

Freethought Today

Vol. 32 No. 3

Published by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.

April 2015

But CNN airing wins raves

ABC, NBC join ban of Reagan's FFRF ad

A 30-second TV spot recorded by Ron Reagan for the Freedom From Religion Foundation has now been banned by the three major networks: ABC, NBC and CBS.

However, FFRF has run the ad on CNN in late March and early April to great success, welcoming hundreds of new members and hearing from thousands of interested viewers. The ad says:

Hi, I'm Ron Reagan, an unabashed atheist, and I'm alarmed by the intrusion of religion into our secular government. That's why I'm asking you to support the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the nation's largest and most effective association of atheists and agnostics, working to keep state and church separate, just like our Founding Fathers intended. Please support the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Ron Reagan, lifelong atheist, not afraid of burning in hell.

'Where have you been all my life?'

FFRF is also airing the spot on day-after rebroadcasts of "The Daily Show" through the spring.

The ad debuted on May 22, 2014, on Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" and "The Daily Show." FFRF next tried to place the spot on CBS' "60 Minutes." Last fall, after months of delays, CBS rejected that placement and banned the ad from any national CBS show. Recently, ABC and NBC also rejected it.

NBC first offered to accept it if "not afraid of burning in hell" was deleted, then even decided against that.

"We'd never agree to censor Ron's punch line," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "Imagine these national networks being so afraid of a little irreverence."

FFRF also ran the ad in select metropolitan cities on the finale of "Cosmos" last year after Fox refused to air it nationally, citing a policy against "advocacy" ads. Even major metropolitan CBS stations have refused it.

Although the networks may be pan-



Coming soon

This is a depiction of a billboard that will be going up in Madison, Wis., in mid-April. See page 5 to read about FFRF's TV ads against Wisconsin's ballooning use of taxpayer funding of private schools, which are almost all religious schools.

ning the ad, CNN viewers gave it rave reviews:

"Where have you been all my life?" (Andrew, Johns Creek, Ga.); "That is literally the best commercial I've ever seen!" (J.T., Akron, Ohio); "This is the best thing that has happened to atheism since Richard Dawkins!" (Jane, New York City); "That's an extremely superior and wonderful ad. Wow!" (C.D., Vancouver, B.C.); "Best ad I've ever seen." (J.S., Fallbrook, Calif.); "I'm excited about what you do!" (Mike, Cleveland, Tenn.); "I'm a 95-year-old lifelong atheist. That's

a long time!" (Gainesville, Fla.); "I thought I was the only atheist in America!" (E.Z., Elmhurst, N.Y.); "Brilliant!" (Ron, Nevada).

"The censorship of this ad and of Ron Reagan's 'unabashed views' by so many major networks really shows the heavy hand of religion upon this country and its power to suppress freethought and even the mildest criticism of religion," said FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.

FFRF encourages freethinkers to speak up on social media with the #NotAfraidofBurninginHell hashtag.



Ron Reagan will keynote FFRF's October convention. See back page.



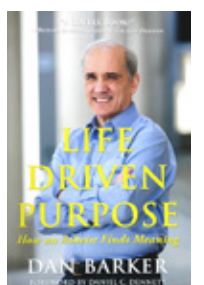
Erwin Chemerinsky (left), founding dean of the University of California-Irvine School of Law, accepts FFRF's Champion of the First Amendment honor from Co-President Dan Barker at the October convention in Los Angeles. Read his acceptance speech on pages 12 and 13. (photo by Ingrid Laas)

Inside This Issue



Anita Weier makes history page 3

Dan Barker vs. Rick Warren page 5



14-year-old sits down for his rights page 11

Meet an 'Out' Outdoors member



Neysa Dickey with Wilson at Best Friends Animal Society in Kanab, Utah. The sanctuary includes a Bunny House.

Name: Neysa Marie Dickey.

Where I live: As of 2014, Green Valley, Ariz., roughly from November-April; Bozeman, Mont., May-October. (I bought a condo last summer up there.)

Where and when I was born: Neenah, Wis., (then headquarters for Kimberly-Clark), Oct. 26, 1949; raised in Appleton, Wis.

Family: In Appleton, a brother, Pete; niece, Dawn; great-nephew, Dominic; former sister-in-law (love her as a sister), Emma. My husband, Skip Baese, died in 2010, so my only immediate (living with me) family is my 13-year-old cat, Boo. I've had her since she was 8. She's known variously as Boo, Boo-kitty, Boo-Boo, Ba-Boo-shka, Kitten-ca-Boo-dle, Bam-Boo-zler and the Boo-Meister.

Education: From the above, apparently not enough! B.A. in 1974 from Adams State College (now University) in Alamosa, Colo., in biology and environmental science, one of the first two graduates with that double major; endless training during 30 years with the

National Park Service.

Occupation: Retired supervisory park ranger (Interpretation) for the NPS. Now I'm "occupied" with volunteering at an elementary school (Reading Seed program) once a week, theatrical productions, community chorus, reading, walking, hiking, traveling, weekly game night with "the gals," book club and other fun things.

Military service: None, but my brother was a conscientious objector back in the Vietnam days and finished his two years of service in Illinois children's homes. His action had such an influence on me, that, had I been drafted, I would've done the same.

How I got where I am today: This could take a while — as I understand it, it began billions of years ago. More seriously, it's too big a question, but it might be easier if I limit my answer to how I got where I am in my atheistic thinking.

That began in the First Congregational Church (before it merged and became the United Church of Christ) in Appleton, in confirmation class.

To an emotional, hormonal, bright, questioning teen, so much of the bible made no sense, was contradictory and seemed like fairy tales. I witnessed a great deal of hypocrisy in the church. Luckily, we had a liberal, open-minded associate minister at the time, Bill Charland.

When I told Bill I felt I couldn't write the last assignment (a personal credo), he said I could write what I *didn't* believe. After that, I was probably more of an agnostic than an atheist for a few years, but since nothing intervened to "prove" the existence of a god or gods, I realized I was clearly an atheist.

Where I'm headed: Bozeman, in late April or early May. Arizona summers do me in. I love having three or four seasons in Montana and returning to Arizona for the mild winters.

Person in history I admire: Since [the guidelines don't let me] pick my father, Ed Dickey, I will go with two: Charley Scribner, my high school biology teacher, and Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*. Charley was a longtime summer ("seasonal") naturalist in Glacier National Park. It's hard to say, but I suspect (at least subliminally) he influenced my choice of college majors and my life's career. Dawkins? Read the book. And Charles Darwin fits well with my other two choices, don't you think?

A quotation I like: "It is good to tell one's heart." (Native American proverb on a refrigerator magnet I bought in an airport.)

These are a few of my favorite things: The northern Rocky Mountains, waterfalls, New Zealand, writing, acting, singing, hiking, Boo, wolves, owls, open-minded humans, laughter, languages, accents, limericks, UpWords, playing UpWords with BFF Susan, family and friends.

These are not: Mixing of church and state (surprise!); poor grammar and spelling, especially in letters filled with typographical or other errors from supposed professionals (education administrators, bankers, etc.); rotten and/or aggressive drivers; people who mispronounce my first name (rhymes with Lisa) after they've been told the correct pronunciation several times.

My doubts about religion started: See above. Somewhere along the line, I came across a copy of Freethought Today. I thought the atheist equivalent of "I'd died and gone to heaven." Here were like-thinkers, mentors, role models, activists, folks who understood my struggle. I felt as though I could breathe. That's not when my doubts started, but when they solidified.

Before I die: I'd like to feel joy and contentment with my everyday life and feel hope for the planet.



Neysa's Park Service friend Mary Wilson took this photo outside Bozeman, Mont., near Hyalite Canyon.

Ways I promote freethought: Mostly with my words and actions, having long ago come out of any closet I might have been in regarding my atheist status. I write letters to newspaper editors and other entities reminding them of the need to follow the U.S. Constitution and to be open and accepting of all people, regardless of religion or lack thereof. Every year I send out a winter solstice poem summarizing my year.

I wish you'd have asked me: What national park areas I worked in. They were (current names) Great Sand Dunes, Colorado; Timpanogos Cave, Utah; Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota; Rocky Mountain regional office, Denver; Dinosaur National Monument, Utah-Colorado (where I met my husband); Pacific Northwest regional office, Seattle (now merged with the San Francisco office); Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Montana (a lesser-known treasure); Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming-Montana-Idaho (we lived in the park at Canyon).

You also could have asked how did you get your name? My parents were looking in a book of baby names when my mother was pregnant with me. Neysa is the Slavic form of her name Agnes. We weren't Slavic, but my parents liked the name, so she was Agnes Marie and I am Neysa Marie. Also at the time, there was an illustrator for McCall's and other magazines, Neysa McMein, who was a member of the Algonquin Round Table, and Mother liked the name from her, too. Ironically perhaps, she died about five months before I was born.

Freethought Today

published by Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.

info@ffrf.org • FFRF.org

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701
(608)256-8900 • FAX (608)204-0422

Editor: Bill Dunn, ftoday@ffrf.org
Production Editor: Jake Swenson

Executive Editor: Annie Laurie Gaylor

Contributors:

Philip Appleman, Dan Barker, Erwin Chemrinsky, Amy LaValle Hansmann, Chris Johnson, Ewan McCartney, Wendy Thomas Russell, Lauryn Seering, Andrew Seidel, Maddy Ziegler,

April 2015

The only freethought newspaper in the United States

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 April 2015 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

Notify Us of Your Address Change Promptly!

Email: info@ffrf.org

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

Hip, hip hurray for Madison council, Anita Weier

Making history: ‘Nonreligion’ now protected class

The city council in Madison, Wis., adopted on March 31 what’s believed to be the nation’s first city ordinance making “nonreligion” a protected class. The historic action extends the same protections to nonreligion as it does to religion.

Madison’s equal opportunity ordinance now bans discrimination based on “sex, race, religion or nonreligion, color, national origin or ancestry, citizenship status, age, handicap/disability, marital status, source of income, arrest record or conviction record, less than honorable discharge, physical appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic identity, political beliefs, familial status, student, domestic partner, or receipt of rental assistance.”

The ordinance change, which initially met a rocky reception, was proposed by outgoing Alder Anita Weier. Testimony of FFRF Staff Attorneys Patrick Elliott and Andrew Seidel appeared to convince a subcommittee to recommend approval to the council. Eventually, 14 members of the 20-member council agreed to sponsor it, and it passed by voice vote without dissent.

The Wall Street Journal reported it April 2 with the headline “In Madison, nonbelievers have religious rights too.”

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor hailed the proposal for its symbolic significance. However, it also carries penalties of \$100 to \$500, and means the city’s Equal Opportunities Commission can investigate complaints of discrimination by nonbelievers, Weier pointed out.

Weier, who describes herself as “not religious,” told the Wall Street Journal: “Since religion is protected in our equal opportunities ordinance, in all its variations, I thought that nonreligion should be, too. I just think there is a general stigma about it. I don’t think people should be afraid to say what



Madison Alder Anita Weier (photo by Andrew Seidel)

they they think.”

Elliott and Seidel testified with concrete examples of discrimination. Elliott noted ethnic festivals in Wisconsin give free entry to church-goers (successfully contested by FFRF) and told how a plaintiff in one of FFRF’s lawsuits lost her job when her atheism became known. “Having worked to protect the civil rights of nonreligious persons, I can tell you that discrimination against atheists is widespread and an ongoing concern. It permeates into employment, public schools and even in discounts offered by places of public accommodation,” Elliott testified.

Seidel noted that nonbelievers have been rejected as volunteers at soup kitchens and that several state constitutions forbid atheists to hold public office. “We see discounts to religious people, which effectively charge atheists a higher price for the same goods. Here in Madison, one store gave out free gallons of milk to Christians, while forcing atheists to pay full price. Schools block



A screen capture of WISC-TV’s story shows Annie Laurie Gaylor addressing the Madison Common Council.

atheist groups from forming and filter out atheist and freethought websites,” he said.

Seidel told the council: “If any group in this country needs protection, it’s the one that is least liked and most distrusted. When it comes to voting for an otherwise qualified candidate, atheists rank below Jewish, Mormon, LGBT and Muslims. We fall 14 percentage points below a gay or lesbian candidate, simply because of our irreligion.”

Chris Calvey, former director of Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, noted that even though AHA is one of the most successful secular campus groups in the country, many of its student leaders are afraid to list their volunteer work on their résumés.

FFRF Lifetime Member T. Kozlovsky

referred to surveys and polls routinely showing that atheists and nonbelievers are the most distrusted.

Gaylor noted that secularists usually are on the defensive when going before local governmental bodies, such as protesting prayer.

Back in the 1970s, a very different kind of public servant, Anita Bryant, went before a government board in Dade County, Fla., seeking not to extend rights and protections, as Anita Weier is doing, but to take them away, Gaylor noted.

“Bryant’s ordinance unfortunately led to a national movement to take away rights from gays. It’s my hope that the adoption of this historic ordinance will seed other such ordinances to protect rights — nonreligious rights — around the country.”

FFRF’s display stolen from Wis. Capitol

A Freedom From Religion Foundation “In Reason We Trust” sign was stolen March 28 from the first-floor Capitol rotunda in Madison, Wis. The sign features Thomas Jefferson with his thought-provoking quote, “Question with boldness even the existence of a god. . .”

FFRF Staff Attorney Sam Grover and Legal Intern Ryan Jayne (pictured) filed the permit application March 9. The sign was put up in the Capitol to counter Easter religious displays.

After contacting authorities, FFRF was given access to the security footage. On Saturday, March 28, at 1:13 p.m., three suspects were recorded removing the 20x30-inch sign and the easel it was propped on.

The suspects are two males and a female, all Caucasian. Footage showed a male struggling to remove the tape holding the sign to the easel. The other suspects joined shortly after and posed for multiple “selfies” on a cell-phone camera. One male left through the Wisconsin Avenue exit and the oth-



FFRF staff members Sam Grover and Ryan Jayne with the sign. (photo by Andrew Seidel)

er suspects left via the West Washington exit.

The stolen easel was a rental from the Capitol Police Department.

The theft is a Class A misdemeanor,

with a fine up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to 9 months. FFRF is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator(s).

Include FFRF In Your Estate Planning

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

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

FFRF
P.O. Box 750
Madison WI 53701

Freedom Depends on Freethinkers

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

NOBODY DIES IN THE SPRING

Nobody dies in the spring
on the Upper West Side:
nobody dies.
On the Upper West Side
we're holding hands with strangers
on the Number 5 bus,
and we're singing the sweet
graffiti on the subway,
and kids are skipping patterns through
the bright haze of incinerators,
and beagles and poodles are making a happy
ruin of the sidewalks,
and hot-dog men are racing
their pushcarts down Riverside Drive,
and Con Ed is tearing up Broadway
from Times Square to the Bronx,
and the world is a morning miracle
of sirens and horns and jackhammers
and Baskin-Robbins' 31 kinds of litter
and sausages at Zabar's floating
overhead like blimps—oh,
it is no place for dying, not
on the Upper West Side, in springtime.

There will be a time
for the smell of burning leaves at Barnard,
for milkweed winging silky over Grant's Tomb,
for apples falling to grass in Needle Park;
but not in all this fresh new golden
smog: now there is something
breaking loose in people's chests,
something that makes butchers and bus boys
and our neighborhood narcs and muggers
go whistling in the streets—now
there is something with goat feet out there, not
waiting for the WALK light, piping
life into West End window-boxes,
pollinating weeds around
condemned residential hotels,
and prancing along at the head
of every elbowing crowd on the West Side,
singing:
*follow me—it's spring—
and nobody dies.*

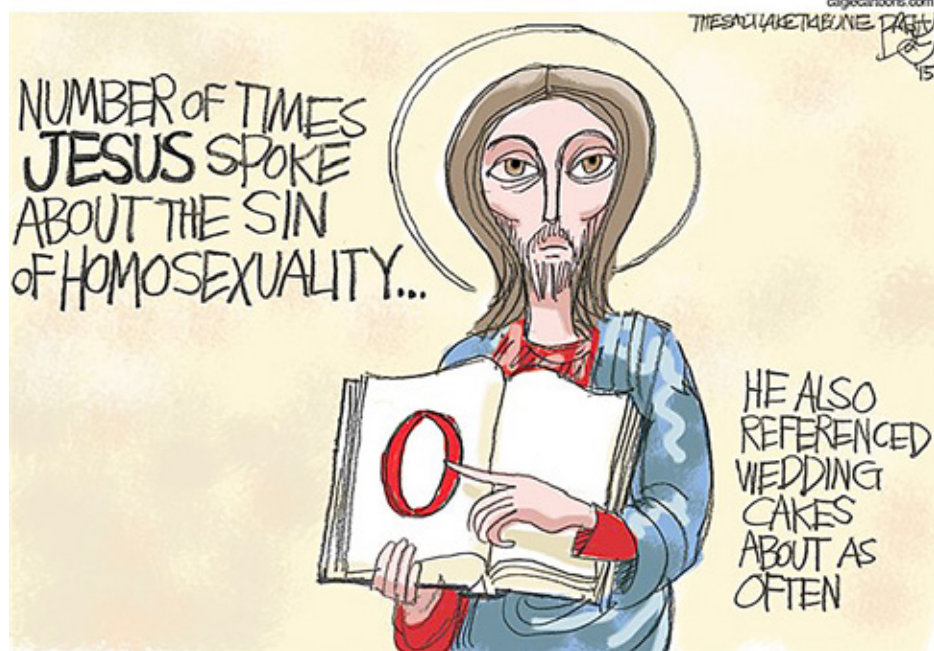
© Philip Appleman.

From the book *New and Selected Poems, 1956–1996*



Philip Appleman is a 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 "After-life" Members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Phil's books: ffrf.org/shop.



Overheard

I'm not president, but I do a magic show. Teller and I are atheists and our audiences are mostly believers and they don't care what we don't believe because we're the ones they want to see do a magic show. If Americans can take honesty in their magicians, we should give them a chance to accept honesty in their president.



Penn Jillette, op-ed, "Have Faith, We'll Have an Atheist President"

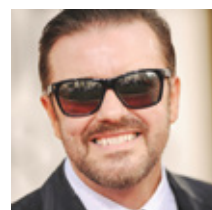
New York Times, 3-27-15

No matter how many Christians live here, we are not a Christian nation. For the sake of people of all faiths and of no faith, we should hope we never become one.

Op-ed by Peter Manseau, author of *One Nation Under Gods: A New American History*

Fox News, 3-6-15

I retweeted this awful thing, this religious thing — "If you euthanize someone in terrible agony, it's deprived them of the privilege of the grace of God to suffer" — and I just think what a twisted, evil thought process that is. To impose your beliefs on another human being in terrible pain and suffering and agony and trauma, and you're telling them that it's cowardly not to live through that hopelessness and fear and pain. It disgusts me.



Atheist entertainer Ricky Gervais, interview

New York Daily News, 3-29-15

You know what? The [anti-abortion] activists need to get their lives together. When they become sin free, then you call me back.

Callie Chatman, a certified medical technician and Baptist pastor's wife who works one day a week at Reproductive Health Services, where abortions are performed in Montgomery, Ala.

Christian Post, 3-2-15

While the number of visible minority atheists is still small, we are here and we're here to stay. We will continue to grow, in both the black and secular communities. We can lead the charge for this change. The more we make our presence known, the better our chances of working together to turn around the disparities we face, and bolster the recognition we so rightly deserve.



Mandisa Thomas, president and founder of Black Nonbelievers Inc., op-ed

CNN, 3-27-15

Our editorial board's solution to the brouhaha over the Hindu prayer last week in the Senate chambers of the Idaho Legislature? Simple. Stop having public prayers at a body that makes laws for everyone — they're inappropriate.

Newspaper's Facebook post referring to an editorial commenting on how Sens. Steve Vick, Sheryl Nuxoll and Lori Den Hartog "behaved like petulant children" when they walked out on Rajan Zed's prayer

Idaho Press-Tribune, 3-11-15

Vatican reeling as DNA tests show communion wafers contain 0% Christ

58,724 people like this. Sign Up to see what your friends like.

The Vatican is this morning facing a further crisis after routine DNA tests revealed that the communion wafers used in Sunday mass contain 0% of the body and blood of Christ.

The findings are sure to pile further pressure on the ailing religious



UK-based NewsThump's stated aim is "to mock absolutely everyone, eventually."



Jessica and Sean Scuff are discerning readers (and Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel's sister and brother-in-law). (photo by Andrew Seidel)



Dan Barker signs a copy at a pre-release book signing in FFRF's new Charlie Brooks Auditorium in March. (photo by Jake Swenson)

Barker finds purpose where pastor Rick fails

Atheist book for 'inspirational' aisle?

It seems certain that not-so-reverend (or revered) Rick Warren is no intellectual match for ex-reverend Dan Barker.

Christian pastor Warren's best-seller, *Purpose Driven Life*, starts with a single-sentence paragraph: "It's not about you." God planned your life, he claims, before you were born. "You don't get to choose your purpose."

Former minister Barker, now FFRF co-president, turns Warren's sad worldview right-side up in his new book, *Life Driven Purpose: How an Atheist Finds Meaning* (April 2015, Pitchstone). "It is about you," his book starts. "When it comes to purpose, it is about you and no one else."

Life Driven Purpose, with an eloquent foreword by philosopher Daniel C. Dennett (author of *Breaking the Spell* and an honorary FFRF director) is the

first book by an atheist aimed at the "inspirational/motivational" bookshelves. "We atheists are truly IN-spired," Dan says, "while believers are OUT-spired. They desperately seek their marching orders from somewhere outside themselves — a king, commander, lord or slave master — while we nonbelievers find and create purpose and meaning within ourselves."

Inner-directed purpose is the only true purpose, Dan writes. "Asking, 'If there is no God, what is the purpose of life?' is like asking, 'If there is no master, whose slave will I be?'"

