

Freethought Today

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FFRF, secular groups file Florida discrimination suit

The Brevard County, Fla., Board of Commissioners' policy of excluding nontheists from offering premeeting invocations is unconstitutional, several civil liberties groups say in a federal lawsuit filed July 7 in U.S. District Court in Orlando.

The suit filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida on behalf of multiple plaintiffs asserts that the county's persistent rejection of atheists, humanists and other nontheists who want to deliver solemnizing messages at board meetings violates the U.S. and Florida constitutions.

Plaintiffs include the Central Florida Freethought Community (a chapter of FFRF) and its chair David Williamson, the Space Coast Freethought Association and its president Chase Hansel, the Humanist Community of the Space Coast and its president Keith Becher, and Brevard County resident Ronald Gordon.

"The framers of our entirely secular and godless Constitution did not find it necessary to pray during the four months the Constitutional Convention met," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "Why then should it be necessary for county commissioners to pray over liquor licenses, variances and

other lesser matters? But if religious citizens are permitted to open county board meetings with invocations, then secular invocations must also be permitted."

"Brevard County's invocation policy blatantly discriminates against people who do not believe in God," said Alex Luchenitser, associate legal director of Americans United and lead counsel. "Such rank discrimination is plainly unconstitutional."

The lawsuit notes that in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, the U.S. Supreme Court made clear that local governments cannot discriminate based on religion when choosing who will deliver statements to open government meetings. This is the first legal challenge following the *Greece* decision's provision for secular invocations.

Florida Today reported that the commission voted unanimously to affirm its policy on the same day the suit was filed by limiting invocations to representatives of the "faith-based community." Commissioner Curt Smith's resolution, approved without discussion, specifies that nonbelievers can only speak during the public comment portion of meetings.

Williamson said after the meeting that the resolution was "extremely disappointing. We just want equal protection under the law."

In a statement when the suit was



Plaintiffs Ronald Gordon (left), David Williamson, Chase Hansel, Keith Becher and Jeffery Koeberl at the Brevard County Government Center in Viera, Fla.

filed, Daniel Mach, director of the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief, said, "The government should never play favorites with belief. The county's discriminatory policy is unfair and unconstitutional."

ACLU of Florida Legal Director Nancy Abudu said, "If a government decides to have a forum that is open

for public voices, then it must make it open to all voices. They don't get to pick and choose."

Williamson v. Brevard County is being litigated by Mach, Luchenitser and Americans United Legal Fellow Joshua Hoffer, Rebecca Markert and Andrew Seidel of FFRF and Abudu and Daniel Tilley of the ACLU of Florida.

Legal wins: Two fewer Christian flags fly in secular nation

Aggressive Wisconsin atheist group bullies small Alabama town into removing Christian flag

WRITTEN BY JORDAN LAPORTA ON JULY 6, 2015 AT 2:52 PM CDT



GLENCOE, Ala. — An out-of-state atheist organization has challenged the city of Glencoe's display of a Christian flag

FFRF complaint letters have led to removal of two Christian flags. The city of Glencoe, Ala., took down a Christian flag from in front of its police station next to City Hall, where it flew alongside the U.S. and state of Alabama flags.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel first wrote to the city in February about the unconstitutional endorsement of religion. "The Christian flag was designed by Protestants in the early 20th century and continues to be displayed in Protestant churches throughout the country. It features a Latin cross — the most significant symbol of Christianity. Moreover, each of the flag's colors represents a different aspect of Christianity: Blue refers to ritual baptism in water, white to biblical conceptions of purity and red to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ."

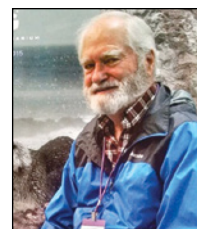
WBRC-TV reported July 3 that the city council decided to remove the flag in mid-June after meeting in executive session. Mayor Charles Gilchrist said the city attorney told the council it could be costly to keep the flag up and end up on the wrong end of a lawsuit.

"I have to look out for the best interests of the city," said Gilchrist, adding he was unhappy the flag had to come down.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State settled a lawsuit for \$500,000 in January against King, N.C., which had refused to remove a flag of the same design.

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This Birmingham blog confuses asking for compliance with the law with bullying.

Meet a staffer



Jake Swenson photo

Chelsea Culver on the new balcony at Freethought Hall.

Name: Chelsea Culver.
Where and when I was born: Green Bay, Wis., Jan. 15, 1991.
Education: B.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Stout; master of social work, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
How I came to work at FFRF: The mission and values of FFRF appealed to me. In my role as a social worker, I am not always able to speak up about religiously motivated rejection and stigmatization that indubitably impacts families and communities. FFRF unapologetically voices concerns about the harmful aspects of religion and fights against religious interference in our laws and government. I am incredibly sad to be leaving FFRF as I move into a permanent, hospice social work position.
What I do here: A little of everything! Mailings, sales, organizing storage areas, etc.
What I like best about it: I get to control the temperature and music downstairs. I also know that all of the work done here at FFRF ultimately makes my job as a social worker that much easier, specifically issues surrounding death with dignity and end-of-life decision making.

What gets old about it: So many paper cuts!
I spend a lot of time thinking about: How beautiful the weather looks from my window, and what else can I slather peanut butter on?
I spend little if any time thinking about: This is tough to answer, but probably anything related to computer or video games. I prefer the outdoors!
My religious upbringing was: Freethought.
My doubts about religion started: When my parents decided to send my sister and me to Catholic school for “educational” reasons. We had never been part of a religious community and didn’t quite fit in, though I played along. My skepticism only grew after 12 years of theology classes. Ultimately, it was the hypocrisy, homophobia and bullying behaviors of my classmates and their families that turned me away.
In a quest to save my soul and also find a church for herself, my college roommate convinced me to attend service at every church in the area (all 26

of them) to find a more “agreeable” Christian denomination. We even interviewed every pastor after the ceremony with the same set of questions. I just could not get into any beliefs about the supernatural or eternal salvation, though I met many wonderful, well-meaning people.
It was when I entered the helping profession that I witnessed the harm caused by the judgmental policing behaviors of religious institutions. I switched from being turned off by re-

ligion to turning against it.
Things I like: The Green Bay Packers, free and accessible birth control, hugs, Hall and Oates and a good craft brew.
Things I smite: Scott Walker and mayonnaise.
In my golden years: A house and boat up in Door County will be right up my alley.
FFRF sends its best wishes to Chelsea in her new career, and we will miss her.

Welcome to 15 new Lifetime FFRF Members!

The Freedom From Religion Foundation gratefully announces 15 new Lifetime Members. They are:
George Covington, Lawrence Davidson, William Dean French, Gerald McFatridge, Don Mershon, Steve Scholl, Yvonne Scholl, Mary Schulatz, Stephen Seewer, James Strayer, Maggie Symington, Diane Taylor, William Thomas, Zenas Van Slyck and Robert Weissman.
Jim Strayer’s membership was a surprise gift from Hal Strayer, also a Lifetime Member.
States represented are California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Virginia.
Individual Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000 designated as a new membership or membership renewal, mean nary another renewal notice and go into rainy-day reserves. Memberships and donations are deductible for income-tax purposes, as FFRF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
Thank you Robert, Zenas, William, Diane, Maggie, Hal, Stephen, Mary, Yvonne, Steve, Don, Gerald, William, Lawrence and George!

Two fewer Christian flags

Continued from front page
Bradley County Judge Keith Neely ordered removal of an “Appeal to Heaven” banner from a courthouse flagpole in Warren, Ark. Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote Neely on June 16 that the flag was “government endorsement of Christianity, a blatant violation of the Establishment Clause.”
It had been flying directly below the Arkansas state flag for about 11 months. Neely told the Saline River Chronicle in a July 6 story that a local pastor had requested the flag fly at the courthouse. The Chronicle reported Neely was told by legal advisers there could be “substantial financial liability to the county” should a lawsuit be filed. The flag’s design goes back to Revolutionary War times, but it’s now associated with the Appeal to Heaven movement, whose adherents “honor the Lord by supporting candidates for public office who are believers in Jesus Christ, who regularly attend and display a commitment to an evangelical, Gospel-centered church, and who will commit to live and govern based on biblical principles.”



