this country, just look at what happened to poor Mel Gibson. Got to go now, enjoy your wonderful, God-less lives and say hi to Lucifer when you see him! — *Jo M*

Affiliation: Dear brethren, Greetings in Jesus name! We are so much delighted to visits your website and we are so much touched for what you are doing to bring many to have hope and many to understand on how she /he can be grow from dust to be an important person. We are a group of Christians here in Kenya who are devoted for the Lord God's work. We shall be happy to be numbered in your prayers and in your church. — *Pastor Charles Onduso*

You're Wrong About Clemson: To Annie Laurie Gaylor, I say, who are you? No one cares what your opinion or that of your little "foundation" is. YOU need to keep YOUR liberal, feminist-agenda opinions to yourself. Quit trying to make a name for yourself and your silly little

group of Consitution Nazis and let the men handle a man's job. Snooty, uptight, narrow-minded women like you should stay in the kitchen. — *Ken Adams, Tennessee*

Clemson tigers: This little organization is f__n trash just another liberal, atheist group of people that discount God. You know when you in hell forever burning and nashing of teeth you stuck. Hey why don't you and the gay loving ACLU go have alittle meet me in hell party. — *shane york, clayton, georgia*

how do I join: A group like this that wastes everyones time is something I like. Now I can collect money from Obama for doing nothing, and join you , and harass people who are minding their own business. what a fucking joke you people are. — *Juan castenda*

Why Don't You Attach Islam: Why don't you pussies attach Mohammad? I know why! You are afraid they will cut your fucking heads off! I want to see some "Fuck Islam" ads from you! How about Mohammad is a myth! You don't have the fucking balls for that! Fuck you and your useless organization! — *Mitchell Hahn, Bolingbrook, Ill.*

atheism: I am a biblical student who was an atheist growing up. Now I am religious and working on my Doctorate in Theology. Can you please explain to me why my rights are not important to you? Please do not try to force me to live the way you want me to. — *Lisa Dempsey, RN, BA, MA, soon to be PhD, Summerville, S.C.*

Clemson University: There's a plane flight Leaving this country on the hour every hour.

Pack your bags and get on One. I could care less whether you believe in God or not. You all make me want to PUKE! — *Robert Michel* [Editor's note to Robert: If you could care less, why don't you?]

Freedom from environmentalism: When is FFRF going to undertake Freedom From Environmentalism? Environmentalism is as much a religion as Christianity or Judaism, except that we are subject to Environmentalism 24/7/365. — *Arthur Needham, Fitchburg, Mass.*

Clemson - right to prayer: Today is Good Friday, when Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins (yours and mine) over 200 years ago. But the Good News is that He arose from the dead 3 days later. I pray organization will awake from the tunnel of darkness! — *Frank Lucas, Louisiana*

Donation: Your donation is in my toilet. — *David Richie*

Jesus is NOT a myth: TAKE DOWN THAT SIGN WITH THE FALSE STATEMENT YOU PUT UP IN Wisconsin and quit false advertising LEARN YOUR FACTS BEFORE YOU TRY TO ADVERTISE STATEMENTS LIKE THAT. This is an argument that you don't want to TRY to win. — *Jesus's Attorney, Jerrin Duane Snyder*

Freedom: I know you could care less about God, or being a Christian. But mark my words, you, me and all of us when we die, will be on our knee's before our creator and he will judge us. Man's Law means nothing. — *Keith Pope* [Editor's note to Keith: If we could possibly care less we would.]

FFRF, Minn. Atheists, sponsors 'Aints' game



Eric Jayne outside Midway Stadium in Saint Paul.

By Eric Jayne

There's a lot of excitement in Minneapolis about the 2014 Major League Baseball All-Star game coming to town in July, but perhaps an even better (and far more affordable) game will be played four days earlier at the other Minnesota Twin City across the river.

On Friday, July 11, the city of Saint Paul will be unofficially rebranded as "Mister Paul" as it hosts an atheist-themed minor league baseball game. The Saint Paul Saints minor league team will change its name to the secular-friendly Mister Paul Aints for the third year in a row in what is being billed as a "Night of Unbelievable Fun: The Third Strike." It's sponsored by the Minnesota Atheists and Freedom from Religion Foundation.

After losing the first two years, the Mr. Paul Aints will be going for their

Last year, 'Doubting Thomas' was ejected by the umpire for arguing a call.

first win when they face the Kansas City T-Bones. There will be pregame tailgating, postgame fireworks, atheist-themed antics and even atheist-themed jerseys that will be worn by the home team players.

The specially designed jerseys (featuring a big red "A") will be auctioned off during the game. A portion of the proceeds will go to the Family Place shelter, which serves area families without permanent housing. The front office staff will also cover the "S" in the Saints signage and hang banners promoting Minnesota Atheists and FFRF throughout Midway Stadium.

Some of the atheist "antics" are still being developed for this year's game, but I know for certain that fans can expect an even louder and more skeptical "Doubting Thomas" in July. That very same character was quickly ejected last year after he demanded more evidence from the umpire after an inning-ending call.

At a time when athletes continue to publicly invoke their religious beliefs, and with the relatively recent injection of "God Bless America" replacing "buy me some peanuts and Crackerjacks" during MLB's seventh-inning stretch, a brief introduction to this baseball team boldly choosing to partner with organized atheism might be in order.

Partly owned by comedian/actor Bill Murray, the Saints have gained national attention for their promotions and for the theatrics during the game. One of my favorite promotions was the Michael Vick dog chew toy that was given away during the NFL quarterback's federal investigation for his involve-



An Aints player at the plate during last year's game.

ment in a dog fighting ring.

Besides topical humor, there's genuine tolerance and an open attitude within the Saints organization that falls directly in line with freethinking values. Mike Veeck, another part owner of the Saints, was heavily influential in the team's signing of the first woman to play in minor league professional baseball.

In 1997, 50 years after Veeck's father (Bill Veeck) helped bring racial integration to the American League by signing Larry Doby to the Cleveland Indians, Ila Borders made her first appearance with the Saints as a relief pitcher. Although she only played a few games with the Saints, she found success with two other teams in the league before retiring.

I refuse to make up some corny baseball metaphor about atheism, but I will say that the combo will be unbelievably fun. The tailgating will start at

4 p.m. in the stadium parking lot. The first pitch will be at 7 p.m. If you're interested in winning the opportunity to toss out the first ceremonial pitch from the pitcher's mound, visit MinnesotaAtheists.org/FirstPitch/.

Game tickets are available at SaintsGroups.com/. After you get through the Captcha screen you'll need to enter the group password "Atheists" with an uppercase A. You might want to consider staying in town the next day and join other friendly heathens for a regional, one-day conference in downtown Saint Paul on Saturday, July 12.

Speakers include Susan Jacoby, Debbie Goddard, PZ Myers, Rebecca "Skepchick" Watson and others. For more details about the baseball game and conference, visit MinnesotaAtheists.org/conference/.

FFRF member Eric Jayne is president of Minnesota Atheists.

Newsnotes

Humanists now Army 'religious' option

Lt. Col. Sunset Belinsky, a U.S. Army spokeswoman, said April 22 that the "preference code for humanist" as a religious preference became effective April 12 for all members of the Army.

According to Religion News Service, that means fewer hurdles for seculars trying to organize. It could also lay the groundwork to add humanist chaplains.

Jason Torpy, president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, has been pushing for greater recognition of humanists in the armed services; in February, the American Civil Liberties Union sent a letter to the Pentagon on Bradley's behalf.

"This is a big victory," said Jason Torpy, president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers.

Reserve Maj. Ray Bradley, Fort Bragg, N.C., who serves in the Medical Service Corps, said it took the Army two years to approve his re-

quest. On a section of MAAF's website titled "Atheists in Foxholes, in Cockpits, and on Ships," Bradley says this: "It never bothers me to keep my head up in formation while others are praying. And I've noticed over the years that more soldiers do the same. I doubt there are that many more atheists today. Most likely, fewer feel afraid to reveal they are not Christian. And though religion is strong and apparent among many in the military, I believe it is the unbowed heads in the formation that remind the world that we are united by freedom above all else."

Arizona atheist tosses hat in ring

James Woods, an open atheist who is also blind, announced his candidacy April 27 to run as a Democrat against U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon, R-Ariz., in a heavily Republican district.

If elected, Woods, a member of the Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix,



Seriously, we didn't know!

"Hoping we never need 'healing' in Oriental, N.C.," write Barb and Roy Masinton. "We cover a lot of miles in our corner of the world and are frequently amazed by the countless proclamations made by the countless churches we drive by. 'Here's a church spending tax-free dollars on billboard advertising. This is bad news for all our local doctors, surgeons and researchers working around the clock to find a cure for cancer. Or maybe it's just plain good news, as they can move on to other, more pressing matters.'"

would be the only "out" atheist in Congress. He told Religion News Service, "I believe in human ingenuity. We can solve problems to improve our lives and the lives of people around us. You

don't need religion for that."

He lost his sight seven years ago at age 26 to a life-threatening staph infection.

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Stanley Brittain, 39, Albany, OR: 25 counts each of 1st-degree encouraging child sex abuse and 2nd-degree encouraging child sex abuse. Brittain, pastor at St. Anne Greek Orthodox Church in Corvallis, was arrested after a search of his home allegedly turned up child pornography on a computer.