Chapter 1, "The Good News," softly mimics the "inspirational" style of "psycho-faith" authors like Rick Warren and Joel Osteen, but comes to a novel conclusion: The truly good news is that there is no purpose of life. There is purpose *in* life. Nonbelievers have

lived, and are living, immensely meaningful lives as they work to solve problems and meet the challenges that confront us in the real world.

The rest of the book returns to Dan's familiar writing style. Chapter 2, "Mere Morality," replaces C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* with a superior, naturalistic moral philosophy. Chapter 3, "Religious Color Blindness," creatively probes the polarized mind of a fundamentalist believer. (You'll have to read it to discover how Annie Laurie Gaylor's misplaced hat sheds light on religious belief.) Chapter 4, "Much Ado About," is Dan's thoughtful answer to the question "Can something come from nothing?"

Summing it all up, the final chapter "Life Is Life" circles back to "meaning" by recounting personal stories from Dan's family. Thus does it replace the

elusive "meaning of life" with the very real "meaning in life."

Life Driven Purpose flips so many religious precepts on their heads. You can see the real world much better, Dan says, by looking through the right end of the telescope. "A supernatural additive pollutes what is pure and precious in our species. We atheists simply refuse to be cheated of the good life."

Richard Dawkins, who helped with editing, calls *Life Driven Purpose* "a lovely book!"

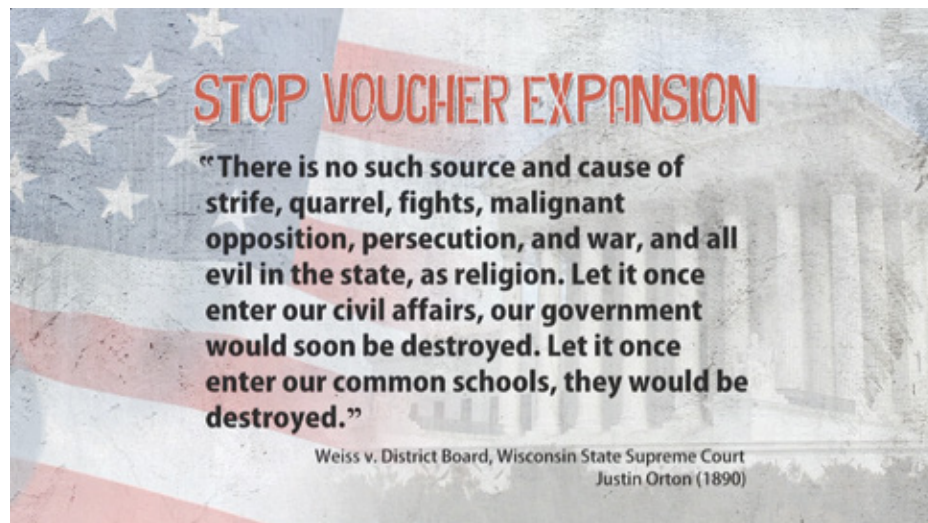
Ordering from FFRF benefits the Foundation because Dan is contributing his royalties. You can order the book for \$20 postpaid by U.S. mail from FFRF Shop, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701, or online at ffrf.org/shop, where prices vary slightly due to custom shipping. (Please indicate if you'd like it autographed.)

FFRF to air TV ads against Wis. voucher expansion

FFRF has produced two 30-second TV ads to air in Madison, Eau Claire-La Crosse and a few other Wisconsin markets, raising the alarm on Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's unprecedented bid to expand vouchers to send children to religious schools at public expense.

"We have a sense of urgency to inform the public about the disastrous consequences, if Walker's voucher expansion is adopted," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "We must end Wisconsin's failed voucher experiment, not expand it."

The first spot explains: "Our public schools are under attack by Governor Walker. He wants to take money from our public schools and use it to support someone else's religion. Your tax dollars shouldn't fund religiously segregated schools. Nearly half of our state's students would be eligible for vouchers under Walker's scheme. Vouchers are bad for children and bad for education. Help us stop Walker's brazen attack on our public schools."



A screen capture of FFRF's anti-voucher commercial.

The second ad (quoting a Wisconsin Supreme Court decision) says: "There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state, as religion. Let it once enter our civil affairs, our government

would soon be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed." It concludes, "Stop Governor Walker's disastrous proposal to expand vouchers for religiously segregated schools."

The ads started airing April 6 on the

6 p.m. and 10 p.m. news broadcasts for two weeks on WISC-TV, the Madison-area CBS affiliate. FFRF also scheduled them locally during CBS "Sunday Morning" and a few other news programs for two weeks.

The ad takes viewers to ffrf.org/stopvouchers to encourage them to contact legislators using information from the Web page.

FFRF notes that Walker's recently expanded statewide voucher system has resulted in a system where 100% of the state-funded schools are Christian, and 73% of students attend Catholic schools.

What Is a Freethinker?

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



FFRF legal staff secures variety of victories

FFRF complaint stops teachers' prayer

Two Prattville Primary School teachers in Prattville, Ala., will no longer lead students in Christian prayer during the school day. FFRF received a report that one teacher led at least six classes in prayer while students were in the hallway on the way to lunch.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent the Autauga County School System a complaint letter Nov. 24. The school board's attorney responded Feb. 27 that FFRF's concerns had been "specifically addressed with the two teachers mentioned" and did not anticipate a continued problem.

'Rogue speaker' out in Nebraska

Elkhorn Valley View Middle School, Elkhorn, Neb., will ensure that future school assemblies are free from inappropriate religious content. Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter of complaint March 2 about a Dec. 8, 2014, assembly about drug and alcohol awareness at which Pastor Servando Perales invoked God and Jesus many times.

FFRF's complainant summarized the message her child received as, "If you don't find God, then you'll be a drug dealer and a criminal."

Superintendent Steve Baker responded the same day, agreeing that the assembly had been inappropriate, claiming that it "went astray as the result of a rogue speaker." Perales will not be invited back, Baker said.

Good news: Gideons get left behind

Jefferson County School District in Madras, Ore., will no longer allow the Good News Club to park a trailer at Warm Springs K-8 Academy. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote to the district Feb. 16 after learning that the school board allowed the club to promote religion during school hours on school property. The Child Evangelism Fellowship states that club is to "evangelize boys and girls with the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ."

An attorney for the district answered March 3, forwarding a letter the district sent to the club to inform it that allowing the trailer on school property was unconstitutional.

•••

After FFRF received a report that Gideons International distributed bibles to students at Holly Hill Elementary School, Enterprise, Ala., Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote a March 18 complaint letter.

"It is unconstitutional for public school districts to permit the Gideon Society to distribute bibles as part of the public school day. Courts have uniformly held that the distribution of bibles to students at public schools during instructional time is prohibited," said Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel in a March 18 letter to the district.

Enterprise City Schools Superintendent Camille Wright responded the next day, saying she had notified all principals not to allow Gideons to distribute bibles on school grounds.



FFRF Legal Fellow Kat Paige with Staff Attorneys Patrick Elliott (right) and Andrew Seidel on March 14 at Freethought Festival 4 organized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Atheists, Humanists & Agnostics student group. Elliott and Seidel presented a one-hour workshop titled "Get Off Your Butt and Help Protect the Wall of Separation."

K-Life Ministries no longer welcome

Sheridan County School District #2, Sheridan, Wyo., will not let representatives from K-Life Ministries, a Christian youth organization, visit students during the school day. The group, based in Branson, Mo., is known nationally for insinuating its members into students' space at lunch tables to discuss personal religious beliefs.

Superintendent Craig Dougherty responded March 9 to Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel's Nov. 12 complaint letter: "You can be assured that K-Life representatives will not be allowed into the public schools during lunch to proselytize, talk to students or pass out literature."

Letter remedies Okla. religious violations

Chandler Public School District in Chandler, Okla., has resolved several constitutional violations after getting a Jan. 30 complaint letter from Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel, who wrote to object to reports about school-organized prayers at football practices and other athletic events, as well as a teacher giving religious explanations for scientific matters and proclaiming the teacher "did not believe in science." Crosses and other religious items were also being displayed in classrooms.

Superintendent Wayland Kimble responded March 9, saying the issues had all been resolved and that he did not foresee them resurfacing.

Bible verses by principal silenced

Principal Dan Noll, White Oak [Texas] High School, has stopped his practice of reciting bible verses during

morning announcements over the intercom. The district originally doubled down after getting Staff Attorney Sam Grover's complaint letter March 5. White Oak ISD Superintendent Michael Gilbert wrote in a statement that he was fully aware of the practice and, "we have not (in my opinion) violated anyone's rights and/or subjected anyone to undue stress. Bible studies and scriptures are allowed in schools." Gilbert's recommended response to FFRF was, "I'm sorry you feel that way. I will be praying for you and your staff daily."

Gilbert reconsidered later, however, according to a March 15 article in the Longview News-Journal. It quoted Gilbert saying that Noll's "thought for the day" would remain a part of morning announcements but added: "It will consist of material intended to encourage students to consider positive choices in their daily life and plans for the future. The thought for the day will come from a variety of sources and will not include chapter and verse from Scripture."

'You're a sinner' video plug pulled

Palm Beach County School District in Florida has stopped making students watch a motivational speech by Christian evangelist Nick Vujicic. Boca Raton Middle School had required all students to watch one of Vujicic's speeches. He also spoke at several other schools in the district.

Vujicic's organization, Life Without Limbs, encourages visitors to its website to "become a Christian" and "understand and accept that you are a sinner." The district reportedly also showed videos of his presentations to preschool and elementary students and had plans for future events.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel com-

plained in a March 9 letter. An administrator responded March 16 that the district would "immediately cease sharing this video with our students."

FFRF ends prayer at Ohio athletics

The St. Clairsville High School spring sports banquet in St. Clairsville, Ohio, did not include prayer, unlike its fall banquet, thanks to a Jan. 5 complaint letter from Staff Attorney Sam Grover. He sent the letter after learning that the St. Clairsville-Richland City School Board president reportedly led a sectarian invocation and benediction at the fall banquet.

FFRF's complainant reported March 18 that the spring banquet had no prayer or mention of religion.

Church signs off L.A. school fence

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a March 6 letter objecting to letting a church permanently post signs on the fence of University High School in Los Angeles. Vintage Church had been permitted to keep signs up around the clock for at least two years.

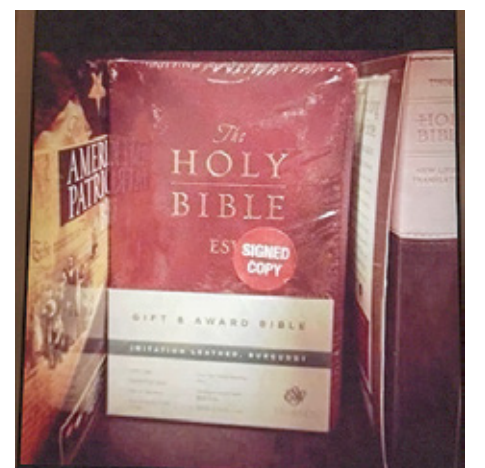
FFRF's complainant reported March 20 that the signs had been taken down.

Christian WyldLife not oxymoron

A Chicago Public Schools teacher who regularly promoted weekly religious club meetings to students during instructional time will no longer be allowed to do so. A Greeley Elementary School teacher promoted meetings of WyldLife, a Christian club that meets in the school's gym after the school day ends. WyldLife is sponsored by Young Life, an organization dedicated to "introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith."

The teacher also regularly invited students to bible study with his wife and other adults.

"A public school may not sponsor or provide preferential treatment to a Christian club," said FFRF Staff Attorney Sam Grover in a complaint letter. The district responded that it advised the teacher he could not promote the club or bible study during the school day. In addition, FFRF received word on March 25 that all staff had been issued guidelines regarding religious clubs.



One of a kind?

Bill Lundell, Texas Life Member, writes, "After seeing this in a bookstore, a Facebook friend sent me this picture. Unique find!"

FFRF, ACLU file second suit against Indiana county

The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a second lawsuit March 24 against Franklin County, Ind., after the county denied its application for a seasonal display about the Bill of Rights on the courthouse lawn in Brookville. FFRF is represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana and its Senior Staff Attorney Gavin M. Rose.

FFRF previously sued over an annual nativity display prominently placed in front of the courthouse. The county subsequently passed an ordinance declaring the courthouse lawn a public forum, where, it claimed, any citizen could put up a display with the right paperwork.

FFRF maintains that the county's practice of putting up a nativity scene every year prior to passage of the ordinance was illegal and is still pursuing its original federal lawsuit.

The Thomas More Society, a conservative Catholic legal group, has stepped in to represent the county. Jocelyn Floyd, associate counsel, claimed in a press release, "A public forum, such as the Franklin County Courthouse lawn, is open to speech from all citizens on any topic, religious speech included. If people disagree with a message being proclaimed in a public forum, the proper response is to apply and put up their own display as well, not try to shut

down the displays of other citizens."

"That welcome message apparently doesn't apply to atheists," noted Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "When FFRF applied to place a charming display celebrating the Dec. 15 'nativity' of the Bill of Rights, we were rejected. The county cannot create a public forum only for Christianity or majority views."

Similarly, when the Satanic Temple applied to place "an artistic three-dimensional sculpture" mounted on a wooden platform, its application was denied. FFRF, with the Satanic Temple as co-plaintiff, is asking the court to allow the displays.

The county currently limits applicants to Franklin County citizens. FFRF contends this requirement violates its First Amendment rights and is asking the court to enter an injunction allowing the displays. In FFRF's ongoing lawsuit over placement of the nativity scene, local members, who are offended by the yearly governmental Christian display, are named as plaintiffs.

The case is filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, Indianapolis Division, and is assigned to Judge Sarah Evans Barker. The ongoing nativity suit is before U.S. District Judge Tanya Walton Pratt.

Theocrat group awards FFRF 'blue ribbon'

By Andrew L. Seidel
FFRF Staff Attorney

The Liberty Institute, a Texas-based theocratic legal group founded in 1972 as the Free Market Foundation, released its annual "Survey of Hostility to Religion in America." Ironically titled "Undeniable," it's full of misinformation, twisted facts and erroneous conclusions.

My friend Rob Boston at Americans United helped debunk several of the stories that the institute has used previously, but I don't want to focus on the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of factual errors in their ponderous 400-page cut-and-paste job. Instead, I'll just point out that its fearmongering shows what and who scares them. Liberty Institute is terrified of, and perhaps a bit obsessed with, FFRF and the great work we do.

The timorous survey mentions FFRF 420 times in 393 pages. On top of those

420 mentions, it references our website 185 times. Thanks for all the hits! Our friends at the American Civil Liberties Union come in second with 260 mentions.

The survey came on the heels of an institute release listing its top "five foes": FFRF, Americans United, American Atheists, the American Humanist Association and the ACLU. Then the American Family Association — the \$30 million hate group — released its "Bigotry Map" and rudely left our hard-working friends at the Center For Inquiry off the map. The map had to be puffed up to scare AFA's donors, so the group included FFRF and AU chapters and even college atheist groups.

You have to hand it to them, they really know how to name things. "Liberty" Institute, "Undeniable" and the Survey of "Hostility to Religion" in America. They simply choose the word that best represents the opposite of their intent. Big Brother and the Ministry of Love would have been so proud. Only in the warped mind of an evangelical Chris-

tian law firm does upholding the separation of state and church amount to hostility. They need to feel persecuted, even if they aren't.

And because Christians are (for now) the majority in this country, vastly overrepresented in government and used to exercising their privilege without being challenged, the institute scraped together this glorified Internet search. It's clear that they envy FFRF's effectiveness.

If you look at their website, they claim to have won 90% of their cases against secular groups. However, Liberty Institute has gone up against FFRF precisely *once* in court. That was the case of the Jesus portrait in the public school in Jackson, Ohio. FFRF and the ACLU won, and the school district, which unfortunately made the mistake of listening to religious demagogues, ended up paying nearly \$100,000 in legal fees.

So, at least against FFRF, they've lost 100% of their cases. But why let facts get in the way of mythology?



What we imagine our award will look like. We're sure it's in the mail!

Texas coach strikes out on state/church separation

FFRF Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent a letter of complaint April 2 to the Pittsburg [Texas] Independent School District after learning that Pittsburg High School head baseball coach Tommy Stewart reportedly conducts bible study with players after practice each Wednesday and punishes those who don't attend with 20 minutes of running.

FFRF's complainant reported that Stewart shows religious videos, including the movie "God's Not Dead," and that practice uniforms have "With GOD all things are possible" printed on them.

Before FFRF had even written the district, word of the complainant's objections were reported by local media. Superintendent Judy Pollan sent a message of support for Stewart to staffers, writing, "We are blessed to have a man who feels called to work with our boys as they make the transition into manhood. I WOULD MOST CERTAINLY RATHER BE REPORTED FOR DOING SOMETHING GOOD RATHER THAN DOING SOMETHING BAD."

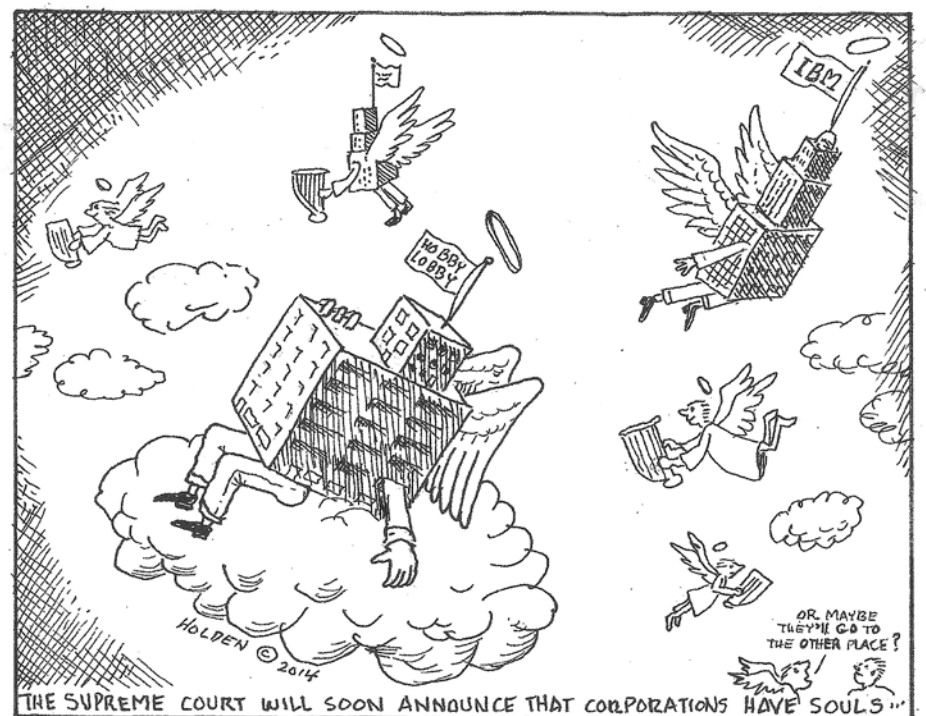
Pollan warned that FFRF "is the same [group] that caused White

Oak and Mt. Vernon problems," and chastised the local complainant for "hid[ing] behind the camera and not show[ing] her face." She concluded her email with a bible quote: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

According to Co-President Dan Barker, "FFRF is pleased to report it has experienced no withering as of today and is prepared to alert the police should anyone attempt to 'cut down' its 'workers of iniquity.'"

Barker added, "It shows the extent of the problem that the superintendent, instead of taking corrective measures against the coach, compounds the violation by misusing her public authority to espouse her personal beliefs. This public school district's promotion of religion turns Christians into 'insiders' and the rest of us into 'outsiders,' and that is unacceptable."

Pittsburg's native sons include U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert and Carroll Shelby, auto designer and racing driver.



Recruit a Member—Sample Copies for \$2

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.)

Four reasons I'm glad I came out as an atheist

This column was first published March 19 at AlterNet and is reprinted with the author's permission.

By Wendy Thomas Russell

Coming out of any proverbial closet can be hard. For those of us who have hidden part of our identities from people we know and love, finally revealing that thing can be daunting. Fear and anxiety, no matter how ungrounded, have a way of clutching our hearts.

When I decided four years ago to write a book aimed at secular parents, I knew that it would require that I disclose my atheism to my friends and family. My own parents were comfortably secular themselves, which no doubt made the task a whole lot easier. But I had plenty of other loved ones who felt strongly about their faith and would surely be offended or uncomfortable with my stance — not to mention worried about my daughter's eternal soul. So I definitely felt that sense of coming out of a closet.

I took a few days to send a bunch of e-mails and make a few phone calls. And while no one disowned me in the process, the revelation did hurt some people I love, at least a little. And that made it hard.

But now, four years later, I can candidly say that, for me personally, being "out" has been one of the most surprisingly gratifying choices I've ever made. Here's why.

1. It turns out I really enjoy shattering people's assumptions. I don't fit the media's stereotype of a non-believer — who does, right? — so it's nice to be able to spread the "good word" that atheists, agnostics and other "nones" are just as likely as the next guy to be engaging people, good parents and involved community members. I particularly enjoy slipping my atheism into conversation with religious people who already know and like me; it forces them to confront any stereotypes they might have. Always a good thing.

2. I like religious people more now. When I was closeted, it was way too easy to sit back and become preemptively resentful. I sometimes felt a little pissed that others were "free" to share their views while I had to keep mine to myself. I assumed, as many do, that people's reactions would be negative if I were to inject my views into these conversations. But once I was out — and because I only brought up my atheism in truly neutral ways, not as a point of conflict — the reactions from religious people have been overwhelmingly positive.

Some quietly disapprove, sure. But, in my experience, religious people have been, outwardly, very lovely about my lack of belief. (As lovely, incidentally, as I am about their belief.) They don't insult me or shy away from me. They don't avoid the subject (well, some do, and that's okay!) or make snide comments. They don't try to change me. And with every positive experience I have, I am more open and less judgmental of "religious people"

myself. I find that the more open I am about myself, the better I feel about the people around me.