The Appeal to Heaven and Arkansas state flags at the courthouse last year in Warren, Ark.

Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin railed against FFRF in a column at Breitbart.com: “The judge found himself in a tough spot, and without the budget to fight out-of-town lawyers, he was advised by the county attorney to remove the historic flag. Well, the Freedom From Religion Foundation rattled the wrong cage. This is an attack on freedom, on honoring accurate history, and is more of the fundamental transformation of America that will render us not only unexceptional, but unrecognizable.”

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info@ffrf.org • FFRF.org
P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701
(608)256-8900 • FAX (608)204-0422
Editor: Bill Dunn, *fttoday@ffrf.org*
Production Editor: Jake Swenson
Executive Editor: Annie Laurie Gaylor
Contributors:
Philip Appleman, Donald B. Ardell, Dan Barker, Sean Carroll,
Brent Nicastro, Eric Poole, Sam Roberts, Lauryn Seering, Andrew Seidel,
Ed Sweeney, Maddy Ziegler,
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A Note to Members

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Florida city restricts atheist invocations

FFRF objected to the Pompano Beach, Fla., City Commission’s recently adopted resolution to severely restrict who is allowed to give invocations before its meetings, limiting the pool to religious speakers only.

Under the new policy, the “invocation speaker” must be chosen from “churches,” “congregations” or other religious assemblies in the annual Yellow Pages” and “religious congregations with an established presence in the local community.” It also calls for the city clerk to determine a congregation’s “authenticity” by examining its tax-exempt status.

“This resolution flies in the face of the Supreme Court decision that allows these invocations in the first place,” said FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel in a July 16 letter. He noted that in that case, *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, the court took note that the town “at no point excluded or denied an opportunity to a would-be prayer giver,” and that its leaders maintained that anyone, “including an atheist,” could give an invocation.

The change came in response to a request to give an invocation from Chaz Stevens, a self-described “minion of Satan.” Stevens previously made news when he put up a Festivus pole created from Pabst Blue Ribbon cans to celebrate the fictional holiday alongside other holiday displays in the Florida Capitol.

Pompano Beach’s policy is “blatantly discriminatory,” charged Seidel.

Records show city’s illegal prayer coordination

FFRF uncovered evidence though an open records request that the city of Orange, Calif., used employees’ time and city resources to coordinate mayor’s prayer breakfasts in 2013 and 2014. FFRF sent the city a letter June 20 to ensure there’s no similar unconstitutional sponsorship in the future.

The prayer breakfasts were “undoubtedly Christian affairs,” wrote Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel to Mayor Teresa “Tita” Smith. The city admitted this in their records: “He will be talking about how Christ and following Christ has impacted his life — duh it’s a prayer breakfast and their goal is to share the Gospel and bring people to Christ and strengthen their beliefs,” wrote Deputy City Manager Irma Hernandez in an email about the 2013 keynote speaker.

City personnel sent invitations, responded to RSVPs, arranged musical performances and speakers, made seating arrangements, ensured staff attendance and prepared Smith’s opening remarks and coordinated her bible verse selections and themes of speakers’ messages.

“Given the high degree of city involvement and entanglement in the event, any reasonable person or court

would interpret this conduct as government espousal of religion,” Seidel wrote.

“We know these events nearly always promote Christianity, but rarely do you see a city admit it in black and white,” said FFRF Co-President Dan Barker. “Our response to Hernandez is, ‘Duh, it’s unconstitutional!’ ”

Grant to Christian athletes contested

FFRF sent a letter July 9 strongly criticizing the state of Ohio’s \$300,000 grant to Athletes in Action, a Christian sports ministry. Republican Attorney General Mike DeWine announced the grant July 1 “to reach more than 3,700 athletes and students over a two-year period,” including AIA Little Dribbler Camps.

According to its website, “Since 1966, Athletes in Action has been using sports as a platform to help people answer questions of faith and to point them to Jesus.” It was founded as part of Campus Crusade for Christ, now called Cru. “We dream of a day when there are Christ-followers on every team, in sport, in every nation.”

“The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the government cannot subsidize religious projects wherein public money is used to facilitate religious exercise, proselytization or inculcation,” wrote FFRF Legal Fellow Katherine Paige.

“The state is funding a Christian ministry that uses sports as a vehicle for faith; it is not funding a sports program that happens to be run by Christians. The distinction is crucial and means that the grant is unconstitutional.”

DeWine said funds for the grant came from Ohio’s share of a multistate settlement with a company regarding its marketing practices.

FFRF raises alarm over coach’s ‘coercion’

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter July 16 to Iowa State University President Steven Leath to raise concerns about Steve Prohm, the school’s new head basketball coach due to “numerous reports of Mr. Prohm’s promotion of religion through his coaching position.”

To combat Prohm’s anticipated proselytizing, FFRF also sent a letter to all Iowa State basketball players informing them that they have “a right to participate in university athletics free of religious proselytizing, promotion or bias from school employees.”

Prohm has stated that he’ll be praying with players before games and practices and will ask for prayer requests. At his previous coaching job at Murray State University in Kentucky, Prohm also reportedly declared that “we build our program around faith in Jesus Christ — not on individuals.”

“Mr. Prohm’s team is full of young and impressionable student athletes who would not risk giving up their scholarship, giving up playing time or

losing a good recommendation from the coach by voluntarily opting out of his unconstitutional religious activities, even if they strongly disagreed with his beliefs,” Elliott said. “Using a coaching position to promote Christianity amounts to religious coercion.”

Lights out, please, on religious display

FFRF lodged a complaint June 22 on behalf of residents of La Crescent, Minn., to protest the city’s practice of hosting an illuminated cross and star decoration at Easter and Christmas on public land. The display, mounted on the bluffs above the city, has been illuminated to celebrate religious holidays for four decades. The Lions Club maintains the display, located inside

a fenced area that includes the city’s 800,000-gallon water reservoir.

“The government may acknowledge Christmas as a cultural phenomenon, but under the First Amendment it may not observe it as a Christian holy day by suggesting people praise God for the birth of Jesus,” Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert told Mayor Mike Poellinger. The star’s coupling with the cross “seems to suggest that the city is celebrating the religious aspect of the Christmas holiday, which is another violation of the First Amendment.”

City officials discussed the issue at a July 13 council meeting but took no action. FFRF is working with the La Crosse Area Freethought Society, a secular group across the Mississippi River in La Crosse, Wis., to convince the city to remove the display.

Fox’s ‘fair and balanced’ equals 4 against 1



Clockwise, top left: Sean Hannity, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Todd Starnes, Jonathan Morris and Bill Donohue.

How many angry Christian men does it take to debate one atheist woman on national Fox News’ “Hannity” show?

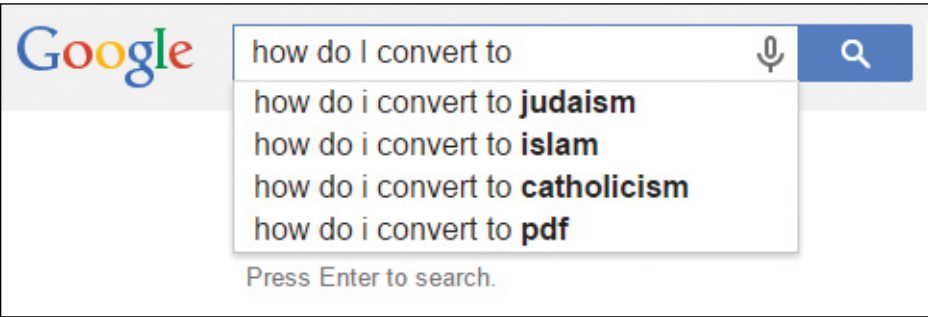
It was Hannity, Fox’s favorite Catholic priest “Father” Jonathan Morris, blowhard Bill Donohue of the Catholic League and Fox’s Todd Starnes against an outnumbered and much interrupted Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

During the July 1 show, ostensibly discussing a court ruling to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the Oklahoma Capitol but which

devolved into a claim that Christians are being persecuted by the Supreme Court’s marriage equality ruling, Donohue called Gaylor a liar.