"Each photo or depiction is in and of itself a charge," said Albany Police Capt. Eric Carter. *Source: Gazette-Times, 4-19-14*

Xiu Hui "Joseph" Jiang, 30, St. Louis: 2 counts of 1st-degree statutory sodomy involving a boy younger than 14. Jiang, associate pastor at the Catholic Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, is accused of having sexual contact twice in a bathroom at Cathedral School between July 1, 2011, and Aug. 1, 2012.

Jiang, a native of China, was charged in 2013 with sexually abusing a minor and witness tampering for allegedly molesting a teen girl 4 times in Old Monroe, MO, in 2013. Authorities alleged he tried to pay the victim's family \$20,000 in hush money. Charges were dismissed without comment by the prosecutor in November.

At the time, Deborah Lee, 48, a recent Catholic convert, told a reporter Jiang had made a name for himself as being particularly holy. "If he is a manipulator, a liar, then he is the best one in the world," she said.

Nicole Gorovsky, the family's attorney in a civil suit, alleged Jiang used his influence to gain access to the devout family. "He groomed the whole family, expertly." *Source: KMOV/Post-Dispatch, 4-17-14*

Roger C. Kissel, 66, Sidney, IA: 2nd-degree sexual abuse, lascivious acts and indecent exposure. Kissel, pastor at the nondenominational Sidney Cowboy Church, is accused of molesting a 5-year-old girl over several months in 2013.

Police said alleged victims aren't connected to the church. *Source: Omaha World-Herald, 4-16-14*

Gary Petersen, 62, Grandville, MI: 2 counts of embezzlement involving less than \$20,000. Petersen, pastor of The Rock Church, is accused of stealing money from Wellspring Community Church, which he founded 18 years ago and resigned from in September.

Court documents allege he used a church credit card, which the financial committee didn't know he had, to charge about \$3,000 for a Mediterranean cruise and a Colorado vacation. *Source: mlive.com, 4-16-14*

Philip Altavilla, 48, Scranton, PA: Indecent assault, attempted indecent assault and corruption of minors. Altavilla, pastor of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter, is accused of giving alcohol to a 13-year-old girl he drove home after Christmas Eve Mass in 1998 and then fondling her.

Detectives said in an affidavit Altavilla allegedly admitted taking photos of the feet of the victim and other teen girls. The affidavit alleged he acknowledged "that he uses the Internet to research videos and images depicting women being strangled, given chloroform and then sexually assaulted."

Scranton Bishop Joseph Bambera removed Altavilla from his duties and said in a statement, "I am both angry and demoralized to think that, yet again, a priest has been involved in such inappropriate, immoral and illegal behavior." *Source: Citizens Voice, 4-15-14*

A Catholic priest, name withheld, 79, Perth, Australia: 6 counts of indecent dealing with a child under 13. Police allege he molested a girl between the ages 10 to 12 when he was pastor at St. Aloysius Church in 1980 and a girl age 6 or 7 when he worked at Holy Name Church in 1969.

Offenses allegedly occurred in the rectory. *Source: WA Today, 4-13-14*

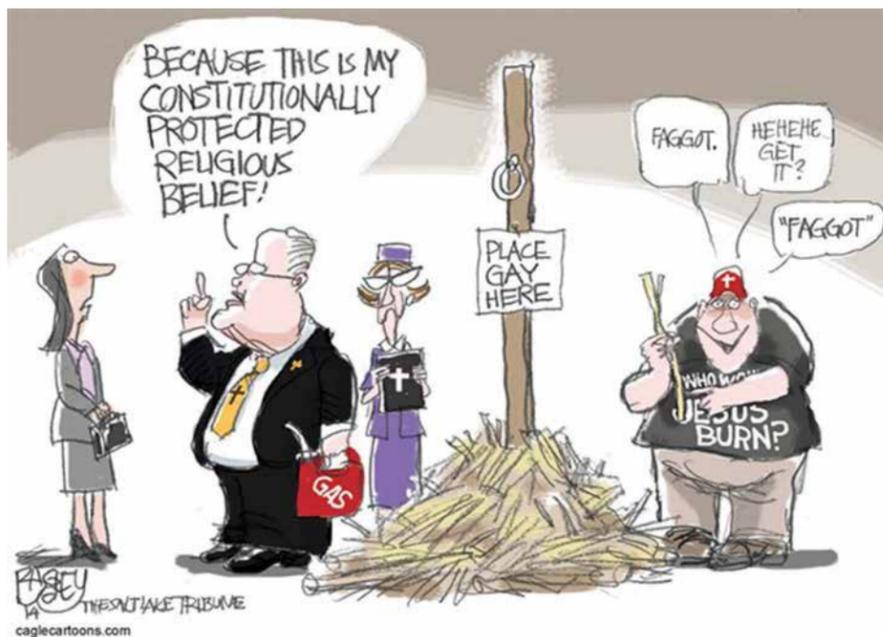
Michael Thayanandan Patrick, 57, Scappoose, WA: Luring. Patrick, pastor at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, is accused of trying to lure a 14-year-old girl into his car in Vancouver. At one point, the girl told police, the man said "Come on, cutie." She remembered the license number and her mother called police.

She allegedly identified Patrick at his home and when asked if he was the man who talked to her, on a scale of 1 to 10, she said "11."

Patrick studied at Our Lady of Lanka National Seminary in Sri Lanka. *Source: The Oregonian, 4-12-14*

An unidentified French priest, 40, Versailles: Aggravated rape, torture and committing barbarous acts. Prosecutor Vincent Lesclous said the Catholic priest belongs to the ultra-conservative Society of St. Pius X and is accused of assaults on 3 teachers at the society's Notre-Dame de la Sablonniere school in Goussonville in 2010.

It's alleged he first raped a teacher during an exorcism to purge her of the "evil" from a previous sexual assault and then used his "spiritual



influence" to convince 2 others to undergo exorcisms. The women alleged he used a broom, toothbrush and scissors during his assaults.

The society, with about 600,000 followers in 62 nations, was founded in 1970 by notorious anti-Semite Marcel Lefebvre, who died in 1991. *Source: AFP, 4-10-14*

William R. Best Jr., 47, Valley Grande, AL: 2nd-degree sodomy, 2nd-degree rape and incest. Best, pastor at Living Waters Worship Center, was arrested after the alleged victim's mother brought her to authorities.

Dallas County Sheriff Harris Huffman said incidents of alleged abuse go back 3 years to when the girl was 14. Best allegedly had sex with her at his home and in the church office "dozens of times."

Huffman said the department has "solid DNA evidence." Best was fired by unanimous vote of the church directors. *Source: Selma Times-Journal, 4-9-14*

Okono Joseph, Owerri, Nigeria: Child trafficking. Okono, pastor at St. Peter's Catholic Parish, was among 20 people charged. Fubara Duke, State Security Service deputy director, said 8 children have been recovered.

Duke told journalists that Joseph bought 2 boys, ages 3 and 4, for about \$2,800 each.

Joseph told a reporter that women unable to conceive come to him. "I direct them to motherless babies' homes, after which they will come back and give me [a gift of money]. That was how I was arrested." *Source: Leadership spyghana.com, 4-8-14*

Kevin Harrison Jr., 34, Hahira, GA: Child molestation, statutory rape and enticing a child for indecent purposes. Harrison, pastor at Life Power and Praise Apostolic Faith Church, allegedly molested several children from the church.

A warrant was issued after he failed to turn himself in. "We feel like he's on the run," said Steve Turner, Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Harrison surrendered 4 days later. *Source: Times-Enterprise, 4-9-14*

Juan D. Ferreras, 43, Cicero, IL: Battery, aggravated criminal sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of a child, indecent solicitation of a child, 2 counts of criminal sexual assault and 4 counts of distribution of harmful material. Ferreras, a youth minister and teacher at Sonido de Alabanza Church, is accused of molesting 6 boys ranging in age from 9 to 17 at the church, at his apartment and at 2 church camps. He's the son of the church founder and the pastor's brother.

Police said someone tipped off a child welfare agency after several boys stopped participating in church events. *Source: CBS Local, 4-9-14*

Francisco Rios, 44, Brandon, FL: 3 counts of lewd and lascivious molestation. Rios, pastor of Casa de Amore Church, is accused of molesting 3 female parishioners ages 12, 17 and 43.

The 12-year-old alleges Rios touched her sexually about twice a week during the past year. The older girl told a detective he touched her about 15 times starting in 2011. Rios allegedly touched the woman inappropriately in April 2013, convincing her "it was a way to cure a medical condition," the sheriff's office said.

He's married with 2 teen children. *Source: Bay News 9, 4-6-14*

Lynette N. Trotta, 33, Baltimore: Sexual abuse of a minor. Trotta, a science teacher at all-male Archbishop Curley High School, is accused of sexual activity with a student.

The boy, 17, allegedly told police Trotta would pull him out of class to spend time in her classroom, where the activity progressed over time from kissing to him performing a sex act on her.