3. I'm setting a great example for my child. Not believing in God is nothing to be ashamed of, but being open about our disbelief does — I believe — require a bit of finesse. We ought not just blurt it out in anger. We ought not invoke it as a weapon. We ought not talk about it excessively just because we "can." I don't want my child to ever feel ashamed to share her beliefs with others, whatever those beliefs turn out to be, but I also want to be a good role model for how to go about it without being a dick.

4. I'm opening the door for others. You wouldn't believe how many people in our day-to-day lives consider themselves nonreligious, and the look of refreshment on their faces when you open the conversation can be priceless. It's like the floodgates open. There's this whole, rather fascinating aspect of your life, and theirs, that can be tapped for great conversation. By being open myself first, I'm showing others that it's okay to make the first move. In fact, it can make friendships, and maybe life, even better.

Not believing in God is not like being gay, lesbian or transgender. Sharing your "religious affiliation" with others is not required to live a normal, healthy, happy life. Unless you choose to be an activist (or a secular-parenting author), you probably don't adopt behaviors that make you stand out as secular. You might not even know where your friends fall on the religious spec-



Wendy Thomas Russell

trum, or want to know.

That's OK.

There are lots of reasons to come out as a nonbeliever. There are lots of reasons not to come out. All of us must weigh myriad factors before making that call for ourselves, not the least of which is our proximity to the "bible belt." But if you're on the fence, and face no heart-crushing consequences to doing so, I urge you to open that door a crack. You might be delighted by what you find there.

Wendy Thomas Russell has spent most of her career in Southern California, writing and editing for newspapers, magazines and other online and print publications. Her new book is *Relax, It's Just God: How and Why to Talk to Kids About Religion When You're Not Religious*. Her "Natural Wonderers" blog ("Raising curious, compassionate kids in a secular family") is at patheos.com/blogs/naturalwonderers/. Her website is at wendythomasrussell.com/. She lives in Long Beach with her husband and daughter.

An atheist view of the golden rule

This op-ed was originally published March 12 in the *Brainerd, Minn., Dispatch* and is reprinted with the author's permission.

By Amy LaValle Hansmann

I recently read a guest opinion piece that seemed to make the case for religion as a necessary tool for moral behavior.

As an atheist, I often hear that there can be no morality without the absolutes of the Bible (or any other holy book). However, I've found that morality can be quite easily boiled down to one simple piece of guidance, which is commonly referred to as "the golden rule."

While the phrase "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" can be found in some form in the Bible, I'm confident that we as a species could have figured this one out on our own. It's really quite simple. Why, as an atheist, don't I run around murdering people? Because I have no desire to do so, and even if I did, I am equipped

with empathy and can understand how that action would hurt someone else. Why don't I go around driving my car at 100 miles per hour when I feel like it? Because I'm aware of the danger that puts not only myself in, but my fellow humans as well should I happen to crash.

I have had no trouble raising children without the mandates of any religion.

I have had no trouble raising children without the mandates of any religion. They are simply taught to use the empathy and compassion they were born with to treat other people with respect and kindness. If they wouldn't like someone hitting them with a stick, then why would they go around hitting



Amy LaValle Hansmann

someone else with one? It's not a terribly difficult concept to understand, even for children. In fact, when I look around at the world today, I see a direct correlation between the people committing the worst atrocities against humanity, and religion.

I get together regularly with a group of atheists, agnostics, and "freethinkers" as some people prefer to call themselves, and they are some of the kindest, most generous people I've ever had the privilege of knowing. And the interesting thing is, they aren't "good" because they are trying to earn their way to heaven, or win favor with a deity. They are good because they genuinely care about their fellow human

beings, and want what's best for everyone. We have evolved as a species to care about each other. It's the only way we can survive. If we didn't have that sense of built in empathy, we would have become extinct long ago.

I think it's far nobler a pursuit to really wrestle together with questions of ethics than to evade our responsibility and just parrot edicts that were written down thousands of years ago. It's too easy to not have to really think about the consequences of our actions when we can just point to a book and say "but God said so."

In no other realm of understanding is faith seen as a good way of knowing anything about the universe. We don't understand math because we take it on faith. So why should we stop wondering at the many mysteries the universe still has for us to find answers to?

Leaving it to faith is giving up, and deciding that we don't need to seek any further understanding of our lives. In my opinion, that stance does not get us any further as a species. It only leaves us standing still; unable to progress and make life better for everyone.

Amy LaValle Hansmann founded the *Brainerd Area Atheists & Freethinkers* four years ago "to help connect all the freethinkers in my small town who are feeling isolated because of their lack of belief." In her blog "Liberal House on the Prairie," she describes herself as a progressive mom living in the "real America" and adds, "I do have a job, but it's not an interesting one (smiley face)."

Stop the hate; overturn RFRA laws everywhere



By Annie Laurie Gaylor
FFRF Co-president

When my mother-in-law Pat Barker's eyes were opened to religion after a lifetime of devout fundamentalist belief, she poignantly told my husband, Dan: "I'm so glad I don't have to hate anymore."

"You don't have to hate anymore" could be the slogan of the movement known by the hashtag #boycottindiana.

No one should hate in the name of religion. But certainly no one should be allowed to legally discriminate in the name of their god. Bigotry is not divine. No state should pass a law, like Indiana did in early April, which grants religious citizens and corporations license to break laws they feel go against their religion, such as anti-discrimination laws protecting gays.

Indiana passed a state version of the

1993 federal law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, that brought us the Supreme Court's infamous Hobby Lobby ruling last year, setting women's contraceptive rights back half a century. In that ruling, the right-wing, male, Catholic bloc on our Supreme Court ruled that corporations have "religious rights" that can be "offended" if employees don't follow their boss's religion, and that supersede the rights of women.

Clearly, it's time for Congress to overturn the federal RFRA, which has seeded RFRA in almost half of our states. If it's not in your state yet, watch out — it's coming soon.

Thanks to corporations that are more caring than Hobby Lobby, Indiana has become the focus of national consciousness raising and consternation. The NCAA released a statement: "We are especially concerned about how this legislation could affect our student-athletes and employees.

We will work diligently to assure student-athletes competing in, and visitors attending, next week's Men's Final Four in Indianapolis are not impacted negatively by this bill."

Organizations such as the Gen Con gaming convention and the \$4 billion software company Salesforce threatened to move operations out of Indiana.

Every hour, it seemed, another city or state joined the boycott, including the mayors of Seattle, San Francisco, Portland and the governors of Connecticut and Washington. Celebrities such as George Takei and Audra McDonald have decried the law.

Tim Cook, the head of Apple, noted "something very dangerous [is] happening in states across the country. . . America's business community recognized a long time ago that discrimination, in all its forms, is bad for business."

FFRF knows that these laws are bad

for business, women, LGBT rights and true religious liberty.

It's heartening to see the public concern over passage of the Indiana Religious Freedom Restoration Act. But we also need to channel that concern against the 20 other state RFRA and the granddaddy that inspired them at the federal level.

FFRF with several children's advocacy groups submitted the only amicus brief in the Hobby Lobby case (written for us by Marci Hamilton) asking the Supreme Court to overturn the federal RFRA.

It's time to repeal it. Let's have no hate in my state — or in these United States.

Editor's note: After the firestorm of controversy, Gov. Mike Pence (who once described himself as "a Christian, a conservative and a Republican in that order") signed a quickly revised bill that critics said still falls short of providing equal protection to all.

FFRF asks governors to repeal state RFRA

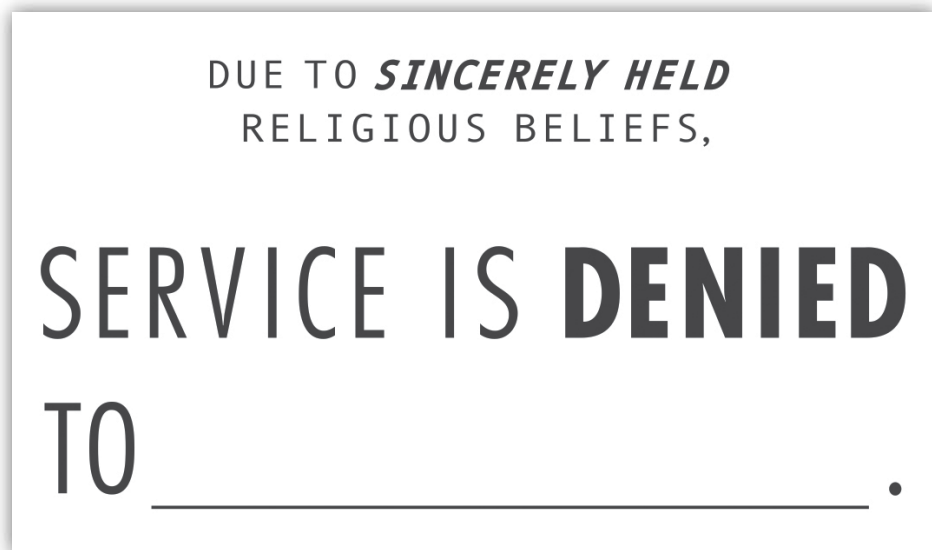
FFRF is calling on the governors of Connecticut and Virginia to take the lead in repealing their states' versions of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. While thanking Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy and Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe for speaking out against Indiana's RFRA law, FFRF points out that their states also have objectionable RFRA laws on the books.

Malloy banned state-funded travel to Indiana, saying, "We cannot sit idly by and do nothing while laws are enacted that will turn back the clock." Connecticut's RFRA law is even broader than Indiana's in that it bans any "burden" of a person's exercise of religion without a compelling governmental interest, instead of requiring the burden to be "substantial." FFRF sent him

a letter April 1.

McAuliffe invited Indiana businesses to come to Virginia, where, ironically, there is also a RFRA law in place. "The executive order you signed to protect state employees from discrimination is an excellent start. But it does not protect all citizens. The fact is, your state has had a law nearly identical to Indiana's in place for eight years," wrote FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker in their letter to McAuliffe.

"The Religious Freedom Restoration Act is now used not as a shield, but as a sword by the religious majority and corporations to discriminate against minority groups," charges FFRF.



ABOVE: In response to Michigan's proposed Religious Freedom Restoration Act Bill — legislation widely criticized for legalizing discrimination in the name of "religious freedom" — the Satanic Temple of Detroit started a petition urging the state Senate to add an amendment requiring businesses to post any discrimination policy in a location clearly visible to patrons and employees.

RIGHT: This quarter-page ad (shown here at 95% scale) appeared in the front section of the New York Times on Easter Sunday, April 5. It was designed by FFRF's new graphic designer Jake Swenson.

NO HATE IN ★ ANY STATE ★ OR IN THESE UNITED STATES

No one should hate in the name of religion. Bigotry is hardly holy. Certainly no one should be allowed to legally discriminate in the name of their god. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) grants religionists an uncivil right — the liberty to break laws, including civil rights protections, they claim offend their religious faith.

The problem isn't just in Indiana and the 20 other states that have adopted RFRA. The problem is the federal RFRA, passed by Congress in 1993, on which the state laws are based. The federal RFRA brought us the Supreme Court's infamous Hobby Lobby ruling last year, setting women's contraceptive rights back half a century. Now corporations have "religious rights" under RFRA that supersede citizens' rights. The best protection for religious freedom is a government free from religion, as the First Amendment requires. There will be more uncivil rulings like this until RFRA is repealed.

**Restore true religious liberty.
Ask the President and Congress to**

REPEAL RFRA

#RepealRFRA

Phone or email FFRF for more information
1-800-335-4021 | FFRF.ORG/repealRFRA

Join our 501(c)(3) educational association of atheists and agnostics working to ban marriage between church and state.

FFRF.ORG FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

FFRF slams 5 more schools with basketball chaplains

FFRF sent letters March 25 to five more public universities that inappropriately employ religious leaders for their basketball teams. The letters follow a March 24 letter and records request to Wichita State University in Kansas. WSU informed FFRF that it was investigating the chaplaincy.

Louisville coach Rick Pitino has allegedly appointed his friend, Fr. Ed Bradley, as “unofficial chaplain.” He reportedly travels with the team, sits with coaches on the bench and leads the team in prayer before games, at halftime, after games and while the team travels.

Many university chaplains, including WSU’s Steve Dickie, are associated with Nations of Coaches, a religious group that provides “character coaches” and chaplains to basketball programs. The group’s website shows a graphic with a whistle with a cross on it,



and bible verses abound on its website. “Nations of Coaches exists to impact coaches and all whom they influence for the glory of God,” says the group’s application.

The University of Maryland employs Pastor Donnell Jones as a chaplain. Oklahoma University lists Scott

Thompson as its “character coach.” Both are associated with Nations of Coaches.

The University of Virginia employs Brad Soucie as director of player development. Soucie and Assistant Coach Ritchie McKay have been together since their time at Liberty University, an evangelical Christian school founded by Jerry Falwell. Soucie recently spoke at a church about the “significance of men finding their identity in Jesus instead of success, work, or any other source.” (It was announced April 1 that McKay was returning to Liberty to be head coach.)

Kansas University also has a chaplain, Wayne Simien. Simien quit the NBA to pursue a “passion . . . for Christian ministry and youth athletics,” and has said his goal is “to impact the lives through sports and with the message of Jesus Christ.”

“Public school athletic teams cannot appoint or employ a chaplain, seek out a spiritual leader for the team, or agree to have a volunteer team chaplain because public schools may not advance or promote religion,” Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel told the schools.

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker noted that giving these chaplains secular titles compounds the violation by blurring the line between a legitimate position and an abuse of that position to “[help] basketball players learn how to love God,” as Dickie put it.

One in three Americans under the age of 30 identifies as nonreligious, FFRF pointed out, making it very likely these chaplains are imposing their religion on students who are not religious and just want to play basketball.

FFRF also requested financial records and policies relating to religion in athletics from all of the colleges.

FFRF objects to evangelist’s speech at Mich. school

FFRF sent a letter of complaint and records request March 30 to Iron Mountain Public Schools in Iron Mountain, Mich., after the school district allowed speaker Bob Lenz to use a presentation during school hours to recruit students to attend a later religious event at a church.

Lenz is part of Life Promotions, which is based in Appleton, Wis. He employs a common evangelical method to recruit public school students to religious programming, giving a supposedly secular presentation during the school day where he passes out fliers advertising pizza, prize drawings or other incentives to attend a religious event later that evening.

At an auditorium event during the school day March 2, Lenz gave a talk touted as “a positive message of hope and encouragement,” accompanied by an illusionist. Lenz says he has been speaking to public schools for over 30 years.

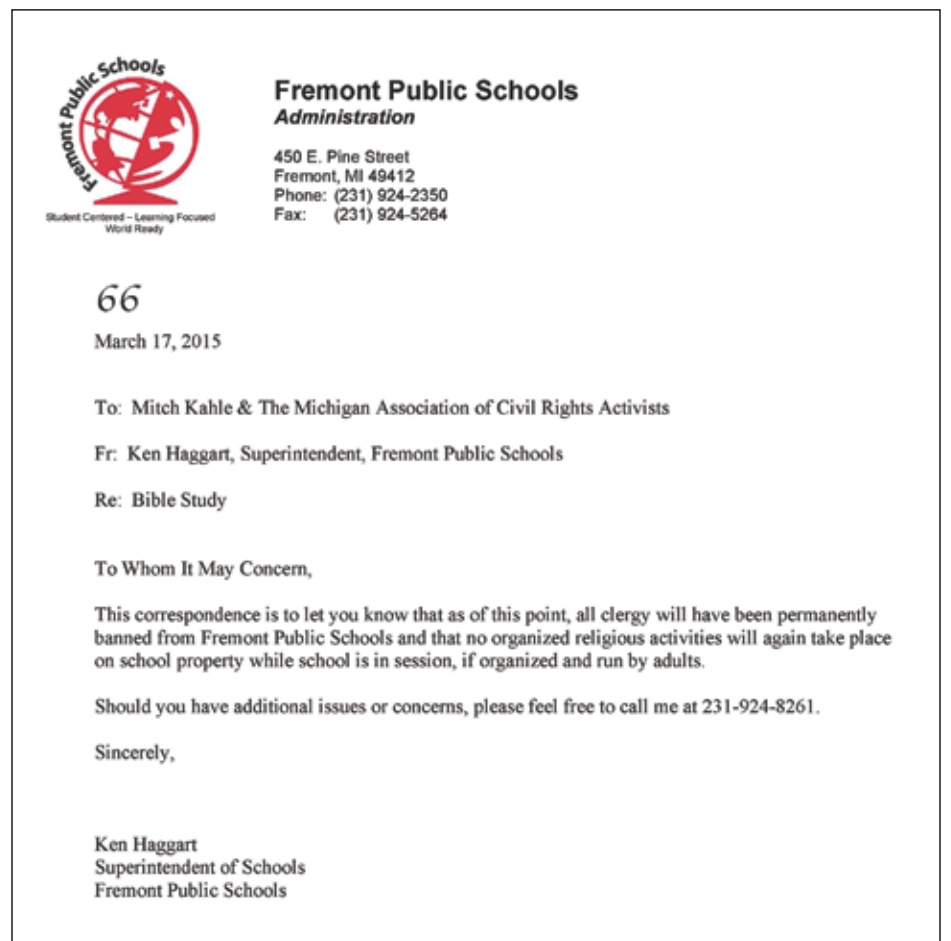
“Students are a vulnerable and captive audience, and Iron Mountain High School allowed Lenz to take ad-

vantage of the students’ captivity to recruit them to come to a Christian event later that night,” wrote Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert.

Lenz brags on Facebook about the percent of students who returned for the religious program and the number who “received Jesus” after a March 9 presentation in public schools in Girard, Kan.

A promotional video for Life Promotions claims that America’s youth are experiencing a “spiritual poverty,” lamenting that less than 18% of youth attend church regularly. The video also takes a tone-deaf attitude toward poverty, asking viewers, “Did you know many of America’s youth are among the poorest in the world?” with a graphic of a person holding out a bowl. The hungry person is then “painted” over, as the narrator announces, “Not a physical poverty, a spiritual poverty!”

“This is very callous, given that 16 million U.S. children live below the actual poverty line,” noted FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.



It’s paying to complain in Michigan

The Michigan Association of Civil Rights Activists (MACRA), co-founded by FFRF Life Members Holly Huber and Mitch Kahle, successfully complained in March on behalf of parents concerned about religious intrusion in public schools.

Kahle wrote a letter to the principal of Daisy Brook Upper Elementary about allowing bible classes. Kahle said Fremont Public Schools Superintendent Ken Haggart told him the district did transport children to a nearby church for bible study during the previous school year but switched this year to holding monthly bible study in the school gym at lunchtime to save money. About a third of the school’s 150 children attended the class.

Haggart told WZZM that the school has returned to its original arrangement in which students are driven off-campus to churches. Haggart told Kahle that the school district won’t provide transportation.

Haggart clarified his statement that

“as of this point, all clergy will have been permanently banned from Fremont Public Schools and that no organized religious activities will again take place on school property while school is in session, if organized and run by adults.” He said in a second email to Kahle, “I wanted to let you know as well that Fremont Public Schools neither encourages nor discourages participation in any religious program. By saying ‘clergy are banned’ we are referring to the offering or conducting of religious instruction classes. In the event of school tragedies, or needed counseling, or for clergy who have children attending FPS, or other use of the facilities, they are of course welcome to visit our schools.”

MACRA also complained about two adults unlawfully leading students in Christian prayer at Cross Creek Charter School in Byron Center. “Clergy and adults are forbidden from participating in any voluntary, student-initiated religious activity that takes place on

school property during school hours, including during lunch and recess periods,” said Kahle. “Release time is not an opportunity for teachers or administrators to circumvent long-established laws prohibiting organized religion in public schools.”

Cross Creek Principal Joe Nieuwkoop told *mlive.com* that the adults were not school employees, but stressed that “student religious groups or gatherings led by adults will not be allowed to hold meetings during school and/or instructional hours. However, students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs and gatherings before or after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other non-curricular student activities groups.”

MACRA complained in February about Hudsonville Public Schools letting students attend bible club in a recreational vehicle in the parking lot during lunch hour. The district responded that it stopped the practice and told Bible Club Ministries Inter-

national-Western Michigan to comply with state law.

In a related case MACRA is involved in, the Grand Haven Tribune reported that a group called Citizens of Grand Haven filed suit April 1 against the city in Ottawa County Circuit Court to contest a city council ordinance in January that resulted in removal of a Christian cross from public property on Dewey Hill. The suit claims the council’s removal of the area as a public forum gives the appearance the city “is hostile to the cross as religious speech.”

Although Mayor Geri McCaleb voted against the ordinance change, she said public entities dealing with groups like MACRA have to be aware of what they do with taxpayer dollars.

Councilman John Hierholzer, who voted for the change, said the city has already spent \$12,000 on the issue without going to court.

Seattle student sits for pledge, calls out bigots

Ewan is the recipient of a new FFRF student activist award, which includes a \$1,000 cash scholarship. The generous donor, who prefers anonymity, writes: "In the 21st century, with so much scientific advancement, I hope all humans are able to reason and think critically. We don't need an invisible 'super being' to tie up our freedom of thought."

By Ewan McCartney

My name is Ewan McCartney. I'm in the eighth grade. I attend public school in Seattle. I am an atheist and I also have autism.

I would like to thank the Freedom from Religion Foundation for helping me. I have sat out the Pledge of Allegiance since the fourth grade. I have several issues with it. Among my issues: I think the "under God" part violates the separation of church and state, and I don't like saying "liberty and justice for all" when we still oppress so many groups of people in our country.

The principal at my school caught me sitting out the pledge and was adamant that everyone should participate.

She said it was disrespectful not to participate. I did a bunch of research and wrote her a letter explaining why it is every student's right to decide for him/herself if they want to participate in the pledge.

The principal was uncooperative and condescending to me, so my mom and I contacted FFRF. Attorney Andrew Seidel helped me a lot and we got the situation resolved (with a letter from the school district's lawyer saying that I am correct and the principal is wrong — yay!). I cannot thank Mr. Seidel enough for his help.