When she tried to get a word in edgewise, Donohue ironically reprimanded her: “Hold on, ma’am. We’re having a conversation here.” Starnes accused humanists of declaring “some sort of secular fatwa.”

See an excerpt of the show, read the transcript and Annie Laurie’s blog about the experience at ffrf.org/news/blog (scroll to July 9, 2015).



New converts daily!

Someone’s online search brought up an unexpected new “religion.” It appears that people are losing interest in joining “jpg.”

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Freedom Depends on Freethinkers

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

The Happiest Times

Why should I care that you're not sweet sixteen?
No grown-up wants a sixteen-year-old wife.
The roads we've traveled together have come to mean
That these are the happiest years of the rest of our life.

We've had a glimpse of paradise, even when
The rest of the world was struggle, strain, and strife.
We needn't live the whole thing over again —
These are the happiest days of the rest of our life.

They're snarling out there in the never-ending fuss
And bother of a world that's always rife
With bitterness — well, let them fight, not us,
For these are the happiest hours of the rest of our life.

We value now each minute slipping past,
Every one more precious than the last.

© 2015 Philip Appleman.
FFRF is honored to publish this new poem.



Brent Nicastro photo
Philip and Marjorie Appleman at FFRF's 2002 National Convention in Washington, D.C. They were married on August 19, 1950.

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 newest book is *The Labyrinth: God, Darwin and the Meaning of Life*. 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 raising my kids to be Pearl Jam and Boston Red Sox fans.
David Holmes, a member of Wichita Atheists who is moving from Kansas to Texas and has two daughters, Veronica, 8, and Tara, 5
The Wichita Eagle, 6-15-15

We occasionally get complaints about Sweet Baby Jesus. Some people are not happy about the word Jesus being on a beer.
Dave Benfield, DuClaw Brewing Co., Baltimore, on reports a Cleveland store had pulled the porter-style beer flavored with chocolate and peanut butter from its shelves
Cleveland Plain Dealer, 6-11-15



We want to interact with all members of the community without a preconceived notion of who we are. We strive to be a nonpolitical, nonreligious organization.
Deputy Police Chief Michael Woods explaining a ban on Muslim head scarves for officers
Columbus Dispatch, 6-24-15

Zambia is a very superstitious society. Atheists need to start a conversation with other Zambians on the existence of God, Satan, witches, demons, the potency of ritual sacrifice, etc. Many people in Zambia believe witchcraft is real. Recently there have been reports of witch killing, the killing of Satanists, of albinos and the murder and mutilation of persons for ritual purposes.
Nigerian atheist Leo Igwe, who's researching witchcraft in Africa in a study at the University of Bayreuth in Germany
Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, 6-23-15

The governor has appointed as board chair an ideologue who voted to adopt new textbooks that scholars sharply criticized as distorting American history, who rejected public education for her own family and who supports shifting tax dollars from neighborhood public schools to private and religious schools through vouchers.
Kathy Miller, Texas Freedom Network president, criticizing Gov. Greg Abbott's state Board of Education appointment of Houston Republican Donna Bahorich, a graduate of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University
The Raw Story, 6-25-15

I know it is very dangerous. I am not afraid of the government. The biggest danger comes from the society. Sometimes I face problems on the street. Some people hit me in the street when they recognize me from the show.
Egyptian atheist Ismail Mohammed, 30, who posts videos on his YouTube channel Black Ducks from his home in Cairo
The Daily Beast, 6-29-15

The number of priests is falling by an average of 9% per year. Daily Rzeczpospolita reports that in 2014 there were 355 priests, down from 401 in 2013.
News story, "Priest numbers dropping off"
Radio Poland, 6-30-15

Looking back at my social life through adolescence, church was the center of everything. A big part of the appeal of Sunday Assembly is it's a way to get back some of that sense of community that was everything to me growing up.
Kevin Breen, who owns a printing company and hosts the Las Vegas Sunday Assembly, which "honors no deity and no doctrine except love"
Las Vegas Review-Journal, 6-26-15

I work for a public school and am a state employee. I should not be forced to pray to Jesus Christ.
Stuart Rosenthal, complaint to the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission that his teaching contract at Kawaikini Charter School on Kauai wasn't renewed because he repeatedly contested morning assembly Christian prayers at the school
Honolulu Civil Beat, 6-29-15

The praise and worship was [sic] good. His wife had just delivered a quick message. And the moment he started to preach, somebody gets up and they yell "Joel Osteen you're a liar."
Anwar Richardson, witnessing six members of a rival church taking turns heckling "prosperity gospel" Pastor Joel Osteen at Lakewood Church in Houston, for which they were cited for criminal trespass
KSPR, 6-29-15

There came a time, the parchment suggests, when God confided to Erica that He couldn't "wait around forever," at which point she finally gave Him a definitive no, a response she qualified by telling Him, "Maybe someday."
Article, "Researchers Say Virgin Mary Actually God's Second Choice to Bear Son"
The Onion, 6-25-15



"I believe in evolution, because science is true," Sally continued. "Yes. But tell me, how do we know that what science says is true?" "Because there are scientists!" Sally was indignant. "Well, no, it's because we can test it." "Oh."
Conversation between "Love, Joy, Feminism" blogger Libby Anne and her 6-year-old daughter
patheos.com, 6-29-15

"A.D. The Bible Continues" Over: There Will Be No Season 2
Headline on a story about NBC's cancellation of the show after 12 episodes due to low ratings
Deadline Hollywood, 7-3-15

In two different jurisdictions, two sets of police officers and two sets of prosecutors found these reports credible and filed criminal charges against Ji-ang. There's also a civil child sex abuse case against Jiang, and yet he feels compelled to go on the attack.
David Clohessy, Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests executive director, on a defamation suit filed against SNAP and others by St. Louis Catholic priest Xiu Hui "Joseph" Jiang
One News Now, 7-6-15

FFRF legal victories

FFRF breaks up church-city event

FFRF’s complaint letter made the city of Casselberry, Fla., cancel a planned partnership with an evangelical Christian church. Camp Casselberry, a city-run youth program, was scheduled to partner with Church Together for “Friday Fun Day” at a park June 26. Pastor Andy Searles and church volunteers planned to participate in and facilitate the event.

When Searles partnered with Camp Casselberry in 2014, his message to campers reportedly was to be good at three aspects of life: physical, mental and spiritual. Searles allegedly likened being “spiritually good” to being “scripturally good.”

“Our concern is that Mr. Searles and church volunteers will take this opportunity to again proselytize Camp Casselberry campers,” wrote Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel in a June 24 letter.

“Paid or not, Mr. Searles and the church volunteers are bound by the First Amendment like any other government employee and must remain neutral toward religion during their

participation in Camp Casselberry,” said Seidel.

A Church Together newsletter obtained by FFRF [see graphic] confirmed that the church would not be participating. The church also urged congregants to pray for people connected with FFRF.

“They can pray for us all they want, so long as they don’t force that prayer on other people’s children,” commented Seidel.

Church Together has a history of proselytizing in secular settings. It was recently known as the Venue Church at South Seminole, one of three Venue Churches in the Orlando area, whose stated goal is “permanently planting churches in Central Florida Schools.” The churches have recently split and been renamed but continue to meet in Orange County Public Schools.