School officials believe a librarian, now suspended, knew about the alleged abuse for several weeks before reporting it. *Source: Baltimore Sun, 4-6-14*

Paul Gotta, 55, Bridgeport, CT: 5 counts of 4th-degree sexual assault and 2 counts of 2nd-degree sexual assault. Gotta was administrator of St. Philip and St. Catherine Catholic churches when the Archdiocese of Hartford suspended him last year after 2012 sexual assault allegations of a minor surfaced.

He also was arrested on federal charges in 2013 for illegally transferring a gun, ammunition and explosive material to a juvenile. That trial is scheduled for May. *Source: NBC, 4-1-14*

Matthew T. Boos, 24, St. Louis Park, MN: Soliciting a child or a person believed to be a child through electronic communication to engage in sexual conduct and engaging in electronic communication relating or describing sexual conduct with a child. Boos, a married youth pastor at River Valley Church in Savage, allegedly told police he posed online as a 15-year-old girl to solicit photos from girls ages 13-15.

The complaint said the mother of a girl showed police a message to her daughter in which Boos asked if she was "bi-curious, what kind of panties she wears and then expressed a desire to exchange nude photos."

Boos allegedly admitted he knew the girls from his pastoral work. *Source: Star Tribune, 3-30-14*

An unidentified Hindu priest, 73, Salem, India, was charged with sexual harassment of an 8-year-old yoga student at his temple. Police said the priest has allegedly touched other young girls inappropriately during classes. *Source: Zee News, 3-28-14*

Tod A. Barnard, 53, Independence, MO: 2 counts each of 2nd-degree child molestation and 3rd-degree assault. Barnard, assistant band teacher at St. Thomas More Catholic Elementary School, Kansas City, is charged with molesting an 11-year-old female student.

"While getting instruments ready, he would pretend to fall and touch her in places that made her uncomfortable," court records said. The student said Barnard would pretend to trip and then steady himself by grabbing her breast.

Another unidentified band teacher at the school hasn't been charged criminally but a diocesan review board recommended terminating his employment due to his alleged "admitted violation of diocesan standards of behavior," a letter sent to parents said. *Source: Kansas City Star/WCTV, 3-28-14*

Gerald L. Clark, 51, Westminster, CO: 2 counts of sexual assault on a child by one in a position of trust and involving a pattern of abuse. Clark, pastor of Jericho Ministries International, allegedly molested a girl over a 3-year period starting when she was 13.

"Gerald began escalating things little by little," the girl told police. He allegedly told her, "Why don't we come up with a code word if you feel uncomfortable. What about 'guacamole?'" He also texted "You're so sexy" and "I miss your body," an affidavit said.

Police said 3 other potential victims have come forward. *Source: 7News Denver, 3-28-14*

Sean P. Thomson, 52, Fairbanks, AK: DUI, refusal to take a chemical alcohol test, drugs misconduct and 2 counts of weapons misconduct (possessing a firearm while intoxicated and failing to immediately inform troopers he was carrying a firearm). Thomson, a Catholic priest employed by the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, was put on leave after being stopped for speeding and crossing the center line. His preliminary blood-alcohol content was 0.247 (he refused a more accurate test because "[he] said

he was drunk and did not feel the test was necessary," the report said).

Asked if he had any weapons, Thomson mentioned a .357 in the back seat but neglected to mention a 9 mm handgun in his back pocket, the report said. He also had a small amount of marijuana in his pocket. *Source: News-Miner, 3-26-14*

Robert L. Harris, 54, Gastonia, NC: Sexual battery. Harris, pastor at Harriett Memorial Free-will Baptist Church, is accused of knocking on a woman's door at a Super 8 motel and asking her for sex. He said he'd been at the motel about 10 years ago to counsel a couple, the affidavit said.

The alleged victim said she told Harris she didn't want to "have some fun" after he asked and then called 911. "[He] tried to push himself in on me. Threw me a \$20 bill and said, 'There is more where that came from. Just let me in for a few minutes,' knowing my 12-month-old daughter was right there with me," the woman said.

The 911 dispatcher said he heard Harris making vulgar requests.

Channel 9 spoke to Harris by phone. "I should never have been in that place, period." He said he hadn't told his family and wanted to go to God in prayer first. *Source: WSOC, 3-26-14*

Richard St. John Cattell, 73, Robina, Australia: 3 counts of aggravated indecent acts. Cattell, who served as a Catholic priest from 1964-94, is accused of molesting an altar boy from 1984-87.

He was convicted in 1994 and served prison time for molesting a boy in 1973. The victim didn't report the abuse until 20 years later. *Source: The Telegraph/Broken Rites, 3-25-14*

Nicholas Henshaw, 38, Ft. Collins, CO: Sex assault by one in a position of trust. Henshaw was youth pastor at Capo Beach Church in Dana Point in the early 2000s, when he's accused of molesting his neighbor's son.

"This is a dangerous man. My son is in danger," the [then] 8-year-old boy's father said in court.

In an affidavit, police said Henshaw's own family members said he has a history of molesting young boys but was never previously charged. His ex-wife alleged she once found pictures of naked boys on his computer. *Source: Coloradoan/Orange County Register, 3-24-14*

Russell Thompson Jr., 55, Pearland, TX: Felony theft. Thompson is accused of stealing \$284,000 from City of Refuge Evangelical Presbyterian Church, where he served as associate pastor.

Police said Thompson created a personal account into which he deposited money intended for the church over a two-year period. *Source: Fox Houston, 3-24-14*

Mark A. Huberty, 43, Maplewood, MN: 5th-degree and 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct. Huberty, former pastor of Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is accused of sexually touching a woman and being touched by her during a visit to her home in 2013.

The complaint alleges he was the woman's "spiritual adviser." Over 400 emails obtained by search warrant led police to believe "that a sexual relationship did occur and at the time they were continuing to meet and discuss religious and Catholic faith issues." *Source: Pioneer Press, 3-24-14*

Michael M. Switalski, 50, Wausau, WI: 8 counts of possession of child pornography. He teaches history, law and religion at Newman Catholic High School, coached the varsity boys soccer team for 20 years and was director of campus ministry.

He was in possession when arrested of 12 "hours-long" explicit DVDs and 95 photos depicting children as young as 8, the complaint said. The videos are believed to be from a Canadian firm raided in 2011.

One of the videos was in Switalski's DVD player when investigators searched his home, Assistant District Attorney Elisabeth Gramer said.

He's a retired U.S. Naval Reserve lieutenant commander and was a judge advocate officer. *Source: Daily Herald, 3-16-14*

Julio Dautrich, 19, Corona, CA: 4 counts of having unlawful sexual intercourse. Dautrich, a youth group volunteer at Crossroads Church, is accused of impregnating a 15-year-old he met at the church.

The girl's mother said she thinks the church ignored or tried to conceal the relationship. "We dropped off our kids at Crossroads Church, thinking they were being supervised at youth group. When I found out my daughter was pregnant, I was shocked, because she's not allowed to have a boyfriend." *Source: Press-Enterprise, 3-13-14*

Pleaded / Convicted

James Schook, 66, Louisville, KY: Guilty by jury of indecent or immoral practice with another and 3 counts of sodomy. Schook, a defrocked

Sex with me will cure your medical condition. — Pastor to woman victim

Catholic priest, was on trial for molesting 2 teen boys in the 1970s. The jury recommended a sentence of 15 years, but the judge isn't bound by that.

Schook's lawyer claimed what happened to victim Michael Stansbury, in court to hear the verdict, wasn't a crime because he was 16 at the time and legally a consenting adult. "May 6, 1976. Anything after that is legal," said attorney David Lambertus. Schook claimed victims were out for money.

Stansbury, who alleged only a single incident, stayed silent until his parents died. Richard Whitfield, now in his 50s, testified he and Schook had a sexual relationship for years starting when he was 13. *Source: WLKY/AP, 4-17-14*

Kevin Sutherland, 46, **Miami**: Guilty by jury of 2nd-degree attempted grand larceny. Sutherland, pastor of Mosaic Church, was convicted of trying to sell 5 counterfeit Damien Hirst paintings and prints to an undercover officer in New York for \$185,000. Hirst received Great Britain's prestigious Turner Prize art award in 1995. *Source: AP, 4-8-14*

John Irwin, 72, **Dungiven, N. Ireland**: Pleaded guilty to theft of about \$3,000 from St. Patrick's Catholic Church and from the Derry Diocesan Fund between May 2011 and October 2012. Irwin is a retired priest. *Source: BBC, 4-7-14*

Sentenced

James Napier, 61, **Alfred, ME**: 2 concurrent 5-year terms in prison (suspended) with 12 years' probation, submitting to random search and testing, no contact with children under age 16, no serving in a church capacity and no Internet or social media access. Napier, who resigned as pastor of New Beginnings Christian Mission after his 2012 arrest, pleaded guilty to 10 counts of possession of sexually explicit materials of a minor under 12.

Police found more than 100 child porn images on his home computer during a raid. *Source: WMTV, 4-17-14*

William R. Dowel, 88, **Melbourne, Australia**: 3 years in prison suspended and sex offender registration for life. Dowel, a retired Anglican priest, was convicted for molesting 3 boys aged 12 to 16 between 1973-77 at the vicarage.

Prosecutor David Cordy told the judge that Dowel kissed, fondled and performed oral sex on a victim and then said, "Oh my conscience."