When I am not arguing about my right to free speech in school, I am active in local politics, mostly with regard to education and human rights. I testify every chance I can get in the state legislature (and complain to any elected official I can convince to listen to me) about better funding for public education and closing the achievement gap in our schools.

I have also volunteered extensively on various "freedom to marry" campaigns. I am an ordained minister with the Universal Life Church and am available for all your gay wedding needs!



Ewan McCartney, 14, loves museums and history. Here he is at the Louvre last summer with a black basalt stele inscribed with the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, dating to about 1750 BCE.

'Devil' breathes life into Ingersoll's words

"Speak of the Devil," a two-act comedy drama about "The Great Agnostic" Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-99), was presented in February at Theatre NOW New York in New York City.

The actors' impassioned performances had the audience listening intently, laughing and applauding. The dramatic reading, the first in the company's 2015 Raw Reading Series, was made possible through the sponsorship of the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the Yip Harburg Foundation.

"Speak of the Devil" was written in the early 1970s by the late Richard F. Stockton, an Ingersoll scholar, and revised in 2011 by Marsha Lee Sheiness. His widow, Irene Stockton, is an FFRF Life Member. The play brings to life the conflicts, joys and difficulties ex-



Richard Stockton

perienced by Ingersoll as he spread his freethought philosophy through oratory and voluminous written works. Its director is Robert Kalfin, founder of New York's Tony Award-winning Chelsea Theater Center.

The play is moving toward full production in the near future, with the goal of reaching as many new audiences as possible. The creative team is reaching out to individuals and groups for donations to make this possible.

Theatre NOW New York is a non-profit that facilitates the creation and development of new works and the "reimagining" of previously produced works through productions, readings, workshops and work-in-progress presentations.

Contributions to help spread Ingersoll's crucial message are tax de-



Robert Ingersoll with his daughters Eva and Maud.

ductible and can be made at ffrf.org/get-involved/donate/. Email speakofthedevilingersoll@gmail.com with questions and comments.

Four moments that made Ingersoll

Richard Stockton (1932-97) on the four moments in Robert Green Ingersoll's life that shaped him, the first being the death of his father John, who was a Congregationalist minister:

"Despite their opposing religious views, the old revivalist on his deathbed asked Bob to read to him from the black book clutched to his chest. Bob relented, took the book, and was surprised to discover that it wasn't the Bible. It was Plato describing the noble death of the pagan Socrates: a moving gesture of reconciliation between father and son in parting. The second event was Bob's painful realization that his outspoken agnosticism not only invalidated his own political career but ended his brother Ebon's career in Congress, as well. Third was the exquisite anguish of seeing his supportive wife Eva and his young daughters made to suffer for his right to speak his own mind. And fourth was the dramatic tension of having to walk out alone on public stages, in a glaring spotlight, time after time with death threats jammed in his tuxedo pocket informing him that some armed bigot in that night's audience would see to it that he didn't leave the stage alive."



Joseph Discher plays Robert Ingersoll and Amanda Jones plays his wife, Eva Parker Ingersoll, who outlived him by 24 years.

Photo Courtesy of Theatre NOW New York

FFRF convention award speech, Los Angeles, October 2014

Legal titan Chemerinsky champions First Amendment



Erwin Chemerinsky

Erwin Chemerinsky gave this speech, edited for print, at FFRF's October 2014 convention in Los Angeles. He is the founding dean of the University of California-Irvine School of Law and Raymond Pryke Professor of First Amendment Law. He previously taught law at Duke University and the University of Southern California. He's the author of eight books, including *The Conservative Assault on the Constitution* and his latest, *The Case Against the Supreme Court*. Last year, *The National Jurist* magazine added him to its list of "most influential people in legal education" in the U.S.

Richard Bolton, longtime FFRF member and outside litigation counsel:

I am very honored to introduce Erwin Chemerinsky, the awardee for Champion of the First Amendment. There are numerous reasons, both independent and cumulative, for Professor Chemerinsky to be given this award. In particular, he was the intellectual architect of the challenge we made to the housing allowance and the parsonage allowance.

Several years ago there was a case pending in the 9th Circuit involving Rick Warren and the housing allowance. The issue of the constitutionality of that benefit to ministers of the gospel was not directly raised by any of the parties, but the 9th Circuit asked Professor Chemerinsky to weigh in with a "friend of the court" or amicus brief. He prepared that brief and has subsequently written on it in very influential law review articles.

The 9th Circuit ended up not deciding the issue because of some political and procedural issues that basically rendered the case moot, but subsequently the Foundation has challenged the constitutionality of the housing allowance.

His influence is not just in the classroom or in the area of academe. He frequently argues cases before the nation's highest courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. He argued in particular, I recall, the *Van Orden* case in the Supreme Court against the Ten Commandments monument at the Texas Capitol. He writes a weekly column for the Orange County Register, monthly columns for the ABA Journal and the Daily Journal and frequent op-ed pieces in newspapers across the

country. He has written more than 200 articles in top law reviews.

His influence is very important to the Foundation's approaches to enforcing the First Amendment through judicial strategy. Basically, in this area, Professor Chemerinsky is a titan.

By Erwin Chemerinsky

Thank you for the incredibly kind introduction. I wish my mother were here to listen to it. Thank you for this amazing Champion of the First Amendment award. I hardly feel deserving of it, but I promise I will do all I can in the years ahead to try to live up to it.

The thesis of my remarks is a simple one: Now more than ever, we need the Freedom From Religion Foundation. In 1947 in *Everson v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court held that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment applies to state and local governments. All nine justices believed that the Establishment Clause was meant to create a wall that separates church and state. Now for the first time since 1947, a majority of the court rejects that notion. We have a Supreme Court that is hostile toward freedom from religion.

First, I want to sketch the different views of the Establishment Clause. Second, I want to explain what everyone here believes why FFRF is correct, that there must be strict separation of church and state. Third, I want to talk about the current court and the belief of the majority of the justices, and how they reject this separation. Finally, I'll talk about what this means for the foreseeable future, and why it means the activism and involvement of all of us more important than ever.

Over the years since *Everson*, three major theories have developed. One I have already alluded to: strict separation. It takes its inspiration from the words not of a liberal law professor, but from Thomas Jefferson: "There should be a wall that separates church and state, a wall that is high and impregnable."

This is not about hostility to religion. Rather it says that we want our government to be secular, and that the place for religion is in the home, churches, synagogues, mosques, in the private realm.

I would say that until the 1980s, virtually every Supreme Court justice would endorse the idea that there must be a wall separating church and state. In the 1980s, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor developed what I would call a second theory with regard to the Establishment Clause, what she referred to as a "neutrality theory."

She said that the Establishment Clause means that government has to be neutral toward religion and nonreligion, neutral among religions.

Of course the problem with this is that symbols are always in the mind of the beholder. One commentator aptly said, "Justice O'Connor's approach to the Establishment Clause is, 'I know it when I see it,' a much ridiculed phrase

that comes from an opinion by Justice Potter Stewart, 'I can't define obscenity, but I know it when I see it.'"

But by the late 1980s, thanks especially to the appointment to the Supreme Court of Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy, a new theory developed, one that leaves very little of the separation of church and state with the Establishment Clause. These justices called their theory "accommodationism." They said what government needs to do is accommodate religion.

The majority of justices believe in it. Under this view, the government violates the Establishment Clause only if it literally establishes a church or coerces religious participation. Nothing else will ever violate the Establishment Clause. They believe that the framers of the Constitution meant to allow religion to be a part of government. They believe that the government should be able to give unlimited aid directly to religious institutions, so long as they don't discriminate among religious institutions.

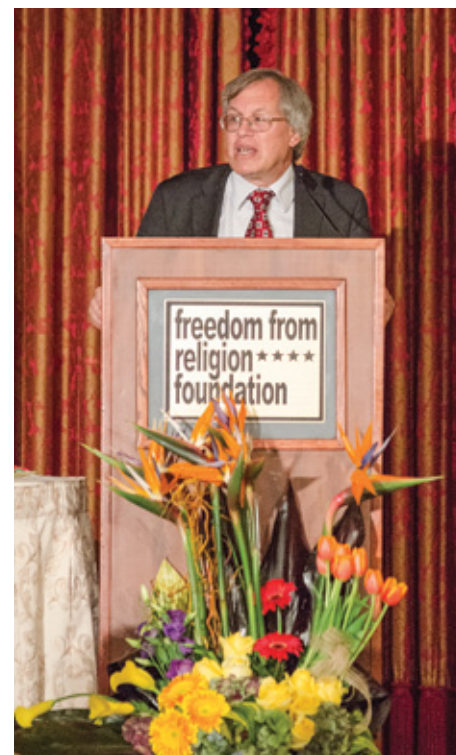
In every case to come before the Roberts court, now with its nine-year history, the court has ruled against the separation of church and state.

Theories in practice

To show you the differences among these three theories, I'll use a couple of Supreme Court cases I'm sure are familiar to you. One was a 1989 case called *Allegheny County v. American Civil Liberties Union*. It involved two displays in the Pittsburgh area. One was in a county building where there was a large stairway display case. And in it, in December, was put a nativity scene.

The other case involved a Pittsburgh city building. In front of it, in December, was placed a menorah, a nativity scene, a Christmas tree, and a proclamation about the importance of tolerance in the holiday season. The Supreme Court said that the menorah was constitutional but the nativity scene was unconstitutional. How did they come to that conclusion? It goes back to the three theories.

Three of the justices then on the court believed in strict separation. They would have said that both the nativity and the menorah are unconstitutional. They would have said, as I believe, religious symbols don't belong on government property. Four of the judges took the accommodationist approach. They said there is no limit on religious symbols on government prop-



Erwin Chemerinsky, who grew up in a working-class family in Chicago, was inspired to become a lawyer by civil rights activists of the 1950s and '60s. (Ingrid Laas photo)

erty. For them, both the nativity and the menorah are constitutional.

That left two justices, O'Connor and Blackmun, who took the middle endorsement approach. They said a nativity scene all by itself on government property is impermissible symbolic endorsement of religion. But they said it was OK to have a nativity scene as a religious symbol, so long as there are symbols of other religious and secular symbols. They said a menorah is a Jewish religious symbol, was accompanied by a Christmas tree and a proclamation of tolerance in the holiday season, so it was permissible.

So then what you had was six votes that the menorah was OK and five votes that the nativity scene was OK and thus the result. But it all came down to those three theories.

Van Orden v. Perry

I am going to give another example, *Van Orden v. Perry*, a case that I argued in the Supreme Court in 2005. It involves a 6-foot-high, 3-foot-wide Ten Commandments monument that sits directly at the corner of the Texas State Capitol and the Texas Supreme Court. It is clear to me that this violates the Establishment Clause. It is in big letters, "I am the Lord thy God" on top. It has the Protestant, specifically the Lutheran, version of the Ten Commandments. It is right at the seat of Texas state government.

But I knew going into the oral argument that there was no chance I was going to get four justices [to agree with me]. I knew that Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justices Scalia, Kennedy and Thomas take the accommodationist approach. In fact, at oral arguments, Justice Kennedy said to me with real hostility in his voice, "If your client doesn't like the Ten Commandments monument, why doesn't he just look the other way?"

Of course a constitutional violation

isn't excused by ignoring it. Besides that, there would be no stopping point. A city could put a large cross atop city hall and say, "If you don't like it, look the other way."

But I was also confident that I would get three votes going in, Justices Stevens, Souter and Ginsburg. They consistently took the strict separation approach. So I felt that the case was going to turn on Justices O'Connor and Breyer, who took that middle endorsement approach. I confess to you that it was really going to depend on Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

My brief was a shameless attempt to pander to Justice O'Connor. If I could have, I would have put her picture on the front of my brief. Sadly, I got Justice O'Connor's vote but lost Justice Breyer's vote. Breyer said that this monument was not an endorsement of religion. It's hard to imagine how a 6-foot-high, 3-foot-wide Ten Commandments monument exactly at the corner of the Texas State Capitol and Supreme Court was not an endorsement of religion, but once more you see the importance of these theories.

The second thing that I wanted to say is what everyone in this room believes. It is what FFRF is all about: That there should be separation of church and state. The reasons have been articulated from the very first days of American history. When the government becomes aligned with religion, inevitably people feel coerced to participate.

When John Ashcroft was attorney general, there were reports that he was regularly holding prayer sessions in his office. The Justice Department was quick to say that nobody was required to participate, but of course any lawyer who wanted to advance knew it was better to be there.

Greece v. Galloway

I'll talk about the Supreme Court and *Town of Greece v. Galloway* that held that town board prayers did not violate the Establishment Clause. The average attendance at board meetings was between five and 10 people. Those who came were often people who wanted zoning variances or conditional use permits. How likely was it that they would not want to participate in the prayers when they had to go before the board to ask for something that is really important to their lives and their businesses?

James Madison also expressed why the separation of church and state is so important. He said, and this is his word, that it is immoral to tax some to support the religion of others. That is why the government should not be using tax dollars to support religion. And of course that is what FFRF has been arguing about and litigating about since its inception.

I also believe that while Justice O'Connor very well articulated the underlying rationale of separation of church and state, she didn't always vote that way. She said, "No one should be made to feel like an outsider or an insider relative to his or her own government on the basis of religion." This is what Justice Kagan so eloquently said in her dissent in *Town of Greece*: "We are an incredibly diverse society. There are people with religious beliefs, and those who don't believe in religion."

When the town begins every meeting for almost 10 years with a prayer by a Christian clergy member, those of different religions inevitably are made to feel like outsiders relative to their own government. Justice O'Connor, in an opinion in a case that I argued, said, "When we look at the history of

the world, we can see so well how combining separation of church and state is disastrous." Don't we want to learn from that? Why would we want to repeat that mistake in this country?

The current court

That leaves the third part of my remarks, the current Supreme Court. As I mentioned, when I argued *Van Orden v. Perry* in 2005, there were four justices who believed in the accommodationist approach to the Establishment Clause: Rehnquist, Scalia, Kennedy and Thomas. Today, as you know, there are five justices who believe in that approach: Roberts, Scalia, Kennedy, Thomas and Alito. In every case to come before the Roberts court, now with its nine-year history, the court has ruled against the separation of church and state.

There is the [California] case of *Salazar v. Bono*. It involves a cross in a federal park in the Mojave Desert. A challenge is brought arguing that this violates the separation of church and state. The federal district court declared it unconstitutional. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals declared it unconstitutional. The 9th Circuit pointed out that the cross is a quintessential religious symbol, and only of Christian faiths

We are going to have to increasingly litigate in state court under state constitutions.

Congress then passed a law that gave ownership of the small parcel of land where the cross is located to a Veterans of Foreign Wars group. The district court said the transfer is a sham. The 9th Circuit said it's a sham. Anybody going through the park would still see the cross, and still see it as a symbolic endorsement of religion.

It came before the Supreme Court, and there is a very telling exchange at the oral argument between Justice Scalia and Peter Eliasberg, the ACLU attorney. Justice Scalia said, "Isn't the cross a universal symbol of the war dead? To which Eliasberg said, "I've been to a lot of Jewish cemeteries and I have never seen a cross on a headstone."

But the court by 5-4 reversed the 9th Circuit and sent the case back, indicat-

ing that the federal government giving up ownership of the parcel of land was good enough. Scalia and Thomas wrote a second opinion that is truly chilling. They said they don't believe that anyone ever would have standing to sue to challenge a religious symbol on government property. They said no one is hurt by a religious symbol on government property.

That means it doesn't matter where the government puts a religious symbol, it doesn't matter what the religious symbol would be, they would never allow anyone to sue to challenge it. Four justices dissented.

Other cases

The second related case with the Roberts court was *Arizona School Tuition Organization v. Winn*, involving the law that gives individuals a tax credit for contributing to a school tuition organization. The 9th Circuit declared this unconstitutional and pointed out that virtually every dollar given was to benefit evangelical Christian and Catholic schools, the effect of which was to advance religion. The Supreme Court reversed 5-4.

The plurality opinion said there was standing to challenge government expenditure that aids religion but not standing to challenge tax credits. Justice Kagan ridiculed this in her dissent: "Does that then mean that the government can give tax credits just for people who buy religious symbols or religious books? Surely that can't be right."

The first of the Roberts court's decisions about religion was *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation* (2007), which said that taxpayers lack standing to challenge the Bush administration's funding of faith-based programs.

The most recent case from the Roberts court with regard to the Establishment Clause was just this past spring. I've already spoken of *Town of Greece v. Galloway*. Greece has about 100,000 people and is outside of Rochester, N.Y. In 1999, it adopted the practice of every month inviting a Christian clergy member to deliver a prayer before town board meetings. From 1999 to 2007, only Christian clergy members were invited to deliver the prayer.

The 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that violated the Establishment Clause. It should have been a really easy case under the Establishment Clause. Under any of the theories I mentioned to you, this should be unconstitutional. The town was coercing religious participation. The town was aligning itself with Christianity. But the Supreme Court by 5-4 reversed and

held that this was constitutional.

I do not think we can excuse the Obama administration here. In *Arizona School Tuition Organization v. Winn*, the Obama administration filed a brief in support of the tax credits. In *Town of Greece*, the Obama administration filed a brief saying prayers should be allowed. It is inexcusable that the Obama administration filed the same kind of brief we have seen from the Bush administration or from the Reagan administration.

Justice Kennedy wrote an opinion with Justice Roberts and Justice Alito saying there is a long history of legislative prayer in our country. It does not matter if it is sectarian or nonsectarian. He said it is permissible unless, and I am not sure what this means, there is a pattern of prayer over time that proselytizes or denigrates religion.

Didn't the town have a pattern of prayer over time that proselytized? Justice Thomas wrote a concurring opinion in which he said that state and local governments never can violate the Establishment Clause. He said that he believes the Establishment Clause was just meant to limit what the federal government can do. He is the only justice since 1948 who takes the position that the Establishment Clause does not limit what a state or local government can do. This also is chilling. If a state wanted to declare an official religion and compel participation, it would not violate the Constitution for Clarence Thomas.

Then in an opinion joined by Justice Scalia, Thomas said that the government violates the Establishment Clause only if it coerces religious participation. For them, nothing else would ever violate the Establishment Clause. Justice Kagan wrote an eloquent dissent.

All of these four cases, all decided 5-4, have rejected the separation of church and state. There are five justices on the current court who take the accommodationist approach.

What's ahead?

Let me conclude by talking about what this is likely to mean for the future. I think this is a court that will allow much more religious involvement in government proceedings. We see that already with *Town of Greece v. Galloway*. The day the decision came down, I got a call from an attorney who represents school boards all over the country. He said as soon as the decision was announced, he got calls from clients asking if they could recite Christian prayers at their school board meetings.

I think we are going to see prayers at school board meetings, park commission meetings, police commission meetings, utility commission meetings and city council meetings in so many parts of the country. And isn't that the very essence of an impermissible establishment of religion?

In light of five justices who take this position, it is why I say that all of our activism is more important than ever. We are going to have to fight this out at the political level. We are going to have to increasingly litigate in state court under state constitutions. We are going to have to fight hard to make sure that the next justices on the Supreme Court believe in separation of church and state.

It is why my theme for the afternoon is, now more than ever, we need the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Thank you and thank you for this wonderful award.

Purchase *The Case Against the Supreme Court* at ffrf.org/shop.



Erwin Chemerinsky with FFRF staff members at the October national convention in Los Angeles. (photo by Chris Johnson)



Jeff Brinckman “did time” in Catholic grade school. (photo by Andrew Seidel)

Meet a member

Name: Jeff Brinckman.

Where I live: Madison, Wis.

Where and when I was born: Milwaukee in 1953. I was baptized shortly afterward, to protect me from the erroneous belief that I’d go straight to hell if I died outside the church. Although my father converted to Catholicism as a condition of marriage in 1941, I had no choice. I became a Catholic the old-fashioned way: I inherited it.

Family: Married once, I have two adult children.

Education: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, BBA.; Hamline University, JD; Utrecht University in the Netherlands, LLM, international law.

I “did my time” at a Catholic grade school in Menomonee Falls. Back then, no tax dollars went to parochial schools and no right-wingers like Gov. Scott Walker were giving welfare money to religious charter schools. My parents kept government out of religion by financially supporting both the public school district and my parochial school.

The election of John Kennedy in 1960, the first Catholic president, was big news at my school. Since Catholics were a minority, the nuns taught us Article VI of the Constitution: “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”

In religion classes, I had to memorize all sorts of unsubstantiated beliefs. Although the nuns were not stereotypical demons, I nonetheless feared them, and particularly the school principal. Fear was a psychological weapon. I was to fear God and the chance of spending an eternity in hell.

Although the 1960s are known for Vietnam and civil rights, there was also a revolution over religion inside and outside the church. While the Supreme Court courageously found prayer in public schools unconstitutional, liberal Catholics prevailed at the Second Vatican Council in Rome (1962-65) and, almost overnight, everything changed.

My doubts about religion started: A nun walked into class one day no longer fully covered in black. Suddenly, the Mass was in English instead of Latin, guitar music replaced pipe organs and meat could be eaten on Fridays. What was infallible truth just yesterday had changed radically. The revolution

opened my mind and made me wonder whether any of it was true. The church had let the genie out of the bottle.

My clearest memory of prayer was in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis when my mother had me kneel before a crucifix so we could pray for peace. Although the Russians turned their ships around at our blockade, I didn’t attribute it to prayer. I thought the crisis was solved by two humans, Khrushchev and Kennedy. When JFK was assassinated in 1963, I wondered why a good god permitted it. I was already a doubting Thomas.

With regards to morals, the church wasn’t all bad. As a member of our all-white suburban basketball team, I was driven into Milwaukee to play the all-black Cherry Street School. I met blacks for the first time and it was a good experience. The priests and nuns who risked violence to push integration deserve credit.