FFRF has tangled repeatedly with Venue churches, and especially with Venue founder Todd Lamphere, particularly for his relationship with Apopka High School. FFRF has learned that Lamphere, pastor at Venue’s flagship church at Apopka, was reportedly forced to resign in June as pastor at



Thank you, legal interns

Pictured are FFRF’s summer 2015 legal interns. From left: Bekki Huelsman, Liana Kapelke-Dale, Seth Wrinkle, Neal Fitzgerald, Adam Grudman and Christopher Line.

the flagship church in Apopka for undisclosed reasons. All mention of him has been scrubbed from the church’s website.

FFRF also previously wrote to Casselberry Mayor Charlene Glancy after she appeared in a church promotional video in her official capacity as mayor.

FFRF letter downs cross collection

Gregg County Clerk Connie Wade, Longview, Texas, removed a collection of more than 20 crosses from her county office after getting a July 2 letter from FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert. A local resident alerted FFRF to the violation.

County Judge Bill Stoudt told the Longview News-Journal that the collection belonged to one of Wade’s employees. It was in full public view. “The employee voluntarily took the crosses down,” said Stoudt, noting he didn’t order them removed.

“If the crosses have been removed, we consider that a victory for state/church separation,” Markert said. She pointed to several cases in which federal courts upheld restrictions on displays of religious materials in workspaces, even including in some private cubicles or offices, since posting religious displays in areas the public can access could reasonably be seen as government endorsement of religion.

Wade has been in the news for refusing to issue a marriage license to Patrick Franklin and his 16-year partner Sailor Smith, citing the lack of a gender-neutral application form.

“Wrong side of history. Thanks,” Franklin told Wade after being turned down.

Athletic banquet now religion-free

The La Farge, Wis., School District in Wisconsin agreed to stop including prayers at athletic banquets and other school-sponsored events after getting a May 7 letter from Staff Attorney Sam Grover.

FFRF had learned that a pastor invited to speak at La Farge High School’s athletic banquet delivered a lengthy Christian prayer. “School events must be secular to protect the freedom of conscience of all students,” Grover wrote.

An attorney for the district told Grover on May 8 that there would be no prayers at future school-sponsored events.

Letter stops preaching while teaching

James Tillman, a science teacher at Douglas County High School, Douglasville, Ga., won’t be preaching anymore to his students during class time.

Around the end of April, Tillman had a discussion about God with a student during class time, FFRF was told. When an atheist student spoke up, Tillman quizzed the student on his atheism, eventually promising to give him a book that might change his mind. About two weeks later, Tillman gave the student two copies of his own book titled *Are You Sure There Is No God?* He had signed them “Be blessed.” The book is subtitled on Amazon.com as “A book of miracles including my warning from Jesus himself.”

Tillman also allegedly showed his class a YouTube video of him preaching at his church, Christian Life Center.

Continued on next page

Camp Casselberry Event Cancelled

This Friday we were due to serve at event with the City of Casselberry and Orlando City Soccer, where the Orlando City Street team was going to be performing and engaging our community kids in some soccer drills and activities. The City received a note on Wednesday from The Freedom from Religion Foundation suggesting that our involvement was a violation of constitutional church and state boundaries. While much of the information that they received was both uninformed and untrue, out of respect for the city that we are committed to serving we have decided to not be present at this event. This has been a hurtful few hours negotiating through this, but my resolve remains as strong as ever to support, serve, build and love the city where we are based. Again, in the interests of being transparent and vulnerable, if you’d like to read the complaint from The Freedom from Religion Foundation, please let me know and I’ll share it with you. Jesus tells us to pray for those who oppose us and I’d invite you to join me in praying for those connected with this group.

Church Together’s newsletter blamed FFRF for asking for compliance with the law.

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HOSTED BY DAN BARKER AND ANNIE LAURIE GAYLOR

Slightly irreverent views, news, music and interviews

ffrf

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 email address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all email correspondence.

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

Continued from previous page

Staff Attorney Madeline Ziegler sent a letter May 26 asking the district to investigate Tillman’s behavior. “Public school employees are government actors and subject to the strictures of the Establishment Clause’s separation of church and state,” wrote Ziegler. “Teachers have access to a captive audience of students due to their position as public educators.”

FFRF also called for an investigation into Tillman’s role as the head of the school’s Christian club. “Given Tillman’s exceedingly inappropriate conduct in the incidents described above, we doubt his role with the First Priority Club is nonparticipatory as required by the Equal Access Act,” wrote Ziegler.

The superintendent replied June 2 that the principal reviewed the First Amendment with Tillman and was confident that “similar incidents” would not happen in the future.

Teacher no longer leading devotions

Akron, Ohio, Public Schools teacher Brad Lingenhoel will no longer lead a religious club at Buchtel Community Learning Center. FFRF received a report that a group called Buchtel Devo Group put on a program called “Wednesday Morning Devotions” in the library before school. Lingenhoel allegedly started the group and stated at one meeting that he wanted higher student turnout, taking it upon himself to individually invite students who had arrived early to school.

FFRF’s complainant reported that Lingenhoel said he wanted to invite a variety of people to lead the meetings because “the students would get tired of just teachers running the group.”

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote the district Dec. 4: “As you are aware, school employees may not run or even participate in religious clubs in public schools, nor can they promote religious clubs or invite students to attend. Any teachers involved . . . may only be present at student religious meetings in a supervisory capacity.”

In a lengthy response April 2, the district’s general counsel noted several school policies that agreed with FFRF’s position and said Lingenhoel had stopped participating in Wednesday Morning Devotions.

Gideon bible handout stopped in Texas

The Corsicana Independent School District in Texas will no longer let Gideons International distribute bibles. Students from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes were allowed to skip class in order to assist with the distribution, and students who did not accept the bible were reportedly told that “they would go to hell.”

Staff Attorney Sam Grover wrote the district’s superintendent explaining FFRF’s objections to the unconstitutional practice.

The superintendent responded June 2 that the district “intends to ensure compliance with the law” by banning future bible distributions.

Reagan Rattlers’ coach to stop prayer

The baseball coach of the Reagan Rattlers baseball team at Ronald Reagan High School, San Antonio, Texas, will no longer lead the team in the Lord’s Prayer at games. Staff Attorney Sam Grover sent a letter to the district June 1 about an incident FFRF was



Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert’s June 26 letter to Sandusky County Sheriff Kyle Overmyer, Fremont, Ohio, led to removal of “The Serenity Prayer.” Overmyer emailed July 7 to say that the plaque had been removed from the county jail.

alerted to.

“The Fifth Circuit, the controlling Court of Appeals in Texas, has specifically held that coach involvement in prayer at practices and games is unconstitutional,” Grover wrote.

The district’s attorney, Ricardo Lopez, wrote back promptly to say that the district would ensure that coaches and staff members would no longer lead prayer “at any time prior to, during, or after baseball games.”

Graduation prayer won’t be official

Prescott, Ariz., Public Schools has ended its practice of including invocations and benedictions at Prescott High School graduation ceremonies. Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote the district May 27 after FFRF received word that the public high school had prayer as part of official graduation ceremony program.

“A prayer taking place at a ‘regularly scheduled school-sponsored function conducted on school property’ would lead an objective observer to perceive it as state endorsement of religion,” Elliott wrote.

The district responded June 3 that “the District does not intend to include prayer as part of any school-sponsored events in the future, and appropriate administrators will be so advised.”

FFRF stops Florida ‘rampant religion’

Dixie County Schools ordered removal of classroom posters that proclaimed “Dixie County High School — God Can Do Innumerably More Than We Can Ask or Imagine,” after getting an FFRF complaint about the display at the school in Cross City, Fla.

On Nov. 12, Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote to the district about rampant religious promotion at the school, including adult-led organized prayer, teaching creationism, bible verses on display and religious bullying. The district corrected those violations swiftly but failed to remove several of the religious posters.

After Seidel wrote again on April 10, the district agreed to remove the last of the religious posters.