Judge Liz Gaynor told Dowel she "would not hesitate to jail you" if he were younger, as the community "pays a very high price in ruined lives, dashed hopes and psychological dysfunction." *Source: The Age, 4-17-14*

Leo C. Koppala, 48, **Blue Earth, MN**: 31 days in jail after pleading guilty to 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct, with stay of imposition due to serving that much jail time already, 25 years' probation, sex offender registration, restitution and no contact with anyone under 18. Koppala, pastor at 2 Catholic parishes, was accused of molesting a 12-year-old girl in June 2013 at her grandmother's house, where he was a supper guest. After sentencing he was taken into custody by the Department of Homeland Security and will likely be deported to his native India.

The Dioceses of Winona and Nellore, India, will work together to assess Koppala's future as a priest, said Winona Bishop John Quinn. *Source: WCCO, 4-2-14*

Ryan M. McKelvey, 27, **Des Moines, IA**: 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to 3rd-degree sexual abuse and 2 counts of sexual exploitation by clergy. McKelvey, youth pastor at Heritage Assembly Church, is a "predator" and a "manipulator" who used his pastoral status to abuse 2 minor females from the church, District Judge Karen Romano said at sentencing.

One girl told police last August McKelvey made her touch his genitals. Then another girl came forward. He allegedly told a victim's mother he could be a "father figure" to her daughter.

When McKelvey's wife was in labor last June, he sneaked into the family's house at 4 a.m. to see the girl, the mother alleged. His wife has filed for divorce. *Source: Des Moines Register, 3-25-14*

Keith W. Denford, 78, **Shoreham-by-Sea, UK**: 18 months in jail for indecent assault. Denford, a retired Church of England priest, was found guilty of molesting 2 teen boys between 1987-90 while he was vicar at St. John the Evangelist Church. He once got in a bath while sexually aroused, a victim testified.

Police were alerted in 2012 when a victim found out Denford was still in contact with children. The Diocese of Chichester has suspended him from the ministry for life. Denford maintains he's innocent. *Source: BBC, 3-25-14*

Francis P. Cullen, 85, **Tenerife**: 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to attempted burglary, 15 counts of indecent assault and 5 counts of indecency with a child while he was a Catholic priest in the UK. The abuse of 7 boys and girls aged 6 to 16 took place from 1957-91 at various parishes.

He was arrested in 1991 but skipped bail and fled to the Canary Islands. He was extradited to the UK in 2013.

Judge Jonathan Gosling said at sentencing, "To say that you were a disgrace to your cloth understates your activity. This was gross hypocrisy. In a sentence, your entire life was a lie." *Source: The Guardian, 3-24-14*

Ahmed Moussa Ahmed, **Pazardzhik, Bulgaria**: 4 years in prison for spreading an anti-democratic ideology, inciting hatred, participating in an unregistered organization and a probation violation linked to a 2003 sentence for spreading "radical" Islam. Ahmed and 12 other Muslim leaders were accused of ties to the ultra-conservative Al-Waqt Al-Islami group, which has been linked to al-Qaida.

Many Muslims have accused the Christian majority of wrongly calling them radical. Bulgaria, with 7.4 million people, is 80% Christian Orthodox and 13% Muslim. *Source: The Sun Daily, 3-20-14*

Richard Rudman, 43, **Stow, OH**: 59 months in prison after pleading guilty to pandering obscenity and pandering sexually oriented material involving a minor. Rudman, a teacher at St. Mary Catholic Elementary in Akron, was found in possession of nude photos of his 12-year-old student and other child pornography.

The victim's mother had noticed inappropriate online conversations in 2013 between her adopted daughter and Rudman, who is married with 2 daughters. "He was one of her best teachers and he wooed her and he groomed her," the mother said.

Rudman requested "private area" photos from the girl during a game of "truth or dare."

Because the sentence is less than 5 years, he can seek early release from prison in 6 months, which worries the victim's family. *Source: ABC-5/Beacon Journal, 3-18-14*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

Lourdes Torres-Manteufel, 29, is suing **Texas pastor Douglas Phillips** and his **Vision Forum Ministries Inc.** of San Antonio, alleging he "methodically groomed" her into "a personal sex object" over 5 years while she worked as a nanny for Phillips and his wife, who have 8 children.

Phillips was a leading advocate of "biblical patriarchy" before resigning last year from Vision Forum and Boerne Christian Assembly, a Baptist church where he was an elder and preacher.

Torres-Manteufel alleges she got threatening emails last August from Phillips' wife Beall about the need to "keep her mouth shut." She says she met the couple at a homeschooling conference in 1999 when she was 15.

The sex started in 2007, the plaintiff alleges, after she'd moved in with the family. Phillips entered her room one night and started touching her, she alleges. Although she started crying and asked him to stop, he "masturbated and ejaculated on her," the suit says.

Phillips' attorney Jason Jakobs called the allegations "false, defamatory and made with malicious intent to destroy Doug Phillips, his family and his ministry."

Jakobs claimed the relationship was consensual: "While it may be true that Mr. Phillips had an intermittent relationship with Mrs. Lourdes Torres-Manteufel, they never had the physical intimacy of touching and/or the exposure of genitalia, nor did the intermittent relationship escalate to sexual intercourse." *Source: wnd.com, 4-15-14*

"J. Christ," **Breese, IL**, is suing the **Belleville Catholic Diocese**, alleging former priest **Robert J. Vonnahmen** molested him at summer church camps in 1970-71. In the early 1990s, Vonnahmen was among 14 priests and a deacon the diocese removed for alleged child sexual abuse.

Vonnahmen was removed as camp director in 1985 and from the ministry in 1993. The Vatican defrocked him in 2007 at age 76. He was never criminally charged.

The suit alleges the diocese failed to protect the plaintiff and failed to investigate abuse complaints by other minors. *Source: News-Democrat, 4-1-14*

San Francisco attorney Vance Woodward is suing the **Church of Scientology** and **half a dozen affiliates**, alleging he paid nearly \$200,000 for counseling services he never used. He claims the church has ignored multiple written requests to return his money.

Woodward says in 2007 he sought psychological and spiritual services and was offered one-on-one counseling called "auditing" and courses based on Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard's books.

"[O]n multiple occasions, Vance was physically and psychologically manipulated into remaining in a small room with Scientology fundraisers, including representatives of defendant's SF Church, who hounded him for hundreds of thousands of dollars for more than six hours at a stretch, each time on a tandem and tag-team

basis, each time until after 4 a.m.," Woodward alleges. He claims he gave \$600,000 all told to the church and its affiliates. *Source: Courthouse News Service, 3-25-14*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

A Phoenix federal jury awarded a couple living in an area controlled by the **Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints** \$5.2 million for years of religious discrimination.

Ronald and Jinjer Cooke, who have lived since 2008 in the border towns of Colorado City, AZ, and Hildale, UT, alleged they were denied utilities because they aren't FLDS and church leaders wanted to drive away outsiders. As a result, they claimed, they and their 3 children were forced to live in a 35-foot travel trailer. *Source: Salt Lake Tribune, 3-20-14*

Legal Developments

A Dane County, **WI**, circuit judge threw out field sobriety tests given to former Lutheran bishop **Bruce Burnside**, 60, **Madison**, who goes on trial May 12 for homicide by drunken driving. Burnside, who lost his job after his car killed a woman jogger in Sun Prairie in April 2013, argued the arresting officer didn't have reasonable suspicion he'd been drinking.

Judge Nicholas McNamara said crash circumstances gave the officer probable cause to believe Burnside had been driving negligently but not that he was impaired. He said prosecutors can introduce a blood test taken later which showed his blood alcohol was 0.128%. The limit is 0.08%. *Source: State Journal, 4-19-14*

A judge in Jacksonville, **FL**, eased probation terms for **Darrell Gilyard**, former pastor at Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church, who spent 3 years in prison after being arrested in 2008 for lewd and lascivious acts with 2 girls. After Gilyard got out of prison, he started preaching at Christ Missionary Tabernacle Baptist Church, which held an egg hunt Easter Sunday.

The judge modified the probation so Gilyard could "minister to children under the age of 18 as long as the children are supervised by an adult other than the defendant." The State Attorney's Office didn't object. *Source: 4jax.com, 4-18-14*

Jonathan H. Smith, 59, **Ocean Springs, MS**, was arraigned and pleaded not guilty in **Salem, NJ**, to aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault of a minor under the age of 13 and endangering the welfare of a child stemming from his November arrest. Smith resigned suddenly as pastor at First Presbyterian Church Salem in September, citing "personal and medical issues."

Prosecutor Lisa Rastelli told the court the alleged victim was a minor male relative who spent time at Smith's home last summer and was molested 5 to 10 times, including while sleeping and showering.

Smith has until June 23 to accept a plea deal that includes 5 years in prison. *Source: South Jersey Times, 4-14-14*

A state court in Nuremberg, **Germany**, upheld the 2013 conviction of ultraconservative British bishop **Richard Williamson** for incitement for Holocaust denial. He was fined \$2,500 for telling a Swedish TV station during a 2008 interview in Regensburg that he didn't believe Jews were killed in gas chambers.