By the 1967 “Summer of Love,” the supernatural part of the church had lost me. Questioning was in; the pope and his entourage were out. While in high school, I still had to go to church on Sundays, but I usually skipped out.

Military service: After anti-war activists bombed the Army-Math Research Center in Sterling Hall at UW-Madison in 1970, where my brother was majoring in math, my parents sent me to UW-Eau Claire. Once Nixon eliminated undergraduate military deferments, I was classified 1-A but drew #185 in the lottery and was not called. As the war wound down, I asked how a good god could allow 54,000 Americans and 2 million Vietnamese to die for no reason.

Five college classes helped me move from agnosticism to atheism: Western Civilization, Philosophy 101, Philosophy of Religion, Constitutional Law and English Legal History.

Person in history I admire: Thomas Jefferson, for his views on religion.

Before I die: I just wish Jennifer Aniston would finally answer one of my calls. I’m getting really exhausted from leaving all those messages.

Editor’s note: Better update your bucket list, Jeff. Recent news reports say Jen, 46, and fiancé Justin Theroux, 43, have finalized their prenup that puts her net worth at \$112 million and his at \$19 million.

Overheard

After four centuries of fighting a losing battle to protect religious America from “outsiders,” maybe it is time to acknowledge that delivering prayers in state legislatures is a secular act and not a matter of faith.

Op-ed, Lloyd Omdahl, former North Dakota Democratic lieutenant governor, “Has legislative prayer become a charade?”

Grand Forks Herald, 3-12-15

So, as of right now, if you are an Orthodox Jew in search of a Loony Lion pleasure ring or a vibrator shaped like the Statue of Liberty, Rabbi Alexander is your go-to guy.

Story on Natan Alexander, an Australian-born rabbi who operates bebetter2gether.com in Israel for nudity-averse online clients

The Times of Israel, 3-11-15

I am an ordained pastor and value the power of prayer, faith and spirituality. I do not support those things being touted in the public government sphere. That was an incredibly inappropriate way to begin and end the meeting.

Rev. Ellen Huffman, Columbus, Ohio, letter to the editor objecting to prayer at a community meeting at East High with the police chief, who has scheduled four more such public forums

Columbus Dispatch, 3-13-15

But with an average Sunday attendance of about 70, West Hill is prospering, relatively speaking, while churches throughout the Western world shrink and wither. All they had to do, it turns out, was get rid of God.

News story on West Hill United Church in Ontario, Canada, “Atheist minister praises the glory of good at Scarborough church”

Toronto Star, 3-16-15

I consider myself an intelligent guy who has gone far. I’m vice president of a multinational corporation responsible for 130 countries. Nevertheless, I can’t forgive myself for how I let that man torture me for eight years.

Chilean journalist Juan Carlos Cruz, on his sexual abuse by Fernando Karadima, a convicted pedophile Catholic priest

IPS News, 3-20-15

I’ve never seen anything like this. It was sad to see the church I pray at every day reduced to a battlefield between those who supported the prelate and those who didn’t.

Attendee requesting anonymity at the first Mass celebrated in Chile by newly installed Diocese of Osorno Bishop Juan Barros Madrid, where the Mass was cut short due to people shouting “pedophile” and “get out” for Barros’ alleged complicity in covering up abuse by Fr. Fernando Karadima

Cruz, 3-21-15

The cruelest thing Fr. Dallat did was leave me two weeks after my mother died. He told me that he had heard a voice from God telling him that he could not continue the relationship with me.

“Linda,” 49, a businesswoman from Northern Ireland who alleges a Catholic priest slept with her three or four times a week from September 2012 until April 2014, during which time she became pregnant and miscarried at five weeks

Belfast Telegraph, 3-23-15

The Town Council’s chambers remained silent Monday night as Mayor Steve Angle asked if there was a motion to adopt a resolution to open council meetings with prayer. With no motion forthcoming, the council effectively declined to establish a prayer policy, leaving meetings to continue as they have for at least two decades, without an opening prayer.

Start of a news story about a government meeting in Rocky Mount, Va.

Franklin News-Post, 3-11-15

That we are somehow a threat. Atheists are associated with other labels such as satanists, communists, fascists, and in my part of the world, Democrats. We’re the bogeyman that will trample their rights, steal their children and TP their front yards.

“Stan Bennett,” an ordained minister still serving a church despite his non-belief, answering the question “What do you think is the biggest misconception about atheism?”

CNN, 3-28-15

I am the one in the second row between the Rabbi with the hat and the Franciscan Sister.

Larry Gember, pastor of St. James Lutheran Church in Greenfield, Ind., emailing that he was proud to be in the photo with Gov. Mike Pence signing a “religious freedom” bill

Indianapolis Star, 3-28-15

Forbidden by their faith to kindle a fire or manually adjust an electric switch on the Sabbath, hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Jews in the U.S. and Israel keep electric or fire-fueled hot plates running throughout the 25-hour period.

News story about a Brooklyn, N.Y., fire caused by a malfunctioning hot plate that killed seven Sassoon siblings: Eliane, 16, David, 12, Rivkah, 11, Yehoshua, 10, Moshe, 8, Sara, 6, and Yaakov, 5

Religion News Service, 3-23-15

Madison, Wisconsin, has become the first city in the nation to make it illegal to discriminate against atheists. Said atheists, “This is the law we’ve been not praying for.”

NBC’s Seth Meyers, opening monologue “Late Night With Seth Meyers,” 4-2-15

If I had to bet, we’d have a gay president before we had an atheist president. I think Americans really want — obviously not all Americans — but folks want a degree of piety and devotion from their leaders. And you know, if they’re Catholic, if they’re Mormon, Jewish, Protestant, whatever, I don’t think that’s as important as just seeing some kind of faith.

Newsweek’s Matthew Cooper discussing the role of religion in politics

“Weekends with Alex Witt,” MSNBC, 4-2-15

[S]hortly after the famed journalist and atheist social critic Christopher Hitchens died in 2011, Noah wrote that atheists “worship him” and therefore, “#WeAllNeedAGod.” He also claimed that “Without God, atheists wouldn’t exist” and asked why “atheists don’t spend as much [time] questioning satan’s existence.”

Ronald Dixon, op-ed on South African writer/entertainer Trevor Noah, Comedy Central’s replacement for host Jon Stewart

Minnesota Daily, 4-6-15

Secular Invocations

David G. Marcus, City Council, El Paso, Texas, Dec. 2, 2014



David Marcus

We come together today in a spirit of cooperation and compromise, respect and courtesy, calling upon the rules of civility to guide us.

As we look around this chamber, we are reminded that in our differences lie our strengths.

We are black, white, Hispanic, Asian and Native American. We are Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Humanist, Wiccan, Pagan, Atheist, Agnostic and unaffiliated.

Some of us live our lives in the certainty of our faith; others of us are still looking for answers, or have found them in our common human struggles. We are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender, with and without disabilities, young and old and everything in between.

We don't all think the same way. Many of us hold very differing views

on topics that are important to us. Our political views range from liberal to conservative and some of us are a bit of both.

But we all agree and know that personal beliefs, regardless of how strongly we hold them, are ours alone.

Yet, as we gather here together, we are linked by our common humanity, our shared heritage and our mutual desire to do what is best for the citizens of El Paso.

Our city has a long history of saying no to hate and bigotry, and as we move forward, we remember the difficult decisions of our former leaders. Let us continue to build on their legacy.

David Marcus is president and co-founder of Join Us for Justice, the El Paso chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and is managing partner of Marcus, Fairall, Bristol + Co., a certified public accounting firm. Join Us for Justice works "to educate the public about the dangers of faith-based legislation and the consequences of breaching the line between church and state, and to serve as a contact for those who seek information and expertise regarding separation issues."

Aleta Ledendecker, City Council, Lenoir City, Tenn. March 23, 2015

Good evening, council of Lenoir City. As I solemnize these proceedings, I want to acknowledge the service of the council members and share appreciation for their willingness to be a part of the governmental process. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who take on the burden of service.

Now, let us not bow our heads, but hold them high with eyes open.

I urge the members of the City

Council to face the future with full recognition of their responsibilities to all the citizens of Lenoir City. I urge you to maintain our trust that you will recognize and serve equally the growing diversity of your constituents with favoritism toward none.

Consider the words of Pericles, the great leader of Athens, the cradle of democracy, who said, "What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

Thank you.

Aleta Ledendecker, FFRF Life Member and Rationalists of East Tennessee secretary, writes: "The invocation was front-page news in the Knoxville News Sentinel and Loudon County News-Herald. My next scheduled invocation will be at another heavily religious city commission (in a county where they recently put plaques of 'In God We Trust' over the courthouse entrances). I'm gearing up for that encounter."

Her husband Carl took issue with the council letting two pastors give prayers after Aleta's secular invocation. "I was disappointed. I thought that they would come in and be respectful and not try to be pushy with people but obviously [they] were pushing back."



Aleta Ledendecker

Nothing Fails Like Prayer Contest

The U.S. Supreme Court unwisely "blessed" sectarian prayers at local government meeting in its *Town of Greece v. Galloway* decision. If the Supreme Court won't uphold our godless and entirely secular Constitution — adopted at a prayerless constitutional convention — it's up to us.

It's up to you!

We'd like to see secular citizens flood government meetings with secular invocations that illustrate why government prayers are unnecessary, ineffective, embarrassing, exclusionary, divisive or just plain silly.

The "best" secular invocation will

be invited to open FFRF's annual convention, receiving an all-expenses-paid trip (this year at the Monona Terrace Convention Center, Madison, Wisconsin, October 9–11, 2015), a plaque and an honorarium of \$500.

Learn more at:

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

FFRF thanks 2 'After-Lifers,' 28 'Lifers'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is delighted to welcome two new After-Life Members, Vincent A. Andrews and Luc Hardy, and 28 new Lifetime Members, who are:

Dr. William Adams III, James Alstrom, Anthony Apfelbeck, Karen Barron, Stanley Beattie, Ted Berstein, Catherine Brown, JS Butler, Don Callender, Christopher Coll, Morrell Daniels, John Dunn, Peter Gretz, Lynn Harke, Lewis Infeld, Michael Jacobson, Norman Jamieson, Karen Jarussi, Paul Krueger, Larry Mitchell, Ed Och-

ester, Randy Pelton, Jed Rose, Yve Solbrekken, Joe Stellbrink, April Sullivan, Gary Thomson and Michael Wear.

States represented are Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, New Jersey, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Lifetime Memberships are offered at \$1,000 for donations designated as new membership or renewal. After-Life Memberships (suggested by a "Lifer" as the next tier for a donor who wants

his or her gift to live on) are \$5,000. Lifetime and After-Life Memberships ensure never another renewal notice, are deductible for income-tax purposes to the generous donor and go into a rainy-day reserve account.

Thank you, Michael, Gary, April, Joe, Yve, Jed, Randy, Larry, Ed, Paul, Karen, Norman, Michael, Lewis, Lynn, Peter, John, Morrell, Christopher, Don, JS, Catherine, Ted, Stanley, Karen, Anthony, James, William, Luc and Vincent!

'Anthropohorseism'

One website accompanied this graphic with: "Seems these days it's a bad thing to say the word God or speak about God anymore. Well, it's not! Let people know that God still exists in your heart and soul — and you are proud to show it!" (Editor's note: Personification is the act of ascribing human characteristics to animals or objects to create imagery, while anthropomorphism aims to make an animal or object behave or appear human-like.)

In Memoriam

Ethel-Mae Haave 1916–2015

Ethel-Mae Haave, 98, Muncie, Ind., died peacefully at home March 1, 2015. She was born in Winona, Minn., in 1916 to Carl and Anna (Schossow) Haave. In 1937 she graduated from the College of St. Teresa in Winona and began a lifelong career in academia with an emphasis on English literature.

In 1948 she accomplished a feat uncommon for women of her generation and earned a Ph.D. in English from Yale University, publishing "Herman Melville's *Pierre: A Critical Study*." Haave continued her career at the University of Rochester and at East Carolina College before being appointed assistant professor of English at Ball State University in 1956, retiring there as a full professor in 1986.

Haave was an excellent tennis player and continued to play into her early 90s. She died as she lived, on her own terms. Survivors include a niece, Elizabeth Dougherty (Gerald) of Gettysburg, Pa., and many, many friends.

"It's wonderful that Ethel-Mae left a \$10,000 bequest to FFRF," said Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "We offer sincerest condolences and are so grateful that she valued FFRF's work to that degree. Her support will help ensure our work continues into the future."

FFRF expels 'Bible Man' from Tenn. school

An evangelist known as "Bible Man" will no longer be permitted to lead religious classes at Coalmont Elementary School in Altamont, Tenn., after FFRF lodged a complaint with the Grundy County Department of Education.

The school district for decades had allowed Horace Turner to lead monthly assemblies during school hours. His assemblies have included "baby Jesus" displays, sermons proclaiming that "Jesus died on the cross for our sins," bible readings, discussions about the meaning of bible stories and distributions of religious literature.

"Allowing anyone access to public school students to proselytize, and including the events in the school's calendar, is illegal District endorsement of the speaker's religious message," wrote Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert in a March 2 letter, noting that FFRF won a lawsuit against another Tennessee school that let an outside religious group provide religious instruction to students.

The fact that parents may have been allowed to excuse their children from the programs did not make a difference, explained Markert. "When children opt out, their absence is obvious, and the ostracism they suffer is precisely what the courts have sought to prevent."

FFRF recently received word that the district had ended Turner's unconstitutional programs.



In the News

7th Circuit denies Milwaukee archdiocese

A three-judge panel of the 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled March 9 that so-called religious freedom protections don't shelter \$55 million transferred to the Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee's cemetery trust fund. Attorneys for clergy sexual abuse victims accused New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan of creating the fund when he was archbishop of Milwaukee to hide money from their clients.

The archdiocese transferred \$55 million in 2008 to the fund after Dolan indicated in a letter to the Vatican that the money would be safe from legal claims. After its 2011 bankruptcy filing, sexual abuse victims sought to void the transfer. The archdiocese argued that the transfer was protected by the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act and the First Amendment. U.S. District Judge Rudolph Randa had ruled that RFRA and the Free Exercise Clause protected the money from unsecured creditors. (Creditors sought his recusal after learning Randa has family members buried at cemeteries owned by the archdiocese, reported WisBar News.)

The appeals court said RFRA did not apply because the creditors committee is not a "governmental actor," and RFRA only protects government actions that substantially burden religion. It didn't address the recusal issue.

The Associated Press reported that the archdiocese's proposed reorganization plan would give 128 victims about \$4 million total and that about 450 other claimants would get nothing.

School removes church ad from program

The Pine-Richland School District, Gibsonia, Pa., removed an ad sponsored by St. Richard Catholic Church from the program for the student production of the play "Pippin."

"We were given the unfortunate choice to either remove any reference to God and/or Jesus Christ, or to pull the ad from the playbill and have the costs refunded," the parish said in a March 10 statement to WPXI. An unidentified school official told a reporter the district is trying to "use our best judgment while following school policies."

An advertising policy states the district can't accept ads that promote "a religious or political organization or cause."

The ad congratulated cast and crew, included "parish news" and urged readers to "Find your 'Corner of the Sky' at St. Richard Parish."

New study details 'typical skeptic'

In a new study titled "Churchless," the Barna Group defines skeptics as those who either don't believe God exists or aren't sure. "Skeptics represent one-quarter of all unchurched adults. Nearly one-third of skeptics have never attended a Christian church service in their lives. That's nearly double the proportion of 'virgin unchurched' who are not skeptics," says the report released March 25.

Barna is "a visionary research and resource company" in Ventura, Calif., "focused on the intersection of faith and culture."

The profile of a typical skeptic

has evolved from a decade or two ago, says Barna. The study lists five demographic shifts: 1. They are younger. Twenty years ago, 18% of skeptics were under 30. That has nearly doubled to 34%. The percentage who are 65 or older has been cut in half to 7%.

2. They are more educated. The percentage of college graduates has gone from one-third to one-half.

3. More of them are women. In 1993, 16% of atheists and agnostics were women. By 2013 it was 43%. (Men's numbers have steadily increased also but not as rapidly.)

4. They are more racially diverse. "While whites represented 80% of skeptics 20 years ago, that figure had dropped to 74% by 2013. This is largely a reflection of the increasing Hispanic and Asian adults among the skeptic cohort. Asian Americans, the least-Christian ethnic demographic in the U.S., especially tend to embrace skepticism."

5. They are more dispersed regionally. The Northeast and West were "isolated hotbeds" of skepticism 20 years ago. "They still remain the areas where skeptics are more likely to live, but the skeptic population is now broadly dispersed across all regions."

The study concludes: "In many ways, skeptics resemble the rest of America more than they once did. And their numbers are growing more quickly than anyone expected 20 years ago."

Judge: Church sign suit can proceed

U.S. District Judge James Munley ruled March 19 that a suit against the borough of Shickshinny, Pa., could go forward. Francene Tearpock-Martini sued in 2012 over placement of a sign for a local church on the border of her property, which is at the intersection of two rights-of-way, reported the Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice.

The borough council approved the sign and a borough employee installed it in 2008. When it fell down, it was reinstalled in concrete.

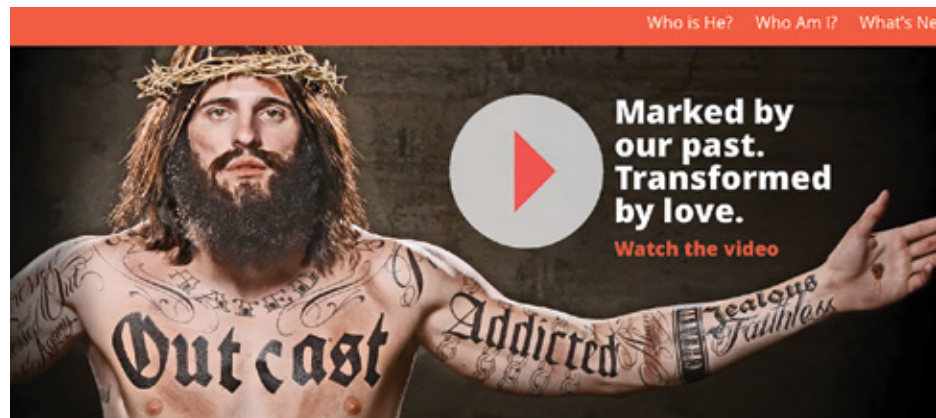
In protest, Tearpock-Martini placed her own sign, "This Church Sign Violates My Rights As A Taxpayer & Property Owner. Residential Neighborhoods Are Not Zoned For Advertisement Signs!" She was told to remove it.

Munley will rule later whether the church sign violates the Establishment Clause.

State/church issues in NYC schools

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio plans to revamp city rules that bar religious worship in public schools, a move announced after the U.S. Supreme Court on March 30 denied the Bronx Household of Faith's appeal to overturn the ban, the New York Daily News reported. The church has been using Public School 12 in the Bronx for services. It's the third time the court has sided with the city against the church.

"The administration remains committed to ensuring that religious organizations are able to use space in city schools on the same terms provided to other groups," said mayoral spokesman Wiley Norvell. "While we review and revise the rules, groups currently permitted to use schools for worship will continue to be able to worship on school premises under [Department of Education] guidelines."



The 5th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals on March 15 upheld a federal district judge's ruling that barred a JesusTattoo.org ad from the jumbotron at a high school football field in Lubbock, Texas. Little Pencil Ministries LLC sued the school district for not allowing its "modern-day parable" in January 2014. "[W]e have once again reviewed in careful detail the thorough and cogent opinion of the district court and find no reversible error," the opinion said.

ABC News reported March 19 that civil liberties groups are objecting to de Blasio's plan to expand public pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-olds this fall because it allows religious instruction and prayers during midday breaks.

"It's kind of like waving a red flag in front of a bull," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "This seems to be asking for a lawsuit."

Some pre-K classes are in public schools but many are run by religious groups and other community-based organizations under contract to the city.

Donna Lieberman, New York Civil Liberties Union executive director, called the break "an end run around the separation of church and state."

"We have urged the city to audit programs that are sponsored by a religious group to ensure that the prohibition against turning these into religious programs is honored," she said.

FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor wrote de Blasio a letter on March 31 objecting to his intent to allow worship in public schools, and also sent an action alert to its 1200 New York State members asking them to object as well. They cited U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Pierre N. Leval, who noted the city is free to conclude "that it runs a substantial risk of incurring a violation of the Establishment Clause by hosting and subsidizing the conduct of religious worship services."

FFRF noted, "One of the most common complaints FFRF receives from members of the public is about church worship being held in public schools. This discomfort is historic. Thomas Jefferson argued passionately in his landmark Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786) that no citizen 'shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever.'"

Chaplain's counseling 'recipe for tragedy'

Military Times reported March 11 that Navy Lt. Cmdr. Wesley Modder, a Pentecostal chaplain, was given a "detachment for cause" letter on Feb. 17 after his superiors concluded he's "intolerant" and "unable to function in the diverse and pluralistic environment" of his assignment at the Nuclear Power Training Command in South Carolina.

The letter said Modder "told a female that she was 'shaming herself in the eyes of god' for having premarital sex, told another student that homosexuality was wrong and that 'the penis was meant for the vagina and not for the anus,' and suggested to a student that he, Modder, had the ability to 'save' gay people."

Commanders felt that allowing

vulnerable sailors to be counseled by Modder is "a recipe for tragedy." Modder has served 19 years and could lose his retirement benefits if a board of inquiry separates him before he completes 20 years.

Male Afghan mob murders woman

A mob of male attackers stoned, beat and kicked 27-year-old Farkhunda Zahra Naderi before tossing her off a bridge, setting her body on fire and throwing it in the river March 19 in Kabul, Afghanistan. Her parents said the killing was instigated by a mullah angered by Farkhunda's accusations that he was distributing false tawiz, which are pieces of paper containing verses of the Quran sometimes worn as amulets to ward off evil.