Christian film nixed at middle school

Nevada’s Clark County School District will update its teacher handbook and reinstruct teachers not to promote their own sectarian beliefs to stu-

dents. On May 21, a teacher at Victoria Fertitta Middle School in Las Vegas played the Christian movie “Amazing 3D Adventures: The P.U.S.H.” for students during instructional time. The message of the movie is to “Pray Until Something Happens” and features a religious rodent protagonist attacking a reasonable reptile.

The movie “teaches students that planning, foresight, and determination are less important to success than the belief and obedience to a god,” wrote Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel on June 5.

On June 15, the district assured FFRF that the school would take steps to remind teachers they are not permitted to proselytize students.

Calif. schools agree complaints valid

Two California school districts have promised to take steps to ensure teachers will not use district resources to promote religious events after getting letters from FFRF.

A teacher at Modesto City Schools’ Downey High School used his district email address to coordinate and advertise the Modesto Area Educators’ 7th Annual Prayer Breakfast, a privately sponsored religious event that took place at the school. A teacher at Sylvan Union School District’s Somerset Middle School also promoted the event with a district email address.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote to the districts June 12, explaining that “statements of school employees made using official resources are attributable to the school. This endorsement of a Christian event offends the nearly 30% of American adults and the 37% of California adults that are non-Christian.”

Modesto City Schools responded June 16, promising to enforce its “acceptable use” policy and to review the policy to ensure employees comply with the Constitution. On June 23, the Sylvan Union School District assured FFRF that it would remind its staff on proper use of district technology.

Teacher’s bible quotes erased in class

Pender County Schools in North Carolina will put a stop to the classroom display of bible quotes. A Topsail Middle School teacher in Hampstead wrote bible quotes on a dry-erase board in his classroom, in full view of his students, and changed the quotes on a weekly basis. A concerned parent contacted FFRF.

“Religious postings are strictly prohibited in public schools,” wrote Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott in a May 28 complaint. “Matters of faith, or absence of faith, are best left outside of the classroom.”

FFRF received a response June 18, stating that the district provided staff with guidelines for selecting appropriate quotes and will further provide staff with “training on compliance with First Amendment principles of religion in public schools.”

Driving video ‘infested’ with religion

Bartram Trail High School in St. Johns, Fla., will stop illegal athletic prayer and will no longer show a religious video to students. A student reported to FFRF that the school’s football coach was participating in student-led prayers and that the school had shown students a video on safe driving that was “absolutely infested

with Christian messages, bible verses and talk of prayer.” The video featured a local student who had been injured in a driving accident and credited prayer as the secret to his recovery.

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel complained to the St. Johns County School District on April 30. The district promptly commenced an investigation and informed FFRF on June 26 that both issues would be corrected. The school’s football coach now understands that he cannot pray with players at school functions, and the school assured FFRF that it will not show any videos promoting religion.

Junior ROTC balls to end prayer

Bethel High School’s Naval Junior Reserve Officer’s Training Corps in Bethel, Conn., has taken several steps to keep religion out of its instruction. A concerned student reported to FFRF that a mandatory military ball included prayers said “in the name of Jesus.” Students were also forced to recite a statement that included the phrase “May God grant me the strength to always live by this creed,” and a classroom displayed a “God Bless America” poster.

Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a complaint letter June 15 regarding all three issues.

Attorney Rebecca Santiago responded June 29 and said future military balls would not include prayers, the “God Bless America” poster would be removed and that students would not be required to recite a religious creed.

Goodbye to Good Friday observances

The city of Bayard, N.M., will no longer close its doors on Good Friday or Easter Monday. A resident reported to FFRF that city offices, the public library and the municipal court were closed in 2014 on Friday, April 18, and Monday, April 21, “in observance of the Easter holiday.”

Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote to the mayor Feb. 27: “Easter is neither a federal holiday nor a New Mexico state holiday. It is unconstitutional and inappropriate for city offices to close for this Christian holy day.”

The mayor responded June 1 and agreed to remove the days from the city’s holiday schedule in future years.

...

FFRF reminded the Lee’s Summit R-7 School District in Missouri that schools are not allowed to take time off to observe religious holidays. Colby Cantrell, a teacher at Woodland Elementary School, sent an email to parents saying that students did not have school April 3 “in observance of Good Friday!” FFRF was notified about this incident and sent a letter to the district May 26.

“This practice violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it not only promotes religion over nonreligion, but also impermissibly favors Christianity over all other faiths,” wrote Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert.

The district’s attorney assured FFRF on June 2 that the district would ensure Cantrell understood that the school was not closed for the religious holiday.

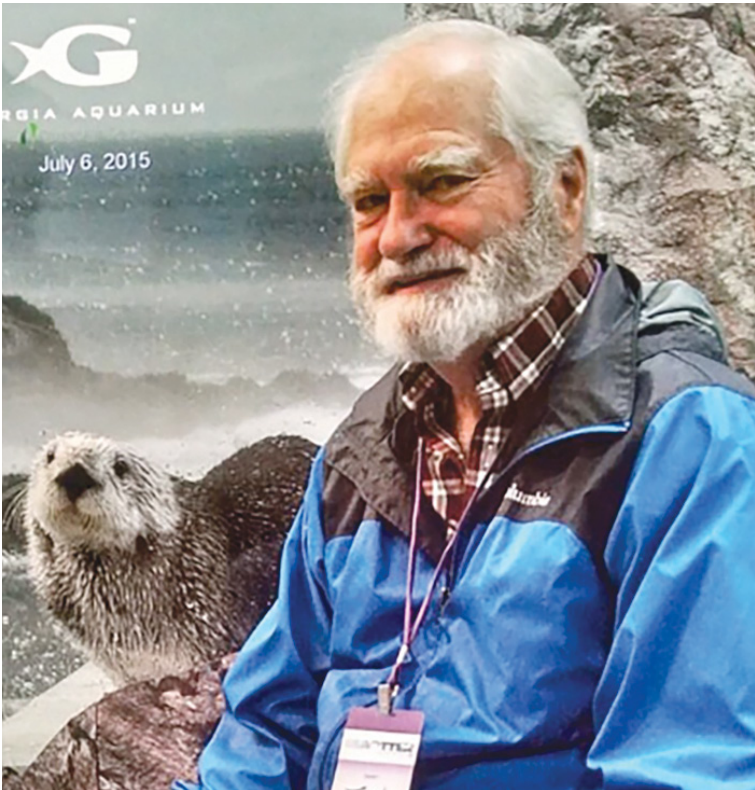
You can be good without god

By Ed Sweeney

“It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.” — W. K. Clifford

No, I didn’t take a class in atheism or religion at the University of California-Berkeley, where I graduated in 1965. Attending Catholic schools for 12 years and going to church every Sunday did not require much thinking. Everything they wanted me to know was fed to me. I was often told, don’t ask so many questions, that is just the way it is, some things are a mystery. It didn’t take long for me when I arrived at Berkeley to figure out that my goal was knowledge, but I was sidetracked into studying accounting so I could have a career, job and family. Now that I’m retired, I can spend more time seeking knowledge by attending classes in Ohio State University’s Program 60, which included “The Philosophy of Religion” and “The Philosophy of Evolutionary Biology.” At Berkeley I lived in a fraternity. Few of the men there were religious. We often had philosophical discus-

sions, including whether or not there was a god. I had prepared for this by reading books to defend my beliefs to no avail. I could not prove that there was a god, and the arguments that there was not a god got me thinking critically, which was encouraged by professors and students. Before my father’s funeral in California in 2007, the priest asked me to participate in the ceremony. I said I did not want to because I was now an atheist. He looked surprised and asked me how I became an atheist. I told him I went to Berkeley and learned how to think. There was no further comment. Throughout my life I identified as an atheist but did not become active until 2008. Before that I did look into other religions, including Buddhism (which is nontheistic and not really a religion),



Ed Sweeney and an otter both sport whiskers at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, which was the world’s largest until it was surpassed in 2012 by Marine Life Park in Singapore.

the Infinite Way (similar to Christian Science), and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). I also read books such as *The World’s Religions* by Huston Smith.