It's the second appeal lost by Williamson in the case. *Source: Epoch Times, 4-10-14*

Eliezer Berland, 77, a Hasidic rabbi who fled **Israel** 18 months ago after being accused of sexual abuse, has turned up in South Africa after being deported from Zimbabwe and Morocco. He's accused of assaulting several females, including a 15-year-old girl.

South African Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein said in an email: "Our community [must] not be involved with sheltering or supporting Berland and his followers. Berland must return to Israel to face the criminal justice system."

Shortly after he fled Israel, his son, grandson and several followers were arrested on suspicion of fraud and money laundering involving the sect's finances. *Source: Haaretz/Jerusalem Post, 4-9-14*

Gleb Grozovsky, 34, an Orthodox priest based in **Israel**, is expected to be extradited to his native Russia to face charges he sexually assaulted 2 girls ages 9 and 12 at a summer camp last year on the Greek island of Cos. The Russian Diocese of Gatchina has suspended Grozovsky from the ministry. *Source: JTA, 4-9-14*

The **Minnesota** Court of Appeals overturned the 2011 conviction of **Christopher Wenthe** for 3rd-degree criminal sexual conduct and ordered a new trial. Wenthe was pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Parish in St. Paul when he was charged for having a sexual relationship with an adult woman who came to him for counseling.

A 3-judge panel ruled the trial judge failed to properly instruct jurors and wrongly barred defense evidence about the woman's sexual history after allowing the state to elicit testimony about her sexual inexperience. *Source: Pioneer Press, 4-7-14*

Documents released by the **Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis** describe a priest allegedly sexually abusing a brain-damaged woman and another molesting a teen boy who killed himself and his wife years later in a mur-

der-suicide.

The new details were revealed in a statement by the archdiocese linked to a lawsuit ordering Archbishop John Nienstedt to testify under oath. About 40 priests have been credibly accused of abusing children from 1970 to the present.

Included were details about **Paul Palmitessa**, a priest accused in 1982 of making sexual advances to a 15-year-old boy who killed himself and his wife in 1999. Palmitessa was transferred to California but was never criminally charged. He retired in 1998.

New details were included about **Kenneth LaVan**, whose first alleged abuses were against 2 girls between 1958 and 1970. The church settled suits brought by them in 1989 and 1992.

LaVan, who retired in December, also has been accused of sexually abusing a woman who suffered from "mental illness and a brain injury," the archdiocese said. *Source: Star Tribune, 4-2-14*

Removed / Resigned

Bob Coy, 58, **Coral Springs, FL**, resigned as senior pastor of the 20,000-member Calvary Chapel in Ft. Lauderdale, which he founded in 1985. Outreach Pastor Chet Lowe told church members that "Our former pastor was caught in sin. He committed adultery with more than one woman. Our pastor committed sexual immorality, habitually, through pornography."

Coy is married with 2 teen children. Church leaders are as prone as any powerful man to temptation, said John Vaughan, director of the Megachurch Research Center in Springfield, MO. "There are a lot of beautiful Christian women. A pastor, as a man, would have the same kind of temptation as a man anywhere else would." *Source: Sun Sentinel, 4-29-14*

Dominican nun **Jane Dominic Laurel** is taking a sabbatical from teaching at Aquinas College in Nashville, **TN**, after controversial comments to students at Charlotte **[NC]** Catholic High School.

Students said Laurel cited studies she said showed gays and lesbians are not born with same-sex attractions and suggested that masturbation and homosexuality are linked.

Sr. Mary Sarah, Aquinas president, said in a statement that Laurel's "deviation into realms of sociology and anthropology was beyond the scope of her expertise." *Source: Charlotte Observer, 4-9-14*

An **unidentified Catholic priest** from **Feltre, Italy**, lost his pastorate for allegedly paying a Moroccan man for sex with cash he got from a nearby convent. Il Gazzettino reported the pair had a "long-standing relationship." *Source: The Local, 4-7-14*

George F. Bailey, 76, whereabouts unknown: Bailey, who resigned in 1989 as pastor of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Parish in Medina, **OH**, has essentially been defrocked by the Vatican, according to a memo from Cleveland bishop Richard Lennon.

Lennon wrote, "In response to credible accusations of sexual misconduct involving a minor, George Bailey requested a dispensation from the clerical state for the good of the church. Dispensation from the clerical state means that in accordance with Canon Law, George Bailey is unable to function in any capacity as a priest anywhere, with the exception of offering absolution to those in danger of death."

Bishopaccountability.org said at least 10 women have accused Bailey of molesting them when they were elementary students. *Source: ohio.com, 3-27-14*

The Vatican removed **Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst** as bishop of Limburg, **Germany**, after his new \$43-million residence complex caused an uproar. A statement said Tebartz-van Elst would get a new job "at the opportune time." *Source: AP, 3-26-14*

Brian S. Suntken, **Hudson, OH**, who resigned as pastor of Christ Church Hudson in 2012, was "deposed and his ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church ended," according to a church document dated Dec. 7, 2013.

The document, mailed anonymously to a newspaper, was signed by 3 members of a hearing panel of the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio, which found Suntken guilty of 8 of 9 allegations against him, including misuse of church funds and dishonesty.

Suntken called the hearing "a one-sided deal" and said he's now pastor of the non-denominational Community of St. John in Hudson.

According to the document, "It is now clear to the Hearing Panel that [Suntken] committed numerous offenses against the Episcopal Church. He turned the rector's discretionary fund into his own personal piggy bank, and did this at not one but two different parishes. He was utterly heedless of the impact his reckless and self-indulgent spending, and his later attempts to conceal it, would have on his parishioners. He plagiarized, disobeyed the orders of his bishop, attempted to intimidate a witness, lied to a specialist appointed to evaluate his mental health, and committed other offenses. His selfish and his authoritarian leadership style caused terrible harm which has still not entirely healed."

The panel suggested the parish consider

Letterbox

Prayerful Clemson coach out of bounds

When I was in fifth grade in Minneapolis, we had “church of your choice day” once each month. Every student took 90 minutes off to go to his or her church — every student, that is, except for me and a girl who was also Jewish.

No one was mean; the teachers made no snide comments. But each time, Michelle and I sat there in the classroom feeling painfully different. We weren’t them. Our families belonged to no synagogue or temple. If we had belonged, we couldn’t have gone because the only ones were all the way across town.

I just now joined FRFF after reading about your efforts to rein in the Clemson football coach. Sixty years later, same problem. Freedom of religion can’t exist without freedom from religion.

Theodore Rosen
Kansas

•••

I just read in our newspaper (The State in Columbia, S.C.) about your effort to get Clemson University to comply with the Establishment Clause of the Constitution. The coverage indicated that you have approximately 20,000 members and 155 in South Carolina. You’ll soon have 156 and perhaps other South Carolinians will be inspired to join along with me.

I’ve been a longtime member of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, but I’d like to be a member of FFRF as well. Thank you for your good work.

Gene Fulton
South Carolina

•••

Thank you for taking on Coach Dabo Swinney at Clemson. That place is thick with unconstitutional uses of my state tax money to promote the worst kind of religious proselytizing: taking advantage of young people over whom one has authority to brainwash (not persuade reasonably) them to accept as truth religious propaganda.

Here’s my membership renewal and gratitude for all the good work FFRF does.

Julia Whitsitt
South Carolina

•••

Lions and [Clemson] Tigers and Bears, oh my. First it was a “war” on Christmas. Now it’s one on on Easter, and the propaganda of the Christian Reich continues in the ol’ “Onward, Christian Soldiers” and “trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored” traditions.

Truly amazing that they don’t want to see, my distant cousin, Tommy Jefferson, or Johnny Adams in Chicago. Faithlessly yours.

Bob Allen
Minnesota

Church discounter gets the heave-ho

[Addressed to Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert]:

I don’t know if you remember this case from four years ago regarding the Syracuse Chiefs baseball team and their Church Bulletin Night promotion, but I wanted to give you a quick update. The gist of the story was that when you contacted the Chiefs requesting that they stop the promotion, the team gen-

eral manager “Tex” Simone responded with a series of incomprehensible messages that completely missed the point.

In the end, the Chiefs agreed to stop the promotion but actually only switched it to “The Promotion Formerly Known As Church Bulletin Night.”

The update is that, over the past off-season, the team’s community shareholders finally got fed up with Tex and his family’s running of the team (yes, he and his family members held most of the senior positions) and replaced them. The team is trying out lots of new promotional ideas, including Mullet Night and a funeral give-away, but no more Church Bulletin Night, or the Promotion Formerly Known As.

Thank you again for all of your great work!

Kris and Ross Rubenstein
New York

Prayer decision appalls high court victor

I am extremely disappointed in the Supreme Court’s decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, affirming that sectarian prayers at city council meetings do not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The 5-4 decision severely diminishes the non-establishment principle and effectively endorses majoritarian displays of public piety.

The notion of public prayer at meetings is itself rather weird, a notion that praying somehow leads to better government, or that some supernatural entity will show favoritism to get better roads in communities that pray. This is naked superstition, a bow to witchcraft and acceptance of magical thinking. Like school kids praying before an exam — better to have read the assign-

ments and done the homework. It is wholly specious to imagine, as Justice Kennedy does, that prayer is not subtly coercive. It should be obvious that such prayers create an atmosphere that a certain god has to be prayed to in order to win its favor. And surely such prayers promote the idea that the government favors some religions or some gods over others.