TOLONews reported that "in order to save his job and life," the mullah reportedly began shouting accusations that Farkhunda had burned the Quran.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs said it had found no evidence that she burned the Quran. Thirteen police officials were suspended after the attack and 13 people were arrested.

"That was, for us, one of the most troubling aspects of this case, that the police did not intervene adequately and properly to save her when there was an opportunity to do so," said Patricia Grossman of Human Rights Watch.

Farkhunda was buried amid a huge public outcry three days later, with her coffin carried by women defying the tradition of men-only pallbearers and funerals. Many in the crowd, including men, wore masks of Farkhunda's battered and bloodied face.

The following day, members of the Solidarity Party and other activists planted a pine tree on the riverbank where Farkhunda's body was set on fire.

Judge OKs 'Jew Hatred' bus ads

U.S. District Judge Mitchell Goldberg ordered the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority on March 12 to accept bus ads with a 1941 photo of Adolf Hitler with a Palestinian leader and the tagline "Jew Hatred: It's in the Quran." Philadelphia's transit system had turned down the ad for violating "minimal civility standards."

Goldberg, a George W. Bush appointee, ruled the policy was not clearly defined. "It is clear that the anti-disparagement standard promulgated by SEPTA was a principled attempt to limit hurtful, disparaging advertisements. While certainly laudable, such aspirations do not, unfortunately, cure First

Amendment violations,” Goldberg wrote.

Bible bill advances in Tennessee

Tennessee legislation sponsored by Rep. Jerry Sexton, R-Bean Station, to make the bible the official state book was approved on a 2-1 vote April 1 by the General Assembly’s State Government Subcommittee.

Rep. Bill Sanderson, subcommittee chairman, said a formal legal opinion has been requested from Attorney General Herbert Slatery. The Associated Press reported that Sanderson said the measure is constitutionally suspect, according to Slatery. The Tennessee Constitution says “no preference shall ever be given, by law, to any religious establishment or mode of worship.”

The Tennessean quoted Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris, R-Collierville, expressing concerns March 31 at a committee meeting. “We’re being asked to make the bible, any bible, any version of it, an object, like the state reptile. Like the raccoon, the salamander, the nut, the fish. I think it’s demeaning. I think it reduces the holy bible from scripture to a politically correct history book.”

FFRF asked its Tennessee membership to oppose this unconstitutional measure.



Happy in nonbelief

Members of FFRF’s Metropolitan Chicago chapter, from left, are Tom Cara, Bob Elmore, Rich Pope, Frank Anderson, Melinda Dunker and Drew Bekius. They gathered near one of more than a dozen billboards placed recently in Chicagoland. (photo by Bob Elmore)

Another atheist hacked to death

Atheist activist Washiqur Rahman, 27, was murdered March 30 in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Two suspects, both students at Islamic schools, were captured and three meat cleavers were recovered, police official Biplob Kumar Sarker said. A third suspect escaped.

Prominent atheist blogger and science writer Avijit Roy was also hacked to death in Dhaka on Feb. 26, 11 days after atheist activist Ahmed Rajeeb Haider was murdered near his home in Dhaka. Asif Mohiuddin, a secular blogger, survived after being stabbed by militants in Dhaka in January 2014.

Agency backs Colo. bakery owner

KMGH-TV reported April 2 that the Colorado Civil Rights Division ruled that Azucar Bakery owner Marjorie Silva in Denver didn’t discriminate against William Jack by refusing to make cakes with anti-gay messages in March 2014.

Jack, of Castle Rock, requested two cakes shaped like bibles. He wanted one to depict two groomsmen holding hands in front of a cross with a red “X” over them, with the bible verses “God hates sin. Psalm 45:7” and “Homosexuality is a detestable sin. Leviticus 18:2.” On the other he wanted the image with the words “God loves sinners” and “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.”

Silva, who is Catholic and has six Christian employees, told Jack that she would make him the bible-shaped cakes but wouldn’t decorate them with anti-gay bible verses and images. She offered to provide him with icing and a pastry bag so he could decorate the cakes himself. “If he wants to hate people, he can hate them [but] not here in my bakery.”

“The evidence demonstrates that [Silva] would deny such requests to any customer, regardless of creed,” the decision said.



FFRF display returns to Daley Plaza for Easter

The FFRF Metropolitan Chicago Chapter erected this 8-foot banner in Daley Plaza on April 4. This was the banner’s first “resurrection,” after debuting last year to counter a 10-foot-tall painting of Jesus plus a 14-foot cross erected annually by the Catholic Thomas More Society, It’s invariably accompanied by a round-the-clock prayer vigil.

John Adams appears on the back, with the famed Treaty of Tripoli signed under his administration quoted, declaring the United States is “not founded on the Christian religion.” Chapter volunteers from left: Mike Weeda, Rick Schuch, Joel Frazin, Bob Hunter, Steve Foulkes, Allen Cosnow and Tony Maguire (not pictured, chapter director Tom Cara, who took the photo). The banner set-up was fashioned by FFRF Staff Attorneys Patrick Elliott, Andrew Seidel and Sam Grover.

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Patrick Kervin, 58, Sydney: Indecent assault. Kervin, a Marist priest and pastor of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, is accused of molesting a 15-year-old boy in 1988 at Holy Spirit College in Bellambi in 1988. *Source: Illawarra Mercury, 3-25-15*

Larry Jones, 65, McAlester, OK: Felony possessing obscene or indecent writings. Jones, former pastor at Missionary Baptist Church, allegedly wrote a letter describing his fantasy of having sex with 3 children as young as 6 who attended his church.

He was arrested after his wife found the letter on a computer printer in their home. Jones' lawyers claim the statute violates the First Amendment. *Source: News-Capital, 3-22-15*

Ronald D. Joling, 71, and Dorothea J. Joling, 72, Coquille, OR: Knowingly filing false liens. The Jolings, who are married and co-pastors of an unidentified church, are accused of filing retaliatory liens against officials involved in the couple's 2014 conviction for hiding more than \$2 million from the IRS over 19 years.

The Jolings, who call themselves "sovereign citizens," claimed officials owed them more than \$100 million. *Source: The Oregonian, 3-21-15*

David Hayman, 37, Oradell, NJ: 2 counts of sexual assault and 5 counts of child endangerment. Hayman, who led a high school youth group until last May at Cornerstone Christian Church, allegedly exchanged explicit videos and text messages with 5 girls in the group and "engaged in inappropriate sexual activity" with at least 2 of them. *Source: nj.com, 3-20-15*

Tim Biggers, 44, Dayton, OH: Suspicion of possessing criminal tools. Biggers, pastor of New Vision Church of God, was among several men arrested in a prostitution sting. He allegedly answered an online ad for sex, said police Sgt. Chris Fischer.

"In conjunction with March Madness [NCAA basketball], there are a lot of out-of-towners that come in, so we addressed street prostitution as well as Internet prostitution," Fischer said. *Source: WHIO, 3-20-15*

Luis V. Camacho, 29, Merizo, Guam: Custodial interference with a minor. Camacho, pastor of 2 Catholic parishes, was found parked with a 17-year-old girl at a beach, said A.J. Balajadia, police public information officer. He's the nephew of Bishop Emeritus Tomas Camacho.

In letters to authorities, Deacon Steve Martinez alleged Camacho "drove the minor child to Subway and then to a remote beach in Agat and had sexual contact with her," including oral sex.

Martinez alleged in a letter that Camacho was influenced by Fr. Edivaldo Oliveira, who once warned girls that boys will treat them like oranges, "sucking the sweet juice from them and when they are all dried up, the boys will spit them out." *Source: Pacific News Center, 3-19-15*

Jesús H. Sahagún, Burgos, Spain: Gender violence, causing injury and mistreatment. Sahagún, a Catholic priest who is official exorcist in Valladolid, is accused of performing 13 exorcisms on a girl starting in 2012 after she became an exorcist. She was tied up and had crucifixes positioned over her head, according to El País. The girl later attempted suicide.

In July, Pope Francis sanctioned exorcisms, with the Vatican hailing them as "a form of charity." *Source: thelocal.es, 3-18-15*

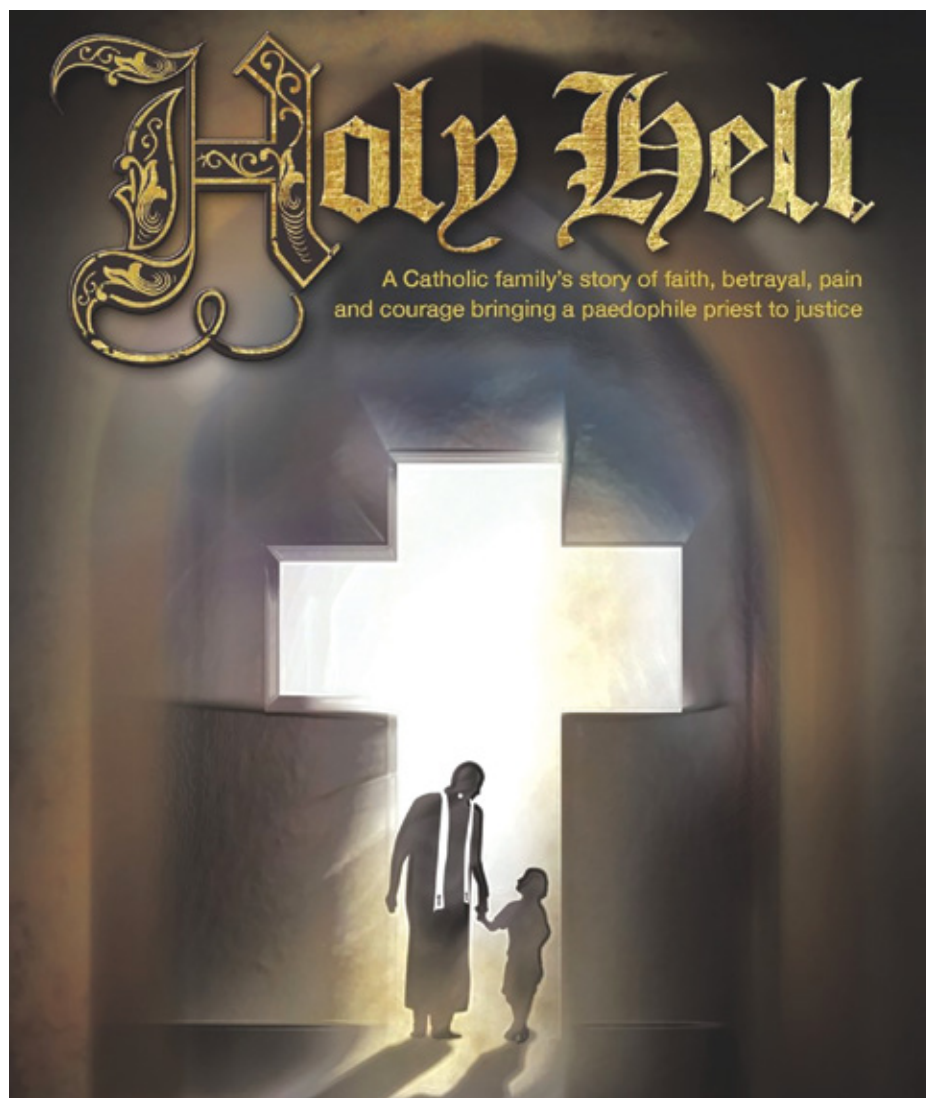
Philip Wilson, 64, Adelaide, Australia: Concealing child sexual abuse. Wilson, the archbishop of Adelaide, is the most senior Catholic official in the world to be thus charged. He's accused of covering up sexual abuse in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in 1976 by pedophile priest James Patrick Fletcher, who died in prison in 2006.

Victim Daniel Feenan's mother Patricia Feenan said Fletcher "groomed the whole family" by portraying himself as a benevolent priest who could be trusted. *Source: The Advertiser, 3-17-15*

Clovis J. Vilchez-Parra, 34, Palatine, IL: Production of child pornography and felony possession of child pornography. Vilchez-Parra, a native of Peru, is associate pastor at Mision San Juan Diego Catholic Church in Arlington Heights. Investigators allegedly traced Internet images to a computer at his home, which is owned by the Archdiocese of Chicago. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 3-17-15*

Franklin Paul, 35, Kongarapalayam, India: Murder. Paul, pastor of an unidentified church, is charged with the poisoning death of a 26-year-old man who was allegedly having an affair with Paul's wife, who had filed for divorce. *Source: Press Trust of India, 3-17-15*

Darrell Best, 45, Upper Marlboro, MD: 1st-degree sex abuse of a minor. Best, senior



Patricia Feenan's 2012 book alleges Fr. James Fletcher "groomed the whole family" to gain access to her son.

pastor at God of the Second Chance Ministry Church and a Washington police officer, is charged with molesting a female minor starting in December. The girl, now 16, attended the church.

Another female church member, now 18, later came forward with similar allegations. *Source: Washington Post, 3-17-15*

Andrew Hamblin, 23, White Oak, TN: Aggravated assault and 6 counts of felony reckless endangerment. Hamblin, pastor of Tabernacle Church of God, is charged with firing a gun out the window at a friend of his estranged wife while she and their 4 children were nearby. Hamblin gained notoriety after appearing on the reality TV show "Snake Salvation" while handling poisonous snakes.

"It's a shame," Hamblin said while entering court. "[The media] ought to be reporting some real news instead of this garbage." *Source: WBIR, 3-15-16*

Diane Reiners, 53, Brooklyn, NY: Criminal possession of a controlled substance, DWI and reckless driving. Reiners, an assistant priest at Cathedral of St. John the Divine, an Episcopal parish, had been driving through the Holland Tunnel erratically and was in possession of an open bottle of Absolut vodka and 31 Tramadol pills prescribed to another person, the arrest report said. *Source: Jersey Journal, 3-14-15*

Helmi M. Agha, aka Imam Abu Farah, Kissimmee, FL: 12 counts of lewd and lascivious molestation. Agha, executive director of the Osceola County American Muslim Youth Leadership Council, is accused of sexually touching a 15-year-old girl in his office.

In 2013, Agha threatened to sue a hospital for not letting him volunteer as a chaplain. Why are we not allowed to offer spiritual care to American-Muslim patients?" Farah asked. *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 3-12-15*

Kerry E. Leeper, Lancaster, PA: Driving under the influence of alcohol. Leeper, pastor of First United Methodist Church, and the Southwest District of United Methodist Churches have agreed he should take a 2-month "renewal leave," said Rev. Bumkoo Chung, district superintendent. *Source: Lancaster Online, 3-12-15*

Michael Parsons, 44, Kevil, KY: 2 counts of 3rd-degree rape and 22 counts of electronic solicitation of a minor for sex. Parsons, youth pastor at Milburn Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, is accused of assaulting a 16-year-old girl who was in his youth group. *Source: WPSD, 3-11-15*

Phillip Kendrick II, 30, Lakeland, FL: Transmitting material harmful to a minor, use of a 2-way communications device to commit felony and 3 counts of lewd battery. Kendrick, former youth minister at Mt. Tabor Baptist Church, allegedly had sex with a 15-year-old girl 3 times between last November and January.

He'd resigned from the church in October but had known the girl for about 4 years through her church attendance.

According to investigators, Kendrick sent pictures of his penis to the girl and she sent naked images of herself to him. Both say the sex was consensual. *Source: WTSP, 3-10-15*

Shawn E. Shaffer, 54, Corona, CA: Multiple counts of sexual molestation on a juvenile under 16 years of age. Several men have alleged he molested them as minors.

Corona police said it's been reported that Shaffer was conducting youth bible studies in his home and that he frequents local skateboard parks. *Source: Inland News, 3-10-15*

Shaun O. Harrison Sr., 55, Roxbury, MA: Assault with intent to murder, assault and battery and unlawful possession of a firearm. Harrison, former associate minister at Charles Street African Methodist Episcopal Church and the dean of academy at English High School, allegedly shot a 17-year-old student "execution style" in the back of the head. The boy, who was being mentored at school by Harrison, survived, and was reportedly involved in selling drugs for him.

Prosecutor David Bradley said in court that Harrison "had told the victim that they were going to a house to get marijuana and meet up with some girls for the victim." *Source: Christian Post, 3-9-15*

Kareem A. Mitchell, 42, Sacramento, CA: Sexual assault, sodomy and oral copulation. Mitchell, choir director at New Testament Baptist Church, is alleged to have initiated a sexual relationship with a male minor that started in 2005 and ended in 2008. Another alleged victim later came forward. *Source: Sacramento Bee, 3-5-15*

Pleaded / Convicted

Thomas Wilson, 63, Watertown, NY: Pleaded guilty to 1st-degree sexual abuse. Wilson, senior pastor of Smithville Baptist Church, is accused of having sexual contact behind the former Lake Ontario Playhouse in 2008 with a 9-year-old girl who was a family friend. *Source: WWNY, 3-24-15*

Adam Metropoulos, 52, Bangor, ME: Found guilty by superior court judge of 4 counts of sexual abuse of a minor. Metropoulos, former pastor of St. George Greek Orthodox Church, testified he never molested an altar boy, now 23,

'The trail of destruction caused by Thomas W. Shea is staggering.'

— Connecticut Bishop Michael Cote

in 2006-07 and claimed he only touched the victim's genitals outside his pajamas once.

Before the trial started, he pleaded guilty to 1 count each of possession of sexually explicit materials and violation of privacy, admitting he had explicit photos of prepubescent children on his computer and that he secretly photographed a woman taking a shower in his bathroom.

Metropoulos testified that altar servers often spent the night at his home and he often slept with the boys, but said when he told police that he had "a predilection toward children," he was talking about girls, not boys. *Source: Daily News, 3-17-15*

Angelo T. Ervin, 51, Kankakee, IL: Guilty by jury of rape. Ervin, former head of deacons at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, was accused of impregnating an 18-year-old woman with an IQ of 59 and the mental capacity of a 5-year-old. Their daughter was born in 2011.

Ervin, who claimed the sex was consensual, was also a family friend and their landlord. "The victim is a child who has a child," prosecutor Carol Costello said in her closing statement. *Source: Daily Journal, 3-14-15*

Clint Landry, 58, Fairbanks, AK: Pleaded guilty to attempted coercion and enticement of a minor. Landry, who was suspended last May as pastor at Sacred Heart Catholic Cathedral, was arrested for wiring cash to the Philippines to obtain child pornography after a custodian saw a salacious image of a girl on his computer.

Landry communicated with at least 7 email accounts in 2013 "for the purpose of viewing live video of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct," a plea agreement said. *Source: Alaska Dispatch, 3-12-15*

Sentenced

Michael L. Miles, 33, Canton, OH: 3 years' probation, 200 hours of community service and no employment with fiscal responsibilities. Miles pleaded guilty to grand theft for stealing \$15,000 from Mt. Olive Baptist Church, where he was pastor.

After sentencing, he invited supporters to worship with him at All Saints Temple. Asked about his case, Miles said, "I'm thankful that God wins and not people." *Source: Canton Repository, 3-25-15*

Wojciech Gil, 33, a defrocked Polish Catholic priest found guilty of abusing 8 minor males in the Dominican Republic and Poland between 2000 and 2013, was sentenced in Poland to 7 years in prison and restitution of \$41,735. He was also charged with possession of child pornography and illegal possession of a gun. *Source: Reuters, 3-25-15*

William Kokesch, 68, Pointe-Claire, Canada: 2 years less 1 day in prison, barred from public areas where children are likely to gather and forbidden to use a computer after pleading guilty to producing and distributing child pornography. Kokesch, a deacon at St. Edmund of Canterbury Parish and communications director for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, had almost 100,000 photos of nude children as young as 5 and 2,000 videos. *Source: Canadian Press, 3-25-15*

Daniel Curran, 64, Newcastle, N.Ireland: 3 years in prison suspended after pleading guilty to gross indecency and indecent assault on a child. It was the 5th conviction for Curran, a Catholic priest already sentenced to 13 years, 8 months in prison.

Curran admitted to offenses in 1990-93 at a family cottage when the victim was between 7 and 10. He took altar boys, including the victim, to the cottage and plied them with alcohol. *Source: Belfast Telegraph, 3-24-15*

Stanislaus Hogan, 70, Adelaide, Australia: 30 months in prison with parole eligibility in 10 months. Hogan, a Jesuit Catholic priest, had more 1,500 books, magazines and videos of young boys in his private quarters at St. Ignatius' College in 2013.

Hogan told the court he used books and videos to help understand pedophiles and himself. Judge Peter Brebner told him that porn production exploits children, even though Hogan's conduct toward students was said to be impeccable. *Source: abc.net.au, 3-20-15*

John D. Maguire, 71, Sydney: 21 to 36 months in prison for 6 indecent assault convictions of a student in the 1980s. Maguire, a Marist Catholic brother, was charged with molesting a boy, starting when he was 11. The victim testified he once awoke in his dorm to find Maguire performing oral sex on him. Maguire still denies the allegations. *Source: AAP, 3-20-15*

Jeffrey D. Williams, 48, Corinth, TX: 5 years' deferred probation and \$1,000 fine after pleading guilty to causing injury to a child. Williams, pastor at the Church of Corinth ("a missional Christian community"), was originally indicted on a charge of solicitation of a minor for attempting to "request, command or attempt to induce an individual younger than 17 years

of age to expose her genitals" in 2013. *Source: Record-Chronicle, 3-13-15*

Josh Wheelless, 29, Cary, NC: 45 days in jail suspended and 12 months' probation after pleading guilty to contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Wheelless, minister of youth and outreach at Landmark Freewill Baptist Church, exchanged nude photos with a 16-year-old girl. *Source: WRAL, 3-11-15*

Duane E. Youngblood, 48, Wilksburg, PA: 16 to 48 months in prison and 3 years' probation after pleading guilty to 3rd-degree corruption of minors for molesting 2 teen boys he was counseling between 2009-11 as pastor at Higher Call World Outreach Ministries Inc. *Source: triblive.com, 3-11-15*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

Catherine Bergin is suing **Nicholas Assi** and the **Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles**, alleging sexual harassment, sexual battery and intentional infliction of emotional distress. She alleges Assi, assistant pastor at American Martyrs Church in Manhattan Beach, put his arms around her last April in the sacristy while she was volunteering and whispered, "Hi, darling," then caressed her lower abdomen and "put his nose in plaintiff's neck and took deep breaths."