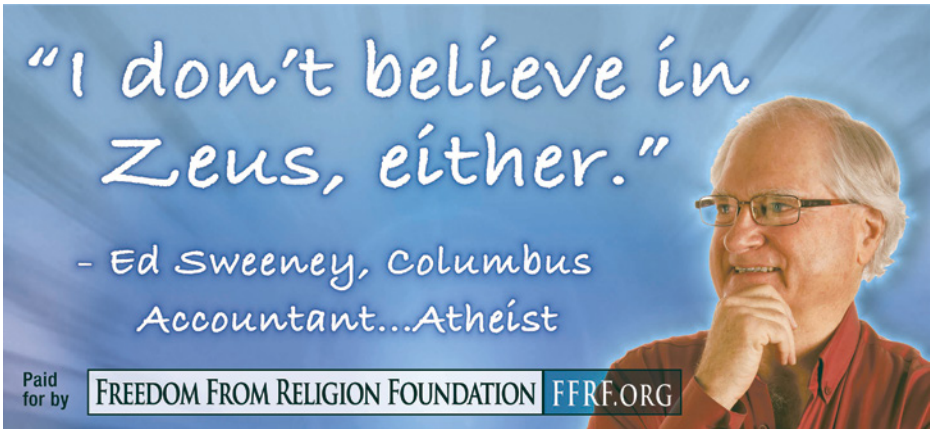
Finding my tribe

In 2008, I attended the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s 31st annual national convention in Chicago. It felt great to be with similar thinking people, like I had found my tribe. One thing religion has going for it is that it fulfills the human need for community.

I searched for local activities in Columbus and found the Humanist Community of Central Ohio. I first attended their winter solstice luncheon and have been active ever since, including

serving on the board of directors. I am also active in Central Ohio United Non Theists (COUNT), Recovering From Religion and Beyond Belief. I have also attended other conventions and events put on by the Secular Coalition for America, Secular Student Alliance, Center for Inquiry, American Humanist Association and American Atheists. I have learned that you can be good without god. I have read over 50 books written by atheists and have listened to numerous talks and debates. My favorite is Sam Harris. I believe I can hold my own in any discussion with a religious person who attempts to prove that there is a god. I had two letters to the Columbus Dispatch editor published: “Some felt unwelcome at mayor’s prayer luncheon” (2012) and “Holy Quran can be read another way” (2015). I feel so much more authentic now that I am an out-of-the-closet atheist.

Ed Sweeney wrote this essay for a college class he’s taking, after retiring in 2013 at age 71 from a career in financial management. He has two sons and lives with his wife Nita and their yellow Lab Morgan. He cooks lunch on Mondays at a senior center, is a volunteer court-appointed guardian who helps people make medical decisions and is a child services guardian ad litem. In 2010, Ed received a CFO of the Year honorable mention award for his service as chief financial officer for the House of Hope substance abuse treatment facility.



Ed Sweeney coordinated the month-long display in 2011 of seven FFRF billboards in the Columbus, Ohio, area.

Meet a doodling member

Name: Stephen Seewer.
Where I live: Pine Lake Park neighborhood in San Francisco.
Where and when I was born: Stanford University Medical Center, November 1966.
Family: Cooper, 4½-year-old mini goldendoodle; Comet, 4-year-old mini goldendoodle (half brothers — same poodle, different retrievers).



Stephen Seewer and Cooper.

Education: Bachelor of science in finance, magna cum laude with rainbow sprinkles, Golden Gate University, San Francisco.
Occupation: I help firefighters plan for retirement.
Military service: None so far.
How I got where I am today: Google Maps.
Where I’m headed: Wherever the path takes me, although it frequently leads to 4505 Burgers & BBQ in San Francisco.
Person in history I admire: The Notorious RBG, also known as Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the Supremes. She is brilliant and insightful and brings me great comfort. She is one of the few things that give me hope for the future of this country.
A quotation I like: “A mind is like a parachute. It doesn’t work if it’s not open.” — Frank Zappa.
“There is no God but Challah and French toast is His Prophet!” It’s my original quote. (My friend Karl says I risk beheading with this quote, given that you’re printing my name and neighborhood.)
These are a few of my favorite things: Working in the garden, making greeting cards by hand, collecting



The California Department of Motor Vehicles approved this personalized plate for Stephen Seewer after first rejecting it, claiming it “has a negative connotation to a specific group,” a DMV employee stated. FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott then wrote the DMV on Stephen’s behalf, explaining that “a number of states have rejected personalized license plates containing nonreligious messages because a government employee has deemed them impermissible. These rejections occur while similar religious messages are allowed. Such action is unconstitutional and violates the First Amendment.” DMV reversed itself and delivered the plates.

interesting papers, chickens, reasonable people, my wonderful and loyal friends.
These are not: People who fail to turn right on red, belief systems rooted in cable news bloviation, the Republican short bus, American exceptionalism.
My doubts about religion started: With observation of the pain and turmoil that faith groups heap upon

LGBT youth.
Before I die: I want to finish my kitchen remodel.
Ways I promote freethought: On my license plates, of course!
I wish you’d have asked me: What shows have you been watching recently? “Black Mirror,” “Orphan Black,” “Sense8,” “Silicon Valley,” “Nurse Jackie,” “Ray Donovan,” “The Brink” and “Real Time With Bill Maher.”

FFRF Emperor Award, 37th annual convention, Los Angeles, Oct. 25, 2014

Physicist Carroll: Atoms and Eve incompatible



Ingrid Laas photo

Emperor recipient Sean Carroll has plenty to say about the shortcomings of religion.

DAN BARKER, FFRF CO-PRESIDENT:

Last night we gave an Emperor Has No Clothes Award to Donald C. Johanson. The very first Emperor recipient, in 1999, was physicist Steven Weinberg. Today’s recipient is also a physicist. Sean Carroll is a theoretical physicist at Caltech in Pasadena. He got his Ph.D. in 1993 from Harvard and was on the faculty at the Enrico Fermi Institute at the University of Chicago. He does research on cosmology, field theory, gravitation, and quantum mechanics. He’s especially interested in how quantum mechanics intersects with cosmology. He’s worked on dark matter, dark energy, modified gravity (maybe he can explain what modified gravity is — it only falls part way, or what?), topological defects, extra dimensions and violations of fundamental symmetries.

He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, the writer Jennifer Ouellette. His most “popular”-level book, published in 2013, is called *The Particle at the End of the Universe: How the Hunt for the Higgs Boson Leads us to the Edge of a New World*.

I think it’s safe to say you won’t hear Sean Carroll call the Higgs boson “the God particle.”

By Sean Carroll

Thank you very much, Dan, and thanks to everyone here. It’s a tremendous honor for me to receive the Emperor Has No Clothes Award. I looked on Google and couldn’t find any major awards that have been won both by Ursula K. Le Guin and Jesse Ventura other than this one.

I have to admit, it’s also a little awkward because I looked through the list of previous winners and saw so many people who’ve done fantastic work for the world, out there fighting for secularism in the public sphere. I’m a theoretical physicist. I like to think about things. I don’t really like to do things.

So I thought about what could I possibly say for the award speech. Then I remembered the holiday season is upon us. Next week is Halloween, which is paradoxically one of the favorite holidays among the naturalist and atheist communities. With that in mind, I was inspired to take death as

the theme of my talk.

You might point out that I am not an expert on death either, much less secularism. It’s an intimidating and forbidding topic. I thought I would soften it a little bit and bring it more into my wheelhouse by also talking about physics, which everybody has warm fuzzy feelings about.

A couple of months ago, I found myself in New York City participating in a debate. Steven Novella and I were arguing against the resolution, “Death is not final.” For the resolution were Eben Alexander and Raymond Moody. Eben Alexander is a neurosurgeon and New York Times best-selling author [of *Proof of Heaven*] who contracted meningitis and went into a coma and visited heaven. You know that because he says he did and he’s very sincere.