The decision wholly ignores non-believers, nontheists and atheists who have no use for prayer. It is even an affront to the Founding Fathers, many of whom were deists, who rejected the notion that God would intervene in human affairs as a result of supplication and worship. Washington, Madison, Jefferson, Franklin, even Adams, would be appalled at the decision, which is a major attack on a memorable phrase from *Engel v. Vitale* (1962): “It is no part of the business of government to be composing prayers. . . .” The idea of a government body paying obeisance is anathema to the legacy of Roger Williams.

The decision will do no good for public policies, no good for good government, no good for welcoming minority participation in community government, and will only reinforce various power structures that buy into the majority religion.

Ellery Schempp
Massachusetts

Ellery Schempp was a successful student plaintiff in Abington School District v. Schempp, in which the Supreme Court ruled in 1963 that bible recitations and the Lord’s Prayer were illegal in public schools.

Why not swear ‘so help me Cos’ instead?

I enjoyed James Davis’ “Atheist Activist in a Foxhole” [April 14]. It’s wonderful what he’s accomplishing, and how he’s doing it with reason, openness and charm (all honey, no vinegar).

As for his impulse to fiddle with the Oaths of Enlistment he must take, I suggest “So help me Cos.” I’m thinking cosmos, as in the universe, Carl Sagan and Neil deGrasse Tyson, but if any-

Reid Schoonover, Wisconsin, saw this on a Facebook page and reposted it on his. “Thank god (ha ha) I’m free from the bible.”

one wants to take it as Cosmo Topper, the old film and TV character played by Leo G. Carroll, who consorted with a couple of swell ghosts no one else could see or hear, that’s OK too.

Joan Reisman-Brill
New York

Readers’ different ideas on mealtime prayers

I am a member-in-waiting. May is starting to look like a good month, because I made the last payment on my car loan this month. In the meantime, I have been enjoying the sample Freethought Today issues tremendously.

My suggestion to J.R. Dreyer of a “gentler” response to “Let’s say grace!” is “Oh no, please excuse me! As an atheist, I would be a hypocrite if I participated.” Then leave the room.

Elke Mikaelian
New Mexico

Religious skeptics do have a dilemma when dinner hosts ask them to pray. How can they satisfy the host without compromising their own views? I think they can succeed by giving a secular “blessing.”

Using no religious jargon, the speaker can publicly thank the host, state the importance of the occasion or in some other way express genuine secular values we all share. Perhaps genuine secular values like generosity, family ties and friendship outweigh abstract religious beliefs.

Some hosts who want religious blessings might be too polite to complain. Others might think they can’t have everything so they accept positive, but secular, statements. Many social gatherings, even religious ones, gain richer meaning from the public sanction of secular values. I hope we don’t leave this challenge to religious monopolies.

John McCall
Illinois

Correction: Baltimore not part of Carroll

Allow me to point out a minor error in the April issue in a story about opening meetings with prayer. “Carroll County commissioners in Baltimore” is not correct. Maryland is divided into 24 subdivisions: 23 counties and Baltimore City, which is not part of any county.

Baltimore County is adjacent to the

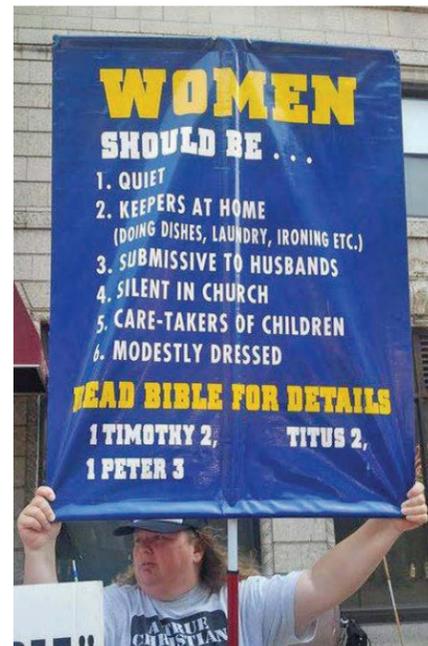


Brent Nicastro

Ellery Schempp



Ross and Kris Rubenstein got the “church discount” in 2010 after alerting FFRF to a constitutional violation.



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Pete Kwaak writes, "I'm an FFRF member and just signed up my daughter as well. Living in Knoxville, Tenn., provides me with many thought-provoking photographic opportunities, since there is a church every quarter mile. I will attach one of myself and my license plate, which elicits comments wherever I go."

city, but they are separate jurisdictions. Carroll County is adjacent to Baltimore County but is not adjacent to or part of Baltimore City.

David M. Shea
Maryland

For Gene's Sweetie, it's a dog's Life



State/church watchdog Hypatia
"Sweetie" Boyko.

The cartoon [dog in the pulpit] on page 16 of the March issue has had me in stitches from the first moment I read it. It has inspired me to give my faithful companion a Lifetime Membership. Her name is Hypatia (but she answers to "Sweetie") Boyko.

I am sure she would write the check herself, but lacking opposable thumbs, it is a difficult task, so please find my check for \$1,000 enclosed. Please enroll her as a Lifetime member. Sweetie is a good girl, very smart and a free-thinker, and will be very proud to be a Lifetime Member. You guys do a Herculean job. Keep it up.

Gene and Sweetie Boyko
Connecticut

Editor's note: Thank you, Gene, and faithful but faithless Sweetie!

In a word, sum up atheist discrimination

FFRF Kentucky [an official FFRF chapter] has the goal of improving communication between members within the commonwealth. Priorities include state/church separation, proper science education and promotion of atheism and agnosticism.

Recent U.S. surveys show that atheists are generally viewed unfavorably.

It's taken decades of education and public dialogue, but now those who discriminate against and malign gays and racial minorities are publicly condemned as homophobes and racists. What might those who discriminate against and malign atheists be called?

This has encouraged some interesting comments on FFRF/KY's Facebook site. I suggest it's time for this to become serious public discourse.

Gary McIntyre
Kentucky

Story on Baptist weapon giveaway was anti-gun

Regarding "Seek salvation, take home a weapon" [April 14], I didn't know you had to be anti-Second Amendment to be a fighter for the First Amendment. This article had an anti-gun agenda running through it. The NRA has 5 million dues-paying members, FFRF has 20,000.

Don't isolate FFRF. It's hard enough to win people over to the FFRF view without adding gun control to the membership requirements.

James Duffy
New York

Editor's note: There is no such requirement, Mr. Duffy.

Church: 'Women and children be damned'

Green Bay Mayor Schmitt's invitation to the pope to visit Wisconsin in 2015 is certainly ambitious. Is he being invited as a great man, a humble man, as the head of a major religion, as Time's Person of the Year or just as a dignitary?

Do we see this pope endorsing women any more than the last 10 popes? Women as clergy? How about just being considered equal to their male counterparts? Is this pope endorsing major prison time for his male priests who rape young girls and boys? Until he's willing to be an active leader in punishing his priests and have them serve time for their crimes, I'm not impressed with his humility.

So why the mayor would want to invite a dignitary who is so lacking in the essentials to bring the Catholic religion into the 21st century? It would seem business as usual, and women and children be damned. Maybe that's where the mayor is as well.

Jeanne Owers
Bedford TX

Attorney Seidel credit to FFRF, freethought

I attended a talk given in Sacramento by FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel. It was titled "The Greatest Story Ever Sold: America's Judeo-Christian Heritage." I learned a lot from his excellent presentation. We are very fortunate to have such an individual on the legal staff.

At the conclusion, Andrew made a very good pitch in regard to becoming a member of FFRF and the importance of such membership to the freethought movement and protecting the Establishment Clause.

John D. Dunn
California

•••

Enclosed is my check for Lifetime Membership. I've wanted to do this for a long time. You do an important job of keeping us from being ruled by religious doctrine.

Saying that, I am amazed at the hundreds, if not thousands, of gods and goddesses people have worshiped and continue to worship around the world. Most are now out of favor and considered mythological. But they're no different from the ones they worship today.

John Fayant
Missouri

•••

I am weary of the increasing dogma of the Religious Right and I've decided to become a "Lifer." I am now able to receive your podcasts and find them informative and entertaining. Kudos from the South. Carry on.

J. Edward Golay
South Carolina

•••

Enclosed is our check for \$250 to support FFRF and renew our membership. The Atheists and Agnostics of Rossmore value your work. Our members really enjoy reading the stories and editorials in Freethought Today.

Susan De Carlo
California

•••

This \$1,000 is a "mini-sponsorship" for Andrew Seidel, whom I met in Portland, Ore. He's knowledgeable, passionate, "mediagenic" and an excellent spokesperson for FFRF — the kind of person we want representing atheists to the rest of the country.

Robert Aughenbaugh
Oregon

•••

Keep up the good work! We got a little extra money and want to share it with you. Many are so grateful for the work you do. Cheers to FFRF in 2014.

Laura and Jes Pedersen
California

Thoughts on building, Obama, educating public

I am thoroughly impressed with the building expansion progress that FFRF is making. I am equally, if not more, impressed with the fundraising that has accompanied this effort, and it is a tribute to your mission as well as to the members that you have attracted to your ideals and goals.