Assi engaged in similar inappropriate behavior with her in December 2013 and March 2014, alleges Bergin, who is married.

An investigator for the church said "boundary violations" occurred but denied allegations of sexual assault. Assi was removed from American Martyrs in May. An oversight board recommended he "be reinstated to priestly functions and reassigned to another parish," the suit states. *Source: CNS, 3-25-15*

A lawsuit alleges the **Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles** moved abusive Vincentian priest **Carlos R. Rodriguez** to a different parish after he spent time at a treatment facility for molesting a boy, 16. The suit details allegations from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Rodriguez was convicted of molesting 2 other boys in 2004 after being defrocked in 1998. He lives in Huntington Park now.

The suit alleges he was placed back into ministry in Santa Paula to work with Spanish-speaking families after treatment in Maryland. Court documents say he then molested boys who attended Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. *Source: AP, 3-23-15*

A suit filed in **S. Carolina** names former Catholic priest **Wayland Y. Brown** and the **Diocese of Savannah, GA**, as defendants. The plaintiff alleges he was molested as a student at St. James Catholic School in Savannah in 1987-88 and at various S. Carolina locations. Brown was sentenced to prison in 2003 for abusing 2 boys in the 1970s and removed from the priesthood in 2004.

Records show church officials were aware of concerns about Brown as early as 1969, with some diocesan staff objecting to his ordination in 1977. *Source: AP, 3-23-15*

Mohammad Qatanani, Paterson, NJ, Islamic Center of Passaic County president, is being sued by 4 former board members who allege he misappropriated \$88,000 from the center to pay his legal bills, health insurance and tuition for his children.

The federal government is trying to deport the imam due to his alleged ties to the Palestinian political group Hamas. *Source: The Record, 3-20-15*

A **Shelton, CT**, man alleges in a lawsuit he was repeatedly molested as an altar boy at St. Patrick Catholic Parish in the late 1970s and early 1980s by **Fr. Walter Coleman**. At least 5 others have sued over alleged abuse by Coleman, who retired in 1995 and lives in Pompano Beach, FL.

Records ordered to be made public by a federal court 5 years ago showed the diocese had been receiving complaints about Coleman since 1976. *Source: CT Post, 3-18-15*

Three women who allege they were molested by **Carpinteria Community Church** youth minister **Louis Bristol** are suing Bristol, the church and the **Presbytery of Santa Barbara, CA**. Bristol, 31, pleaded guilty in 2014 to sex crimes after admitting to preying on members of his worship team, sometimes at a Holiday Inn.

According to the suit, the congregation reacted with "at best disbelief and in some cases outright hostility" to victims after allegations were made. *Source: Santa Barbara Independent, 3-15-15*

A lawsuit seeking \$1.5 million alleges **Phillip L. Shumaker, Austin, TX**, former deacon at River Road Baptist Church, masturbated in front of a church member suffering from stage-4 ovarian cancer when he delivered a Thanksgiving meal at her home in 2013.

The suit alleges Shumaker groped the woman under her shirt and ejaculated on it. He allegedly returned several more times to grope her and masturbate. He was criminally charged twice with indecent exposure. *Source: KXAN, 3-15-15*

"John Doe 117" is suing the **Diocese of Ft. Worth, TX**, for \$1 million for alleged sexual abuse by **Fr. John H. Sutton** at Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls in the early

1990s. Sutton, who died in 2004, would take him into the school chapel, Doe alleges, and grope him while he was praying.

Eventually, Sutton raped him with sex toys from a black bag, the suit alleges. Doe, who lives in Washington state, said he heard a camera clicking on some occasions. Other times, Sutton stuffed a towel in his mouth to stifle his cries, Doe claims. *Source: Dallas Observer, 3-8-15*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

The Catholic Diocese of Norwich, CT, settled a suit for \$1.1 million with a woman who alleged she was sexually assaulted at least 60 times by **Fr. Thomas Shea**. "Jane Doe No. 2" alleged Shea, a family friend, started molesting her when she was 3 and continued until she was 16. He died in 2006 at age 85.

Shea has been accused of molestation by at least 15 girls, including by a woman who tried to kill herself 3 times by age 23. The suit also alleges **Bishop Daniel Reilly** moved Shea from parish to parish in the wake of complaints.

A memo in Shea's file written by current Bishop Michael Cote says "the trail of destruction caused by Thomas W. Shea is staggering." *Source: Hartford Courant, 3-23-15*

Finances

The Catholic Diocese of Oslo, Norway, is alleged to have fraudulently registered thousands of people as members between 2010-14 to obtain about \$6 million in state subsidies.

Predominantly Protestant Norway subsidizes organized religions. Authorities allege the diocese went through phone books to find people with foreign-sounding names and added them to church rolls, often without their knowledge, which doubled membership to 140,000 from 2010-14. *Source: AFP, 3-19-15*

Legal Developments

A **New Jersey** federal district court rejected claims by **several rabbis and Orthodox Jews** charged with kidnapping and conspiracy for using coercive tactics to force husbands to give their wives divorce documents called "gets." The court ruled that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act had no bearing on the cases. *Source: Religion Clause, 3-22-15*

Melvin Randall, 44, Williamsburg, VA: Charges of taking indecent liberties with a child and contributing to the delinquency of a minor were dropped by a grand jury, which indicted Randall for aggravated sexual battery. The criminal complaint said deputies investigating a possible burglary found Randall, former youth pastor at Faith Alive Outreach Ministries, in a car with a 7-year-old girl who was putting her clothes on in the back seat.

The arrest report said the girl told police that Randall took her clothes off and hugged and kissed her and that they got together every other Saturday to sell doughnuts for the church. *Source: WTKR, 3-20-15*

Prosecutors successfully appealed the 2013 sentence of **Joe Seephis Hardie, 70, former pastor at New Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Lakeland, FL**. A state appeals court panel ordered the circuit judge to issue a stricter sentence for Hardie's conviction for embezzling \$115,000 from the church. He was sentenced to 90 days in jail, 90 days of weekend work release, 2 years of house arrest, 18 years of probation and monthly restitution of \$500.

The state appealed the "downward departure" of the sentence, which was below minimum sentencing standards. *Source: Lakeland Ledger, 3-20-15*

Hector Coria-Gonzalez, 46, Davis, CA: Taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to face formal deportation proceedings. Coria-Gonzalez, a Mexico native, pleaded guilty in 2014 to statutory rape for engaging in sexual acts with a 16-year-old girl who belonged to St. James

Mr. Haynes said she would be absolved of those sins by performing oral sex on him.'

—Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Rotella

Catholic Parish, where he was pastor. *Source: Sacramento Bee, 3-20-15*

A **Philadelphia** jury was again unable to reach a verdict in a trial of **Andrew McCormick**, 58, a Catholic priest accused of molesting a 10-year-old altar boy in 1997. The mistrial came 1 day shy of a year since the previous hung jury.

McCormick wished court staff a happy Easter as he signed a subpoena to appear at a hearing April 10, the date by which the state must decide whether to try him again. *Source: Philly.com, 3-12-15*

A Missouri judge ordered the **St. Louis Catholic Archdiocese** to turn over records on sex abuse allegations for 2 decades as part of a civil suit filed by parents of a man who killed himself in 2009. The suit alleges **Fr. Bryan Kuchar** molested their son between 1999 and 2002. The Vatican defrocked him in 2006 after he was convicted for molesting a 14-year-old boy. *Source: AP, 3-11-15*

U.S. District Judge Lawrence Stengel reversed a lower court's decision to allow bail for **Mark Haynes, 55, Westtown, PA**, a Catholic priest charged with trading child pornography and enticing 25 teen girls to send him explicit photos of themselves. Haynes used the alias "Katie Caponetti" online.

Prosecutors told the judge that 3 accusers have surfaced since Haynes' arrest in October. One alleged in court filings that Haynes assaulted her as a teen in the 1990s during confession. When she confessed to oral sex with her boyfriend, "Mr. Haynes said she would be absolved of those sins by performing oral sex on him," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Rotella.

She said prosecutors have also learned about Haynes' alleged plans to meet a girl at Walt Disney World for sex. *Source: The Inquirer, 3-6-15*

Allegations

Jeff Buchheit, **Waterloo, IA**, and his lawyer held a press conference to allege sexual abuse by **Fr. Leo Riley** when Buchheit was a 4th-grade altar boy in 1985 at Resurrection Catholic Church in Dubuque. Riley first assaulted him before school in the church, Buchheit told reporters.

"I've been actively working myself up to this point of understanding how to deal with the shame and how to deal with the fear, so I could step forward," he said.

The Diocese of Venice, FL, which put Riley on paid leave during the investigation, said he "strenuously denies" the allegation. The Archdiocese of Dubuque paid \$5.2 million in 2013 to settle 26 abuse claims.

"The sad simple truth is, the overwhelming majority of adults who were abused as kids can't report these crimes until decades later," said David Clohessy of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, adding that the investigation shouldn't be confined to Iowa. *Source: KCRG/Fox 4, 3-24-15*

"**M.I., 34, Dubai, UAR:** M.I., a Bangladeshi imam with a chef's visa, allegedly groped an 8-year-old boy's genitals during Quran study class, the alleged victim's father, a Pakistani, told the Dubai Criminal Court.

The father told the court he'd asked the imam to come to their home 3 days a week for Quran instruction for the boy and his 5-year-old brother. *Source: Emirates 24/7, 3-17-15*

Police in **Mt. Eliza, Australia**, are investigat-

ing claims of sex abuse at the Shiva School of Meditation and Yoga. **Russell Kruckman**, aka Swami Shankarananda, 73, resigned as director but remained as spiritual head of the ashram after it was revealed he'd had sexual relationships with up to 40 women there.

A sign at the ashram read, "Surrender is doing it when you don't want to," an alleged victim said. *Source: The Age, 3-16-15*

Restoration Youth Academy, Prichard, AL, described as a private Christian boot camp for troubled teens, was closed by Mobile police for sanitary violations after serving a search warrant during an investigation of physical abuse allegations. All 36 teens were removed.

Camp founder **William Knott** was arrested on an unrelated domestic violence warrant. **Pastor John Young** was arrested on a traffic warrant. *Source: WPLG, 3-13-15*

The head of the Office of the Children's Advocate in **Jamaica** said youth are being sexually abused by clergy members. "We have received reports in relation to deacons, elders and prayer warriors," said Diahann Gordon Harrison.

"Children are being robbed, raped and murdered," Gordon Harrison alleged. "They are being abused in homes, in communities, in schools, in the church, and so it is common knowledge that children are victims." *Source: Jamaica Gleaner, 3-10-15*

The University of Arizona in **Tucson** is investigating **Faith Christian Church**, which has operated on campus for 25 years and is being described as a cult by at least 20 former members and staffers.

"Their stories include reports of hitting infants with cardboard tubes to encourage submission, financial coercion, alienation from parents, public shaming of members and shunning of those who leave the church or question its leaders," a newspaper report said.

Neither Faith Christian's founder and head pastor **Stephen Hall**, 62, nor executive pastor **Ian Laks**, 50, responded to repeated requests for comment. *Source: Daily Star, 3-6-15*

Removed / Resigned

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of **Cardinal Keith O'Brien** as head of the Catholic Church in **Scotland** over allegations of sexual misconduct.

O'Brien will keep his title but be barred from all clerical activities.

O'Brien resigned as archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh in 2013 amid allegations of sexual impropriety made by 4 priests. O'Brien, an outspoken opponent of gay rights, was named "bigot of the year" in 2012 by the gay rights group Stonewall.

The first allegation against him dates to 1980. The complainant was a 20-year-old seminarian at St. Andrew's College, where O'Brien was his "spiritual director." *Source: The Guardian, 3-20-15*

Richard Rodgers, 79, was removed by the Diocese of Motherwell as pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Parish in **Cleland, Scotland**, during a police probe of historic sex abuse allegations. *Source: Motherwell Times, 3-18-16*

Four senior staff at the Yeshivah Center, an Orthodox school in **Melbourne**, resigned after victims of sex abuse called for resignations. **Chaim New, Yirmi Loebenstein, Sue Susskind and Don Wolf** resigned from the school's committee of management.

The Chabad community has been embroiled in a cover-up scandal since victim Manny Waks came forward in 2011. Three Orthodox men have been convicted: former security guard **David Cyprys**, former teacher **David Kramer** and **Daniel Hayman**, former school director in Sydney. *Source: Haaretz, 3-14-15*

Pope Francis removed **Curtis Wehmeyer, 50, St. Paul, MN**, from the priesthood. He pleaded guilty to molesting 2 boys and is serving a 5-year prison term. He's also charged with molesting a teen boy who was unconscious. No plea has been entered in that case. *Source: AP, 3-11-15*

Yuan Zhiming, founder of China Soul for Christ Foundation, **Rohnert Park, CA**, resigned to "retreat in the Lord and seek renewal" after being accused of rape, a charge he denies.

His accuser is Chai Ling, founder of All Girls Allowed, which campaigns against China's 1-child policy and other injustices against women. She alleged the pastor raped her in 1990. Zhiming and Ling were both involved in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, then came to the U.S. to become born-again Christians.

Ling alleged Zhiming tried to get her to watch an adult video, forced her to the floor and "covered my eyes with the jackets that fell during my struggle."

An inquiry by 18 pastors detailed 3 more alleged incidents, including one with a China Soul intern on a 2013 trip to Paris. Zhiming allegedly invited her into his hotel room to watch the Korean sex comedy "Horny Family" on his computer, embraced her and asked her to sleep with him. She refused and reported the incident. *Source: S. China Morning Post, 3-3-15*

Email: blackcollar@ffr.org



Letterbox

Secular professionals get Walmart support



Great news! The world's largest private employer, Walmart, has agreed to allow a new secular support group for its associates, with executive sponsorship and permission to use its facilities for meetings and its internal network computers as an internal communications platform.

The first meeting, held Jan. 22, was very well-received. Monthly meetings have been held since then. If you are a Walmart associate and would like to join, search for the "Secular Professionals Alliance at Walmart" on the internal Connect community.

Gary Berger
Arkansas

Indiana student gives thanks for FFRF

I would like to give you credit for standing up against the majority of the community that I live in. I've dealt with many cases in school where I felt uncomfortable because I had different views. The majority seem to be religious and share their beliefs with each other. They seem to think everyone is on board with praying before games, posting God on the wall and teaching a bible class. I believe this should not be in school.

I also encountered a teacher last year who brought in a Quran and showed students highlighted material of what he believed was inaccurate. This to me is disrespectful, even though I am not a follower of the Quran.

I thank you for fighting against this system. I hope for a more neutral school system than what it is now.

Name withheld
Indiana

Our 'faith in science' sets us apart

I found it interesting that CNN's special about "atheists and real faith" appeared to have gone out of its way to avoid mentioning the premier free-thinking organization in the world and one that I am proud to be a Life Member of, FFRF.

I also take this opportunity to state clearly and loudly that as atheists, we are the truest people of faith. We have rational faith, and that means faith in what makes sense and can be proven and has a basis in fact. We should not allow ignorant people to hijack the word faith from us.

When asked if I am a person of faith, I now proudly respond, "Yes I am. I have faith in science and what can be proven." If queried further, as in, "Do you believe in God," my response is, "Of course not. Didn't you understand what I just said?"

I don't say this to be confrontational or mean-spirited. Rather, I do this to stand up for what and who I am just as the blind-faith believers do.

Gerald L. Foreman
Nevada

Ron Reagan ad better than sliced bread

I saw your Ron Reagan Jr. ad on CNN and was blown out of the water. This is the best thing that has happened to atheism since Richard Dawkins! Why didn't somebody think of this before?

Thank you for your courage and your dedication to the atheist cause.

Jane Everhart
New York

•••

Your work is needed, oh so desperately. I hope the battle against superstition and ignorance can be won. You are valiant! Best, best wishes.

Abigail Martin
Florida

Atheist seventh-grader finds FFRF attractive

My name is Aurora Cerone and I am a seventh-grade student at Springville Griffith Middle School. We are working on a project in English and social studies called Kids Can Make a Difference. It is a year-long project in which students pick an organization to write a report about and volunteer for. I picked FFRF because I am an atheist and had heard about you on various podcasts. I also want to make sure that the church is separate from the state, especially in schools.

I would appreciate it if you could send me information about this organization such as pamphlets, ideas for getting donations or volunteer opportunities.

Aurora Cerone
New York

Editor's note: We gladly sent Aurora some relevant information and a freethought T-shirt. Thanks for asking and for your interest, Aurora (also the Roman goddess of the dawn).

Nonpracticing Jew seeks input from others

I am a member of FFRF and a total atheist. I am 79, raised in a Jewish household and bar-mitzvah'd. About 30 years ago, I started to thoroughly analyze all the reasons and justifications for beliefs in a god, heaven, hell, etc., and have personally determined that there is absolutely no justification for these totally unprovable beliefs.

However, I am still a Jew based on my descent, even though I do not practice Judaism. Because anti-Semitism is expanding in the U.S., Europe, South America and the Middle East, I find myself defending my heritage, the country of Israel, and taking personal offense when it occurs. Occasionally when asked my religion, I state my atheism, but when I hear an anti-Semitic comment, I immediately counter-respond.

My reason for this letter is to request a general response from FFRF members asking them their feelings in this matter. If possible, "Jewish" members should be the majority of responders.

Jerry Oster
California

Suggestion for Indiana signs in windows

To the majority of Indiana business owners who are as outraged as I am about discrimination against same-sex couples based on religious belief, I suggest they post the following sign prominently in their store windows: "I'm sorry, but serving brain-dead, idiot politicians is against my religious belief."

J. Lonczak
Connecticut

Skip Xenu, Jesus for birds and the bees

Art Naebig writes: "A few years ago, I sent my first Easter letter to the Reedsburg Independent, and the editor called me to make sure it wasn't a prank. Since then, I have been fortunate to have many of my letters printed in that newspaper." The Independent printed the following letter in March, as did the Wisconsin State Journal, the state's second-largest newspaper:

Many of the world's religions require their adherents to believe stuff that's really hard to swallow. For example, Buddhists and Hindus believe in reincarnation. Mormons believe that we are all inhabited by spirits of gods from other planets. Scientologists believe that the intergalactic dictator Xenu brought millions of souls to Earth, dumped them near volcanoes and dropped atom bombs on them.

Fortunately, Christians only have to believe perfectly reasonable things like Heaven and Hell, Virgin Birth, The Trinity and The Resurrection. On April 5, Easter Sunday, Christians will be celebrating The Resurrection on a day that happens to be named after the pagan Goddess of fertility, Oestre. The familiar Easter flowers, eggs, bunnies and baby chicks are all symbols of the fertility of Springtime.

Why spend that day cooped up in a church looking at a representation of a crucified God when you can take a nice hike on a trail, looking at the new, green plants and listening to birds' mating songs? Your kids will be a lot happier and you won't have to buy them new clothes to show off. If the weather is bad, you can always stay at home and color eggs.

Art Naebig
Wisconsin

In a Theocracy

Science is defiance
and Reason is treason.

Self-righteousness is intensified
and rationalizes genocide.

Simple Common Sense
is a capital offense.

JB Kennedy
California

Closet Buddhist says it's not a religion

As a secular, freethinking closet Buddhist, I am weary of people referring to Buddhism as a religion. When I mention that there is no god or revealed truth or faith involved, they're incredulous.

Siddhartha would be horrified and amused (as would Jesus) to think that their insights would be so abused for political purposes.

William McClanahan
California

Happiness will be N.C. in rearview mirror



Adela Lohr

Today I received a wonderful birthday present from my husband, a subscription to this paper. I read it word for word and found much laughter and healing. Thank you so much for your efforts. I truly applaud your successes.

We moved here from a progressive area of Virginia and have been in culture shock ever since. This town would keep FFRF attorneys busy for a long, long time: religious fliers and bibles in public buildings, radio stations blaring religion in stores and gas stations, signs at restaurants to "drop your name and that of the church you attend," being told "God bless" every single day, learning that my children are singing religious songs in their public school, door-to-door Mormon "salespeople/converters" who come by regularly and fliers sent home from school advertising things like soccer camp at a Baptist church. I called the church and learned that camp includes two hours of soccer and five of religion.

By far the worst experience: Several neighbors have had the audacity to tell my children (when I'm not around of course) that they have to believe in God and go to church. My daughter, who is 8, has since told me that I am going to hell for not saying prayers before meals. She wants to know why we don't go to church when everyone else does. I hope to move this summer and to never again live in the bible belt. Instead of hearing their words, I'm hearing "I have just completely lost the ability to think for myself."

I also have to deal with prospective tenants trying to use religion to influence me into renting to them. One recently texted me that she was "lost in His love." I told her go get a map. Often I hear, "I'll be a good tenant. I'm a regular church-going person." I respond, "Well, I don't go to church. Does that make me a bad person?"

There is an overabundance of churches here. I have always wondered how much better it would be if those churches were a mix of community centers, gyms, art galleries, bookstores or therapeutic centers of some kind. What if all the money that supported religion instead went to getting food and clean water to places where there's not enough or providing health care or housing for our vets who are penniless and living in the street?

Expressing myself after years of confusion and dismay has been helpful to me, and my hope is that I'm able in some way to assist the cause of secularism, although it seems completely hopeless here.

Adela Lohr
North Carolina

Hasidic Jews pushing theocracy in New York

While American freethinkers are rightly concerned about the dangers to secularism posed by the Religious Right, here in New York there is a glaring example of a smaller group that has long held secular governance and the separation of church in utter contempt, with often dire consequences for the general public. I am referring to the bloc-voting Hasidic communities of Brooklyn and parts of upstate New York.