Steven and I did our best to present the more scientific case. The good news is that we won the debate. These “Intelligence Squared” debates are high-quality events, and they were a little nervous to have this one because they are usually about politics. They take a poll before and after, asking how many audience members agree or disagree with the resolution. Happily, we actually changed people’s minds a little bit — a good number of the undecided people came over to our side. You can in fact change people’s minds by talking and having a reasonable discussion about controversial issues.

But there were still a substantial number of people who think that death is not final. It’s a very compelling vision. It’s easy to say that wishful thinking has something to do with it. But whatever the motivations might be, there are even many atheists and naturalists who think that we just can’t say whether there is life after death. They would say that there is no evidence one way or another.

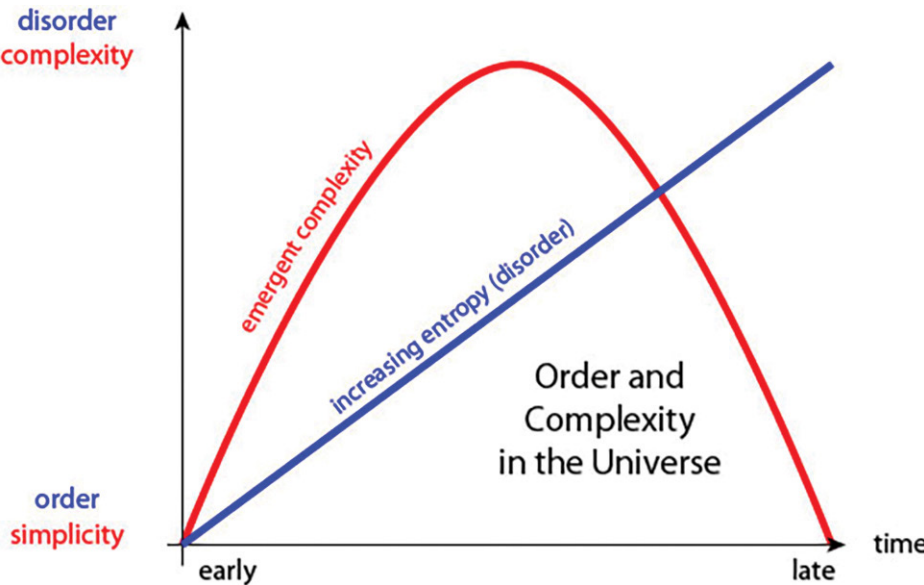
I want to tell you that we can say that there is no life after death. Sorry.

Why is that true? The argument is basically the following: The mind is the brain. That’s what the mind is, there is nothing else other than the brain that is going on. And the brain is made of atoms. Here is the controversial part — even some of my friends get annoyed when I say this. But it’s the truth so I will lay it on you. We know how atoms work. They are not a mystery to us. And they work in such a way that when you die there is no way for the information that is “you” to persist after death. There is no way for that stuff, that knowledge, that set of beliefs and feelings that made up you, to leave your body. Because it is stuck there with the atoms that are decaying in your tomb or being cremated or whatever your favorite way to be after death is.

We don’t know all of the laws of physics by any stretch of the imagination. But we know something about them, and we know enough to make a very powerful claim: there is no room for new laws of physics that would affect how the atoms in your brain actually work. That’s a very subtle statement. I think that Dan mentioned I have three hours to give this talk, so . . . I would get tired if that happened, but I would give the whole explanation for the laws of physics, how they came to be, why we are confident in them.

Instead I will just intimidate you into

submission by showing you an equation. In this one equation are summarized all of the laws of physics necessary to understand the atoms in your brain at the energy mass and length scales relevant to your everyday lives. We have quantum mechanics, we have spacetime, we have gravity, we have the other forces, electromagnetism and the nuclear forces. We have matter, the electrons and the quarks you’re made of, and we have of course the Higgs boson.



There are plenty of things physicists don’t understand, but we know enough to say that if there are any other forces, particles, fields, phenomena, they can’t affect the atoms in your brain. If there are new particles and fields that we haven’t yet seen (which there probably are), either they’re so weak or short-lived that they would not have any affect on what the atoms are doing, or we would have found them in experiments. Those are the only two options.

No one ever understands me when I say this, so I’m going to say the same thing over again. I’m not saying we understand all of physics. I’m not even saying we know how the fundamental laws come together to make complicated things like frogs and ecosystems and spiral galaxies. There are enormous amounts of work to be done in understanding how science works, including physics.

But we have a basic underlying framework, which we call quantum field theory. This framework is either true or false. All the evidence says that it’s true, and if it’s true then there is no room for new physics that can in any way affect what goes on in the atoms in your brain. We understand what they do. There is therefore no room for the information that you persist after you die.

Schrödinger’s egg

And yet, Eben Alexander sells a lot more books than Steve Novella or I do. He’s No. 1 on The New York Times best-seller list. What are we to do with people who say that they have evidence that there is life after death? I like to put it in terms of two options.

Option one is that some ill-defined metaphysical substance, not subject to the known laws of physics, interacts with the atoms of our brains in ways that have eluded every controlled experiment ever performed in the history of science. Option two is that people hallucinate when they’re nearly dead. I

leave it to the court to decide.

We’re not going to simply trust the claims of people who have actually visited heaven and come back to sell books about it. We can be scientific about this. We can ask: Okay, given that we’re made of atoms and we understand what the atoms are doing, what is life? What is this complex non-fundamental phenomenon that arises out of the motions and interactions of the fundamental particles of which we are made?

Famed Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger was one of many physicists who fled Austria just before World War II. Even though he had already won the Nobel Prize, he had difficulty finding a position, because his family included both his wife and his mistress. Finally, the government of Ireland invited him to help found a new Institute for Advanced Studies in Dublin. He moved to Ireland and wrote a little book called *What Is Life?* It became quite famous because it prefigures a lot of what we soon thereafter discovered about DNA and the genetic code, just on the basis of thinking like a physicist.

He also tried to address the question in the title of his book. When is a piece of matter said to be alive? It’s a wonderful thought-provoking answer. He basically says something is alive when it keeps moving long after it should have stopped.

You have a little baby chick, it grows up to be a chicken. As long as you feed it, it’s going flap around and raise its wings and so forth. When it dies, it will stop moving. It will decompose and return to the ground. Schrödinger wants to know what’s going on, what is it that keeps alive things moving and walking around and making noise and raising a fuss.

Answering creationists

The answer, as he quite correctly puts it, relies on my favorite law of physics, the second law of thermodynamics. This law says that the entropy of the universe or of any closed isolated bit of the universe increases as time goes on.

Entropy is simply a measure of the disorderliness, the messiness, the chaotic nature of stuff. If you start with an unbroken egg, it is easy to break the egg. That makes it more disorderly and disorganized. It’s easy to turn that broken egg into scrambled eggs. Again, more disorganized. It’s very difficult and would never happen by itself to take the scrambled egg and make it

back into the pristine form of an unbroken egg, Humpty Dumpty notwithstanding. This law is very profound and captures people’s imaginations.

At a scientific level, it also captures the imagination of creationists. They say, look, there is a fundamental law of physics. You’re telling us, one of the famous laws of 19th century science says that things run down, that things become less and less organized over time, that ultimately the universe will reach “heat death.” Yet you expect me to believe that all of the marvelous complexity of life and the biosphere and this evolution that you guys talk about all just happened starting from some disorderly primordial goo. How is that possible?

There is a simple and perfectly correct answer, which focuses on the phrase “isolated systems.” The Earth is not an isolated system. There’s a little story you can find on the Internet. I’m not sure if it’s true or not. It’s a creationist saying, “You know, the physicists always say that the Earth is not an isolated system, but that can’t be right because if it were, there would be a giant glowing ball of energy in the sky.”

That’s probably not true. That’s just too good to be true, if anyone ever said that.