Yes, we do need to reassert and claim our national godless U.S. Constitution, no matter what the current White House resident wishes to claim, in light of his misunderstanding of the Constitution and its amendments. By

his actions, he has obviously proven that he is not a constitutional scholar, never was and never will be!

This short note is to transmit to you my modest contribution to the Freethought Hall expansion as an anonymous contribution, along with my annual renewal membership. Keep up the reeducation of the U.S. population.

Name withheld by request
Minnesota

Hotel will keep Gideons out of your drawers

SPIRITUAL MENU

Time to reflect? Let us bring up a copy of your book of faith:

- Bhagavad Gita
- Book of Mormon
- Eight Noble Truths (Buddhism)
- King James Bible
- The Koran
- New American Bible
- Tao Te Ching
- The Torah
- What is Scientology

YOU WANT IT? YOU GOT IT!
TOUCH **HELP ME** ON YOUR GUESTROOM PHONE.



HOTELMURANO PROVENANCE
HOTELS

Spirit menus typically have gin, but where is the humanist philosophy? Who do you call for ghostbusters?

We attended a Center for Inquiry summit in Tacoma, Wash., last fall and noticed the enclosed card in the hotel room. As you have convinced others to stop taking the Gideon bible, I thought you might find this interesting. It certainly covers all the bases.

I like the idea because it wrests some of the power and authority that the Gideons assume by foisting bibles in public and private places. Maybe if someone lobbied them to broaden their outlook, it would have a national effect. I also think it shows people that there are other religions and opinions out there!

Betty Inman (aka White Crow)
Virginia

Thanks for conference in Raleigh, podcasts

Thank you for the mini-convention in Raleigh this past weekend. It was refreshing to hear about clergy coming out as atheists and also to meet other people who are passionate about separation of church and state.

I listen to your podcast and appreciate all the hard work that you do for this cause.

Ramiro Rodriguez
North Carolina

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.

State/Church Bulletin

Virginia gov's veto on prayer upheld

Gov. Terry McAuliffe, D-Va., vetoed a bill April 4, saying it could lead to "coercive prayer" or "religious messaging" at school events.

High schools already let students organize religious clubs, discuss religious themes and participate in voluntary prayer or other "nondisruptive expressions of belief," he said.

The Lynchburg News & Advance editorial board wrote, "There was not much new in this unnecessary legislation that could be only a step away from state-sanctioned prayer in the public schools. Lawmakers in the House and Senate should recognize that and uphold McAuliffe's veto."

The Senate refused to override the veto April 23.

Sponsor pulls bible as state book bill

Rep. Thomas Carmody, R-Shreveport, withdrew his bill to make the bible Louisiana's official state book before it could go to a full vote of the state House on April 21. The bill had become a distraction, he said.

Legislators had amended Carmody's bill two weeks earlier to make any copy of the "Holy Bible" the official state book instead of just the "historic" one in the State Museum. That drew even more criticism from opponents, reported the Times-Picayune.

Gay discrimination now legal in Mississippi

Mississippi Republican Gov. Phil Bryant signed a "turn away the gays" bill April 3 in a private ceremony joined by a few lawmakers, lobbyists for the Southern Baptist Convention and the president of the Family Research Council.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act lets businesses and individuals refuse services to LGBT people on religious grounds. The House approved it 78-43. The Senate vote was 38-14.

The bill also adds "In God We Trust" to the state seal.

Secular group rates Congress; many fail

The Secular Coalition for America released its 2013 Congressional Report Cards for the U.S. House and Senate on March 31. A majority of House members earned an "F," while a majority of senators earned a grade of "B" or above.

Representatives were graded based

on their support for 14 bills related to church-state separation issues and discrimination against nontheistic and secular Americans. Senators were graded based on their support for five bills relating to similar issues, a coalition press release said.

HOUSE: 8% received an "A", 7% received a "B", 21% received a "C", 2% received a "D" and 62% got F's.

SENATE: 7% A's, 45% B's, 5% C's, 43% F's.

Seven Democratic senators got perfect scores: Richard Blumenthal, Conn.; Mazie Hirono, Hawaii; Dick Durbin, Ill.; Elizabeth Warren, Mass.; Al Franken, Minn.; and Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez, N.J. Three Democratic representatives were perfect: Eleanor Holmes Norton, D.C.; Rush Holt, N.J.; and Louise Slaughter, N.Y. Three GOP senators received B's: Lisa Murkowski, Alaska; Paul Kirk, Ill.; and Susan Collins, Maine.

Three GOP House members tied for the lowest score of 5%: Reps. Doug LaMalfa, Mich.; Tim Walberg, Mich.; and Walter B. Jones, N.C.

Georgia parents sue over school funding

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that a lawsuit was filed April 2 by parents challenging Georgia's student scholarship organization tax credit program which lets individuals and businesses deduct contributions to groups that give scholarships to private school students, most of whom attend parochial schools.

Steve Suits, Southern Education Foundation vice president, said since the program started in 2008, more than \$280 million has been "diverted" to an "unregulated system of support for private schools" with no oversight from the state Department of Education. More than 13,000 scholarships were given in 2012.

SCOTUS denies cert for N.M. wedding case

The Supreme Court declined April 7 to take the case of New Mexico wedding photographers who refused to work at a same-sex ceremony for religious reasons.

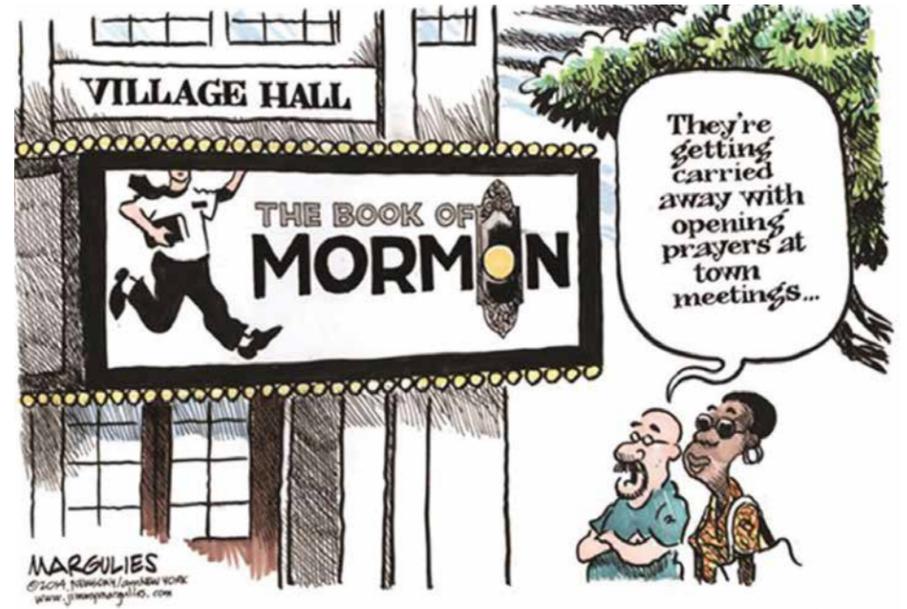
The case featured Elaine Huguenin and her husband Jonathan, whose Albuquerque studio informed Vanessa Willock and Misti Collinsworth in 2006 that it only worked "traditional weddings," reported USA Today.

"Of particular relevance here is the Huguenins' sincere religious belief that marriage is the union of a man and a woman," their Supreme Court petition said. "They believe that if they were to communicate a contrary mes-

appropriate sexual misconduct with non-parishioner adult females, which was over a decade ago. I acknowledge how wrong I was, have repented, received help, and now I ask your forgiveness. Source: Pioneer Press, 4-17-14

German customs officials at a Leipzig airport intercepted a parcel addressed to the Vatican's main post office containing 14 condoms filled with liquid cocaine.

A spokesman said the 340 grams (12 oz.) had a street value of about \$55,000. The package came from an undisclosed South American country. No one claimed it. Source: The Guardian, 3-23-14 Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org



sage about marriage — by, for example, telling the story of a polygamous wedding ceremony — they would be disobeying God."

Bill lets humanists be wedding officiants

Minnesota state Sen. John Marty, D-Roseville, introduced a bill April 4 to allow atheists and humanists to preside over wedding ceremonies. The bill would grant "solemnization authorization" to secular celebrants appointed by atheist or humanist groups.

Current law allows only "ministers of any religious denomination" to officiate.

A House version of the bill was introduced in late March and awaits a hearing by the Civil Law Committee. The Senate bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee.

Obama hosts Holy Week prayer breakfast

President Barack Obama kicked off Holy Week at the White House on April 14 with 150 Christian leaders at the fifth annual Easter Prayer Breakfast.

"The tradition was started by the Obama administration in 2010 to specifically celebrate the life and death of Christ," the New York Daily News reported.

On April 11, Obama announced a presidential delegation to attend the Mass on April 27 at which Popes John XXIII and John Paul II were declared saints.

White House counselor John Podesta led the delegation. Members were Rep. Xavier Becerra, D-Calif., chairman of the House Democratic Caucus; and Katie Beirne Fallon, assistant to the president and director of legislative affairs.