To say they understand how to game the system would be an understatement. Here is a partial list of their activities:

- The Hasidim have always been among the worst slumlords in New York City, with legions of open violations. Landlords act through intermediaries (e.g., superintendents) to empty apartments that could then be sold or rented at market value to bypass rent control.

- A corrupt district attorney and police lieutenant framed two innocent men (both "gentiles," one white and one black) for the murders of Hasidic rabbis in two separate incidents under intense pressure from community. Both men were cleared after serving 19 and 17 years in prison, respectively. For years, the same D.A. ignored a burgeoning pedophilia scandal and let "rabbinical courts" unsympathetic to the victims cover up these heinous crimes.

- Fire Department inspectors are told to "go easy" on violations in Hasidic areas and make up quotas in non-Hasidic areas.

- Hasidim have taken over the school board of the town of Ramapo. They have decimated the public schools, which serve mostly minority students, firing several hundred teachers and cutting funding.

- I have been called for jury duty in Brooklyn seven or eight times, and never once I have seen a Hasidic juror, even though there are many thousands of them in Brooklyn. Either they are illegally exempt or fail to report, apparently with no consequences. Mixing with gentiles is anathema to them.

I place more blame on corrupt public officials who pander to the Hasidim and treat them with impunity than I do on the Hasidim themselves. It is venal and cowardly "public servants" like these who pose the greatest threat to secular democracy.

Name withheld
New York

Constitution's Article VI needs heeding

While I think it is essential that we keep up the good fight to maintain the separation of church and state, I think we must also, as the nation heads into an election year, remind candidates for public office that Article VI of the U.S. Constitution expressly states "but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Endorsing candidates and urging voters to cast their ballots for specific candidates also violates IRS rules for maintaining tax-exempt status.

Alexander Wallace
California

Wedding cake recipe doesn't include religion

Isn't the onus on the buyer to boycott businesses that do not concur with

one's own beliefs? I refuse to buy mulch from the Boy Scouts, patronize Hobby Lobby, Chick-fil-A or Papa John's Pizza. My husband suggests that David Mullins and Charlie Craig [Colorado gay couple] probably paid town/state taxes, helping fund the infrastructure that supports [cakeshop owner] Jack Phillips' business. Mr. Phillips cannot have his cake and eat it, too.

Linda Hollingsworth
Virginia

Major religions guilty of criminal extortion

Extortion is the use of force or fear, or a threat of force or fear, to obtain a thing that the extortionist is not entitled to. Extortion is not limited to property or money. Two major religions, Islam and Christianity, use it to obtain converts.

Christianity says to nonbelievers, "Accept Jesus Christ as your savior, or burn in hell for eternity." Here is the same threat in a different venue. A robber points a gun at you and says, "Give me your money or your life."

Islam is somewhat different. The Quran in Surah 9:29 gives nonbelievers three choices: convert, make pay-



So does Santa!

Tana Legry, Oregon, wonders about the preacher asking for "TMI" (too much information) here. Her sister sent the photo from Kelowna, B.C.

ments called "jizyas" or be killed.

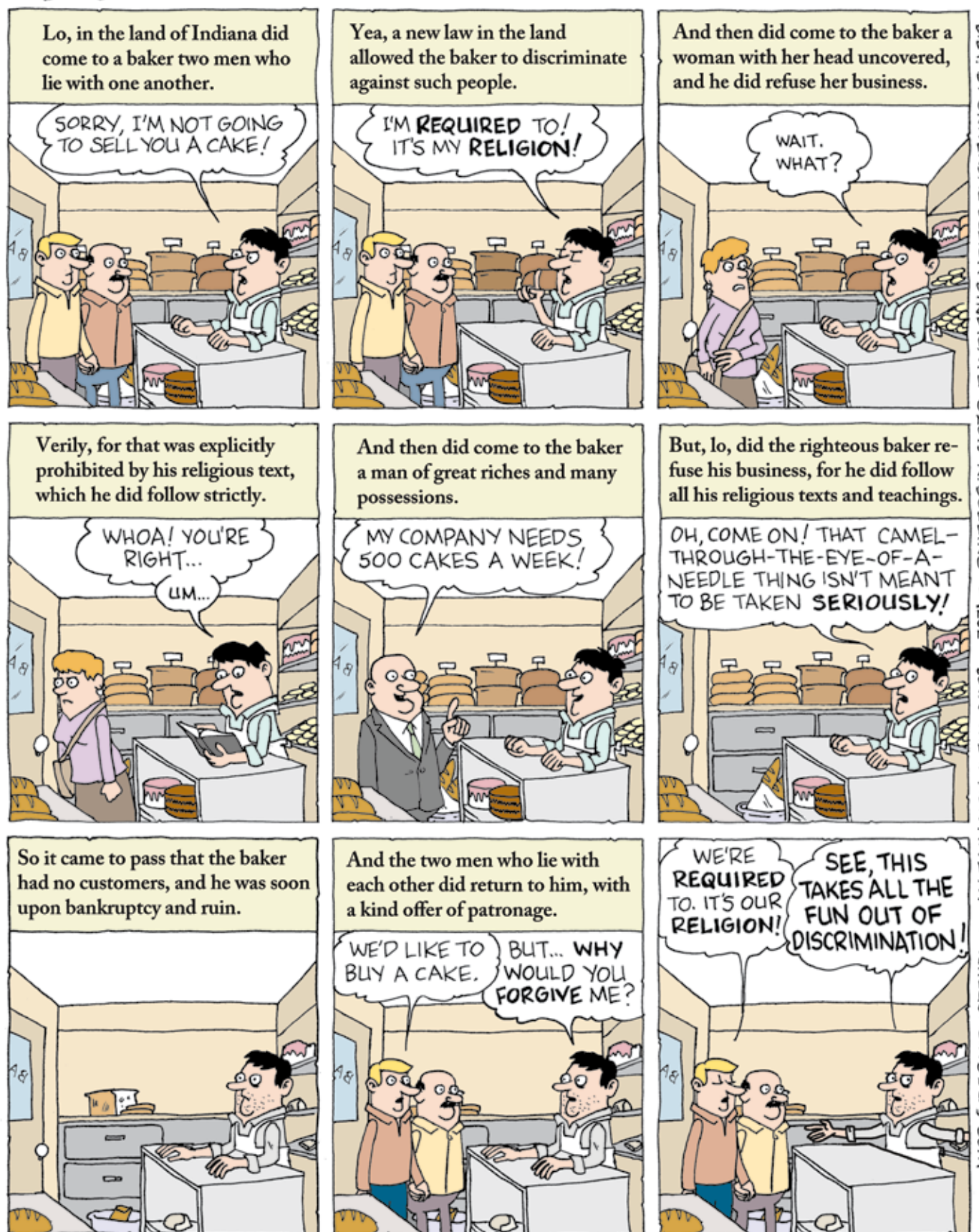
So the next time your Christian or Muslim neighbor tries to convert you, confront him or her with the fact that there is a threat in the offer. Religions

need to be made aware of the criminal conduct they are perpetuating.

James A. Worrell
Oklahoma

TOM the DANCING BUG

by RUBEN BOLLING



DIST. BY UNIVERSAL UCLICK SYNDICATE ©2015 R. BOLLING - 1232 - JOIN THE INNER HIVE AT tomthedancingbug.com



'I hope someday you'll join us'

Wisconsin FFRF members Tracie Nichols and Steve Biever were married April 1 in the new "Above Us Only Sky" Kenneth Proulx Cupola at Freethought Hall. This was the first wedding in the new building. Dan Barker, officiant and FFRF co-president, couldn't imagine a nicer start to a life together.

Sharing the Crank Mail

Ever wonder what it's like to be part of a love-hate relationship? Read the crank mail, printed as received, for some insights.

How do i join? i don't understand why yall feel like you must tell everyone you don't believe in god. It's like a straight guy telling everyone he is straight. Do you want a cookie? Who really knows the truth? And why do the non believers look so funny? is that why you hate god? Yall look like aliens.. I don't care what you believe in!, no one does!. I just don't like people that feel like I should know what they believe in. No one cares!!!! — *American*

This message to Ron Reagan: Soon G-d will let you know who HE is, very shortly !!! — *God, New York*

Wichita Basketball: We here at Wichita State University are not happy that you pricks want to hurt our shocker basketball program. We encourage you to continue to watching our team play basketball, but to find a different outlet for you to spread your atheist nuisances. — *Aaron Jon Delzeit*

Ffrf: You people better be afraid of hell because that's where you are headed if you are a part of this program. — *Abuh Kawasaki*

Ffrf: Anyone who would even think about joining this program is just straight up restarted and will burn in hell if they don't change their ways. God bless you. — *Abuh Shabi*

Your hate and bitterness: My most sincere prayer is that one day you wake up in hell. — *Jesus Christ*

Jesus loves you! As a Christian, it hurts me so, as I am sure it does JESUS that an organization such as this is allowed to exist in this country. You know the, In GOD We Trust Country. — *Carrie Hagy, Pennsylvania*

Keep your nose out of PENNSYLVANIA! WHO the hell do you people think you are to tell pennsylvania to take t he cross out of the official seal which has been there from the beginning. If you dont like a religious country go to russia or iraq or iran or north korea and tell me how you like it there. FUCK YOU ! ! ! ! May GOD have mercy on your doomed souls for all eternity. — *Charles Seng, Allentown*

You are assholes: Leave the country! — *Tim Hill*

religion: It amazes me the what Hippocrates you are. You attack Christian beliefs based on seperation of church and state . Thier

is no law. When you do separate church from state looks what happens to social behavior especially in school, children attack teachers, teachers molesting students. Look how society has faulted since the seperatio of church and state started in the past fourty years. Take the beam out of your eye before removing the sliver in others eyes. Thank You. — *Michael Waggoner, Gridley, Calif.*

I pray for your soul: Maybe you should have your argument with the Pope. Maybe you should watch Father Robert Barron on YouTube. To me it seems you weren't Catholic, the one TRUE CHURCH. We love you like brothers and sisters so please rethink your arguments after you do your due diligence within the Catholic church. — *Brandon Yost*

(no subject): Thanks for screwing up another school, and making our society go future down the path of destruction. — *Richard Lingle, Texas*

P.S. God forgive them for they know not what they do.

Sticking Noses: I'm not sure you know this, but the founders of this country came in search of freedom from religion. They worshiped GOD and believed JESUS died on the cross for our sins, but they didn't want to have to be a Catholic. Why don't you quit sticking your nose in other peoples business. Everybody knows a higher power than any of us makes babies, grows vegetables and fruit, etc. — *Sara Waggoner, Tyler, Texas*

Question: I was curious if anyone would kindly explain to me, a Christian, if the sun, stars, galaxies, bears, dogs, cats, whales, trees, oxygen, fish, turtles, lizards, alligators, snakes, deer, coyotes, along w the complex bodies we humans have, such as our eyes, heart, veins, reproductive system, sense of touch and smell, our ability to remember things in our brain from our childhood, to having a conscience, etc, etc, etc are all good enough reasons to suggest that God created all these things? — *Michael Cuomo*

god: I dont like seeing your commerical on t.v so I vow every time I see your commerical I will email the network and I will have everyone in my church and they will have their friends email the network where you won't be allowed to have a commercial. Leave my god alone. — *natasha farrow*



My body, my choice

Dayna Long, FFRF editorial assistant and president of National Organization for Women-Wisconsin, with the placard she helped the Women's Medical Fund place in the State Capitol rotunda in March to counter religious anti-abortion propaganda. The placard shows the cover of FFRF President Emerita Anne Nicol Gaylor's book, *Abortion Is a Blessing* (Psychological Dimensions, 1975), which details her work as an early proponent of legal abortion. The book is out of print but can be read online at ffrf.org/publications/books/ (scroll to *Abortion Is a Blessing*).



YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

produced by the
Freedom From Religion Foundation

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



Hosted by Dan Barker and
Annie Laurie Gaylor

Slightly irreverent views, news, music & interviews

On the road with Dan Barker



Northern Ohio Freethought Society

A large secular group had big fun at the NOFS Flying Spaghetti Monster fundraiser dinner March 28 in Cuyahoga Falls, where FFRF Co-President Dan Barker was guest speaker and entertained with song (but not dance!).

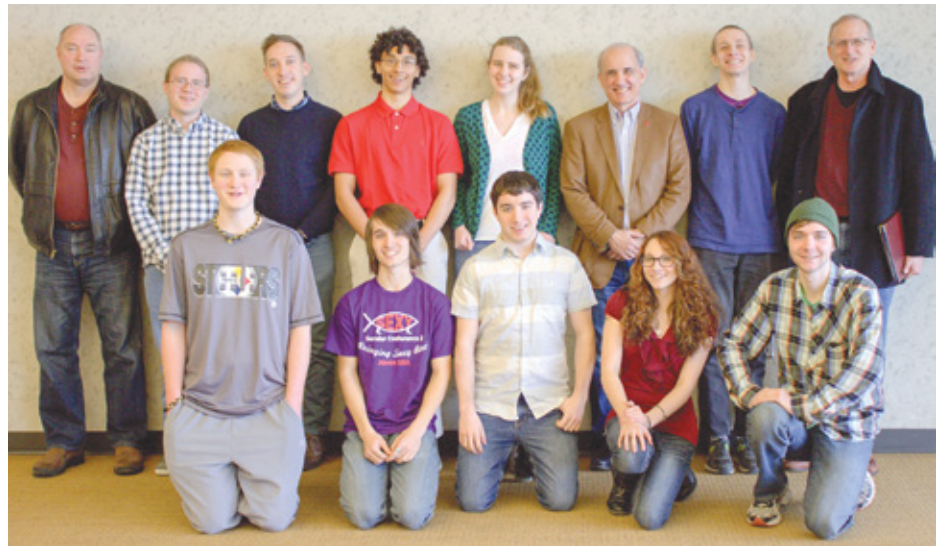


Resolved: Religion is bad for America

That was the debate topic March 26 at Arizona State University-Tempe. From left are Richard Moorhead, ASU Intercollegiate Studies Institute president; debate opponent Jay Richards, an analytical philosopher from Catholic University of America; FFRF Co-President Dan Barker; and Rachel Georgeson, regional director for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, which organized the debate along with the Regnum Society at ASU. It was sponsored by the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation. The debate was standing room only, with more than half representing freethinkers, including many FFRF members.



Sharon Woznicki models a centerpiece made by Jane Minner. (Suzy Wernet photo)



University of Akron, Ohio, March 27

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker (back, third from right) spoke to university Secular Student Alliance chapter members and area FFRF members about freethought and introduced his new book *Life Driven Purpose: How an Atheist Finds Meaning*. (Claudia Nichole photo)



From left are Sam Salerno (NOFS organizer), Marni Huebner-Tiborsky (NOFS president) and Dan Barker, wearing shirts made for the event.



Northern Illinois University, March 25

Dan Barker with students from the Secular Student Alliance at NIU.



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

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

What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

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

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

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

In Madison, Wisconsin Oct. 9-11, 2015

Ron Reagan to headline 38th annual FFRF convention

Ron Reagan, the "unabashed atheist, not afraid of burning in hell" who kindly recorded a recent and much-censored TV commercial for FFRF, will keynote its 38th national convention at **Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, 1 John Nolen Drive, Madison, Wis.**, on the weekend of **Oct. 9-11, 2015**.

The convention center, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, is next to Lake Monona and two blocks from Wisconsin's impressive State Capitol and next door to the convention hotel, the Hilton. (There's a memorial along the lake near the convention center noting that singer Otis Redding and six members of his band died there on Dec. 10, 1967, when their plane plunged into the lake's icy waters.)

Reserve your hotel room now to avoid disappointment at the **Hilton Madison Monona Terrace Hotel**, 9 E. Wilson St., room rate \$169 single or double, by phoning toll-free 1-866-403-8838 or 1-608-255-5100. The group name is Freedom From Religion Foundation and the group code is FFRF. Book online at ffrf.org/convention2015 — go to the hotel site section, which links directly to reservations. **The cut-off is Sept. 7, or as long as rooms last.**

For those who are driving in or don't mind staying away from downtown, there are additional rooms at the **Sheraton Madison Hotel**, 706 John Nolen Drive, which provides a free shuttle to and from the convention center every half hour from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sheraton rates are \$139 single/double/triple/quad. Make your reservations at 1-800-325-3535 and let them know you're with "Freedom From Religion."

You may wish to arrive Thursday in order to tour the "reborn" Freethought

Hall Friday morning, which is 6 short blocks from the convention center. An informal open house will be held from 9-11:30 AM. Please indicate if you plan to attend on the registration form, to help ensure FFRF orders enough refreshments.

Enjoy rolls, juice, coffee and tea and socializing in the Charlie Brooks Auditorium, top floor, where a short video presentation on the building and FFRF will play. Staff members will be posted throughout the building to greet, answer questions and make sure you don't get lost!

If you ordered a paving stone, look for it in the Rose Zerwick Memorial Garden & Courtyard, or your vestibule tile in the entry. Major donors' names will be found in the Wall of Honor and Donor Wall in the Anne Nicol Gaylor Lobby. Every donor will be listed in a book on the reception desk.

Due to time and staff constraints, this will be the only time to tour during the convention.

Speaker lineup

Joining Reagan as confirmed speakers are:

Kevin M. Kruse, the Princeton University professor of history whose new book, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, is creating a lot of excitement. He recently



appeared on NPR's "Fresh Air" with Terry Gross, and has authored or co-edited four other books. His *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005),

won several prizes.

Dan Barker, FFRF co-president, will also speak about his newest book, *Life-Driven Purpose: How an atheist finds meaning*, an answer to Rick Warren's *Purpose-Driven Life*, and will autograph books. Dan, a talented pianist and songwriter who has recorded three music CDs for FFRF, will also entertain throughout the conference.

Douglas Marshall will receive a Free-thinker of the Year Award as the local plaintiff in FFRF's most recent federal court victory, forcing the town of Warren, Mich., to permit him to put up a Reason Station to counter an ongoing prayer booth that dominates the atrium of his city hall.

Anita Weier will be honored as Freethought Heroine for introducing a historic ordinance to make "nonreligion" a protected class in Madison, Wis. Weier, former city editor for The Capital Times, served as an alderperson for two terms.



Her "first of its kind" ordinance passed with no dissent on March 31.

Steven Hewett will be honored with FFRF's Atheist in Foxhole Award. The former police officer and Afghanistan war veteran returned home with a Combat Action Badge and Bronze Star, only to find a Christian flag flying at the Veterans Memorial in King, N.C. In December, following a long court battle taken on his behalf by Americans United, the city agreed to stop flying the Christian flag and to remove a cross from a kneeling soldier statue. Steven is a Lifetime FFRF Member.



Ron Reagan

FFRF staff attorneys will give a detailed presentation on their major accomplishments in ending state/church entanglements in 2015. Other speakers and honorees will be announced in future issues.

You have a chance to receive an expenses-paid trip to the convention. If you persuade your prayerful local governmental body to let you to give a secular invocation, you can enter FFRF's Nothing Fails Like Prayer contest (see details on page 15 or at ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer). The award includes opening a session of the conference with your secular words and a \$500 award, plaque, transportation and accommodations at the convention.

FFRF will honor major donors who made possible the expansion of Freethought Hall at Saturday's dinner, which will also include the annual drawing for "clean money" (pre-"In God We Trust").

See registration form, below left, for costs.

General schedule

After the Friday morning tour of Freethought Hall will be a 2-4 p.m. reception with complimentary appetizers in the Grand Terrace at Monona Terrace, with legal and other workshops. Friday dinner is on your own.

The formal program opens at 7 p.m. Friday, ending with complimentary dessert and hot beverages. The convention resumes Saturday with an optional Non-Prayer Breakfast buffet at 8 a.m. The morning program starts at 9:30. After a two-hour lunch on your own/sight-seeing break, the program resumes at 2 p.m. An optional banquet dinner will be followed by evening speaker/entertainment.

Annual meetings of the membership and the state representatives are Sunday morning.

Menu

Saturday's Non-Prayer Breakfast is the Lakeshore Breakfast Buffet: orange juice, fresh-cut fruit, Wisconsin cheese and chive scrambled eggs, rosemary wedge potatoes, home-baked petite pastries and muffins, coffee, tea or milk and option of bacon. \$20, including 20% service charge and tax.

Saturday's banquet dinner includes a choice of **Champagne Tilapia**, with champagne mushroom sauce, Yukon Gold potato wedges, lemon garnish; **Vegetable Strudel** (zucchini, yellow squash, carrots & peppers in a delicate filo pastry atop red pepper coulis, served with mushroom polenta); or **Wisconsin Cranberry Chicken**, boneless chicken breasts with dried Wisconsin cranberries, baked with vermouth sauce and served with garden rice pilaf. \$40, including service charge and tax.

A **Chef's Vegan Option** will also be available. All offerings are gluten-free except the vegetarian strudel.

Dessert is **Chocolate Lush Cake**, a flourless chocolate cake laced with a real punch and finished with Irish Crème Anglaise.

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

Freedom From Religion Foundation's 38th Annual National Convention October 9-11, 2015 Madison, Wisconsin



Make checks payable to "FFRF"

Number registering

_____ FFRF member registration(s) @ \$60 per person.....	\$_____
_____ Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$65.....	\$_____
_____ Non-member registration(s) @ \$100	\$_____
<i>(Save \$5 by becoming an FFRF Member. \$40 Individual Membership)</i>	
_____ Student registration(s) @ \$10.....	\$_____
_____ Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast Buffet @ \$20* person	\$_____
<i>(Suitable for vegan and gluten-free)</i>	
_____ Saturday Night Dinner @ \$40* per person.....	\$_____
_____ Champagne Tilapia _____ Cranberry Chicken _____ Vegetable Strudel _____ Chef's Vegan	
<i>Indicate number of orders per entree. * Includes 20% gratuity & sales tax</i>	
<i>All meals but vegetarian are gluten-free.</i>	
_____ Number planning to attend Freethought Hall Open House, Oct. 9, 9-11 a.m.	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)