Jersey atheist sues over license plate

A federal lawsuit was filed April 17 by Americans United on behalf of Shannon Morgan, a Leesburg, N.J., atheist who applied in November for an "8THEIST" license plate in November on the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission's website. It was rejected as "considered objectionable." She then entered "BAPTIST" as a proposed plate, which was accepted.

Attempts by Morgan to get approval for her plate were ignored, the suit alleges. The suit seeks a policy "that requires any restriction of expression on personalized license plates to be based on subjective, objective, viewpoint-neutral criteria."

Mt. Soledad cross gets Obama backing

Obama administration lawyers have told the Supreme Court they will defend the 29-foot-tall cross atop Mount Soledad in San Diego as a war memorial and not unconstitutional government promotion of Christianity, the Los Angeles Times reported April 10.

The cross was erected in 1954, but it has been under legal attack since 1989. FFRF members and foxhole atheists Phil Paulson, now deceased, and Steve Trunk have led the legal challenges.

"The United States remains fully committed to preserving the Mount Soledad cross as an appropriate memorial to our nation's veterans," said U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli Jr.

Board member sits out Hindu prayer

Roanoke [Va.] County Board Supervisor Al Bedrosian stayed seated in protest May 13 because a non-Christian prayer was given to open the board meeting. Maharaj Sharma of the India Heritage Society chanted a blessing offering goodwill and peace as an invocation, the Roanoke Times reported. Three other board members stood.

Bedrosian recently has said that only Christians should give the opening prayer because he believes America is a Christian nation.

FFRF legal complaint



FFRF sent a letter of complaint about government entanglement with religion related to this April 8 post by the Galax Police Department, Galax Va.: "2014 'On Target for Christ' will be held May 10, 2014. Our goal is to build relationships with young people ages 8-16. The event will be held at the Galax Police Department firing range beginning at 10:00 am. Space is limited to the first 50 registered. Safety is our primary focus and those attending will be taught the safe handling of firearms and an opportunity to demonstrate skill with .22 rifles. The goal of the event is to build relationships with young people from both a ministry and law enforcement view. Please call Barry for more information or to register 276.233.1590. The event is free and lunch is provided."

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Continued from page 19

filling a police report. Source: Beacon Journal, 3-22-14

Other

David Barrett, 49, New Prague, MN, has returned to public ministry after taking a leave of absence in November as regional associate pastor for New Prague-area Catholic churches.

In a statement, Barrett said, "I want to fully acknowledge my past inappropriate behavior and ask forgiveness from everyone who was negatively affected by what I have done. In the past, I have used the behaviors of angry outbursts, inappropriate staring at women, and in-

Ohio members protest Day of Prayer

Ohio FFRF members Nancy Doldard and Tom Reke, joined by free-thinkers Charles Wright and Andreas Avente, protested the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 1 at the Summit County Courthouse in Akron. The Beacon Journal story said the event marked the end of a marathon reading of the bible that started the previous Sunday. Pastor Mike Radebaugh sang the national anthem and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

The paper added, "Tom Reke from Akron was among local atheists to carry signs on the sidewalk below the courthouse steps. Reke's two-line sign

read: 'Prayer Never Works/There's no God.' "

Nancy notes that Tom's god was lower-cased, unlike the newspaper's. Freethought Today tried to purchase reprint rights to the photo but was told "we will not be able to grant permission to use one of our photos for your publication" by Kimberly Barth, director of photography and graphics.

The Akron Day of Prayer had a "much lower turnout this year," Nancy said. "Also, we got to talk to some young students who were part of the local Secular Student Alliance chapter."



'Sweat the small stuff'

Does it really matter if the president says "So help me God?" Absolutely it does, says Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel (at podium). "We must defend the wall of separation against all incursions." He addressed a crowd March 31 at Lewis and Clark Law School at an event hosted by FFRF's Portland, Ore., chapter. Cheryl Kolbe, chapter president is at left, top.



Andrew Seidel also addressed the "small stuff" topic in early April at Denver's Secular Hub and the Christian nation myth at a humanist gathering in Colorado Springs. A shout-out goes to Claudette St. Pierre, FFRF Metro Denver chapter president (and her elves) for all their help in facilitating the events. Claudette notes that about a hundred people attended the presentations.

FFRF attorneys contest Day of Prayer events



Ten protesters, from FFRF's chapter the Northern Ohio Freethought Society and from Cleveland Freethinkers, counterpicketed the annual National Day of Prayer rally May 1 on Public Square in Cleveland. "We camped on the perimeter of the prayer rally with signs, and handed out some noncontracts to interested passersby," reports FFRF'er Mark Tiborsky.

Every year, the Freedom From Religion Foundation handles multiple complaints about local government officials inserting themselves into National Day of Prayer events, not as private citizens but in their roles as public employees or appointees.

FFRF, a national state-church watchdog based in Madison, Wis., so far this year has sent letters of complaint to Bulloch County (Statesboro, Ga.); the cities of Mandeville, La.; Guin and Summerdale, Ala.; and Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Polk County Public Schools, Bartow, Fla. (event at Lake Wales Senior High); and the cities of Odessa, Texas, and Barron, Wis.

Complaints about Nampa, Idaho, Jeffersonville, Ind., and other locales were pending at press time.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover wrote Mandeville Mayor Donald Villere on April 29 about the rally on the front steps of City Hall, which was prominently displayed on the city's website under the section titled "Mayor's Message."

An April 16 letter from Grover went to Odessa Mayor David Turner and City Manager Richard Morition about the May 1 Mayor's Prayer Luncheon held annually in conjunction with the NDP. A city press release said tickets

for could be bought through the city secretary and listed her phone number at City Hall.

FFRF contacted the previous mayor in 2012 about spending several thousand dollars of tax money on the luncheon and using city staff to coordinate it. Guin promoted its event on the city's website and Facebook page.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote April 30 to Bulloch County Attorney Jeff Atkins, and included a photo of a sign on the courthouse lawn. "It appears that the county is hosting the event since there is no indication of a private sponsor."

FFRF also filed an open records request for county policies on advertising and putting up displays on government property.

This year's National Day of Prayer theme was "One Voice, United in Prayer." The featured bible verse was Romans 15:6: "So that with one mind and one voice, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Secularists and even some Christians have long noted that the day "has been taken over by evangelicals," as one man put it. The NDP Task Force, based in Colorado Springs, is top-heavy with social conservatives, many of whom are homophobic and anti-choice.

FFRF on the Road

'SASS-y' seculars host FFRF in Deland, Fla.

SASS, the aptly named student club whose acronym stands for Stetson Alliance of Secular Students (affiliated with the Secular Student Alliance), hosted an April 24 dinner party on the Stetson University campus, DeLand, Fla. Guest speaker Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president, was honored to be the club's first outside speaker. The university, which has a very pretty campus, was founded in 1883 by Henry A. DeLand as DeLand Academy. It was renamed Stetson University to honor its benefactor, John B. Stetson, of Stetson hat fame. LEFT: (bottom, left) SASS faculty adviser Christopher Bell and student founder Jake Smith and (middle, left), co-founder Rachel Filson and Stefani Yee, club director, a biology major from Jamaica. (Photos: David Williamson)



Meet student activist Daniel Koster

Daniel Koster, who received a \$1,000 student activist award from FFRF last year for helping FFRF and Central Florida Freethought Community challenge bible distribution at his Orlando-area high school, is now a Florida college freshman. Daniel attended the April 24 SASS event and is pictured with Annie Laurie Gaylor.



Youth not believing bible divinely inspired

The fourth annual State of the Bible survey conducted in early 2014 by the Barna Group for the American Bible Society found "a sharp increase" in the percentage of those who think it's less than divinely inspired. The Associated Press reported on the survey April 9.

While about one in five Americans

view the bible as the word of God, an equal number doubt its authority. That's almost twice the percentage of doubters in 2011.

The greatest increase in indifference was among those between the ages of 18 and 29.

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

Supreme Court plaintiffs join convention lineup



Chemerinsky



Hamilton



Johansen



Pinn



Carroll



Rodgers



Galloway



Stevens

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, longtime 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**, Cardo-

zo 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 University 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*.

Secular Coalition for America director **Edwina Rogers**, who oversees the coalition to which FFRF belongs, and has a law degree, will be on hand. 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*.



Johnson

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.

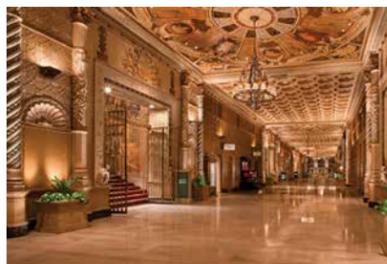
Dinner (\$55 including 23% service charge and 9% sales tax) is a choice of chicken or halibut with potato, vegetable and dessert (or chef's choice vegetarian). Vegan and gluten-free meal options are available.

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

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"



Don't miss the next issue



(to find out what this photo is all about)

Reminder:
June/July is a combined issue

Number registering

<input type="checkbox"/> FFRF member registration(s) @ \$65 per person	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$70.....	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-member registration(s) @ \$110.....	\$_____
(Save \$5 by becoming an FFRF Member)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student registration(s) @ \$10	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast @ \$30* per person	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Classic <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Check if gluten-free	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Night Dinner @ \$55* per person	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Chicken <input type="checkbox"/> Halibut <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> 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)