But there’s another question, somewhat more subtle. It doesn’t seem to violate the letter of the second law of thermodynamics for life to arise on Earth. But does it violate the spirit of the law? Why is it that complicated elaborate complex organisms arose just through the impersonal working out of the fundamental law of physics? If there is no guidance there, if anything, the tendency seems to be towards messy disorder.

So visualize life here on Earth, a lively landscape on a sunny day. The sun is a hot spot in a cold sky. If the whole sky were the same temperature as the sun, Earth would get a lot more energy. Energy is good. But the Earth would soon come to be the temperature of the sun, and we would all die. On the other hand, if the whole sky were the temperature of the night sky, the Earth would come to be the temperature of the night sky — and we would all die.

Why life arose

The reason why we are here and life arose on Earth is because the sun is a hot spot in a cold sky. What matters is not that we get energy from the sun, but that we get low-entropy energy. Orderly energy, which is able to do useful work. We chew our cud and we photosynthesize and we have conventions, all of which degrades that energy. We raise its entropy and then we send it back to the universe.

For every one photon of light we get from the sun, we radiate 20 photons back into the universe, with 20 times the entropy. We give exactly as much energy back to the universe as we get: On average, each photon we radiate out into the sky has one-twentieth the energy of the ones we receive. What matters is not that the sun is a source of energy but that it’s a source of energy in a low-entropy form.

This is not just here in our biosphere. This is something that is characteristic of the universe as a whole. Let me remind you of the history of the universe. If you took a picture of the universe one second after the Big Bang, it would simply be a featureless bright glow in all directions. Sometimes you’ll see the Big Bang, which happened 13.8 billion years ago, portrayed as like a bright dot on a black background. That is completely wrong.

That makes you think that the Big Bang was an event with a location at a place in a preexisting space/time, which is not right. The Big Bang is the whole universe beginning. One second after the Big Bang, the universe was hot, it was dense, it was smooth, and it was the same everywhere. It was shining with a brightness of, I don’t know, some really bright thing.

We can take a snapshot of the universe 380,000 years after the Big Bang. This is the moment when the universe became transparent. The radiation from that moment, the cosmic microwave background, has been imaged by astronomers. And what we see is the gradual formation of structure. The universe is growing increasingly lumpy and inhomogeneous. Some spots are a little bit emptier, other spots are a little bit heavier, a little denser. And if you go on, gravity increases the contrast of the universe, until we get the wonderful collection of galaxies and stars and superclusters we see in the current universe.

We now live roughly 10 billion years after the Big Bang. (Really it’s about 13.8 billion years, but only the order of magnitude concerns us for now.) We live in a world with hundreds of billions of galaxies, and who knows how many conventions are going on with extraterrestrials fighting to keep church and state separate in their local environment. The universe will continue to evolve, even after we’re not here.

Above us only space

Now picture the universe 1 quadrillion years (1 followed by 15 zeros) after the Big Bang. Ultimately the stars will burn out. After about a quadrillion years, the last star will stop shining. We’ll have nothing in the universe but cold rocks and black holes. But even that will not be the end. Because all those rocks, those planets, those dead stars, those comets, will fall into the black holes.

Stephen Hawking in the 1970s taught us that black holes do not last forever. They give off radiation, they will evaporate and will eventually disappear. That will take one googol (1 followed by 100 zeros) years. The last black hole will have evaporated and there will be nothing left but empty space. Our best current model is that empty space lasts forever, infinity years into the future.

That’s the history of the universe. I want you to notice something about this story. Entropy increases as the universe expands, so soon after the Big Bang, the fact that the universe was very smooth was actually in that physical circumstance a reflection of the fact that it’s very orderly. It was so dense and the gravity was so strong that keeping everything smooth is a very rare and finely tuned state of affairs. Entropy grows as the universe expands, structure forms, stars shine, people live and die, and eventually you reach empty space. Which turns out, if you go to the math, to be a very high-entropy state.

But complexity, the organization of the stuff that is going on, is a completely different thing from entropy. In the beginning, the universe was a very simple place, just hot and dense and smooth. And the end, a googol years from now, the universe will be a simple place once again. It will be empty space. It is between when the entropy is increasing from low to high that the universe became complex, forming planets and stars and galaxies and living organisms.

That behavior is not an accident. That is a universal way that complex-

ity behaves. Entropy just goes up, but complexity first goes up and then fades away once you approach the final state, which we call thermal equilibrium. So the right answer to the creationists is that not only is it allowed by the second law of thermodynamics — that complex structures like living beings arose here on Earth — but the reason why is because of the second of thermodynamics. We are parasitic upon the increase of entropy of the universe.

quantum mechanics

spacetime

gravity

$$W = \int_{k < \Lambda} [Dg][DA][D\psi][D\Phi] \exp \left\{ i \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[\frac{m_p^2}{2} R - \frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu}^a F^{a\mu\nu} + i \bar{\psi}^i \gamma^\mu D_\mu \psi^i + \left(\bar{\psi}_L^i V_{ij} \Phi \psi_R^j + \text{h.c.} \right) - |D_\mu \Phi|^2 - V(\Phi) \right] \right\}$$

other forces

matter

Higgs

We are little surfers riding a wave of entropy until we eventually scuttle up on shore, and it’ll just be empty space forever. And again, the universe is not special, you can see this in a cup of coffee. You take a cup of coffee with the cream separate, that’s low entropy. Highly organized but also very simple. If you mix them together, it is high entropy, everything mixed together but also very simple.

It’s the “in between” when you see the tendrils of the cream reaching into the coffee and swirling in little complex patterns. That’s when you get the complexity of the universe. These little swirls, these little ethereal bits of complexity that are caught between the simple beginning and the simple end. That’s us. That’s what we are, temporary eruptions of structure and organization as the universe goes from simplicity to simplicity.

A couple of years ago, I was lucky enough to be sitting on a plane next to Michael Russell, who is a geochemist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. He saw some paper I was reading, and says, “Oh, the meaning of life. I know that one, that’s easy. It’s to hydrogenate carbon dioxide.”

As a geochemist, Michael knows that the early Earth’s atmosphere was dominated by carbon dioxide. And from a chemist’s point of view, that is a very low-entropy thing to be. There is a much higher-entropy thing to be, a place the Earth’s atmosphere wants to go to, which is methane. But it can’t get there. There is no simple chemical reaction that takes you from carbon dioxide to methane. What you need is a complicated system, a pathway of many complex chemical reactions that will take you there.

So as the early atmosphere and the early oceans sloshed about, occasionally there would fluctuate into existence just the right thing to do all the chemical reactions in the right place. Increasing the entropy of the atmosphere that caught on and became the first living being. That’s what life is. That insight is crucial, not only to the scientific definition of life but to our actual lives.

This is the thing that the audience didn’t understand when Steven Avella and I were debating Eben Alexander and Raymond Moody. The thing they didn’t get the most was, “But when you die, where do you go? Isn’t energy conserved, don’t you have energy, doesn’t it go somewhere?” The answer is that life is not an energy, a force, a spirit, a substance. It is a process. It is a chemical reaction.

The end of a life is putting out a candle. When you put out a candle, the energy doesn’t go anywhere. The

reaction stops. When you die, you don’t go anywhere. Your atoms are still there, with all of their energy, but you stop happening. That’s what it means to die. It will happen to you. If you wait long enough, we will all reach equilibrium.

It’s very possible, by the way, that medical science will extend our lives by an enormous amount. It’s not at all in violation of the laws of physics for human beings to live thousands or tens

of thousands of years. But we are not there yet.

We, like other mammals on Earth, get roughly 1.5 billion heartbeats per life span. Then that will be it and you will go away. This is why the afterlife is a false consolation. This is why this wishful thinking, this hope that life is eternal and will go on forever, is not the right hope to have. This is why I like to say that heaven is a bad idea.

Continued on next page

Weinberg was first Emperor recipient



Steven Weinberg and FFRF President Emerita Anne Nicol Gaylor in 1999.

Nobel Prize laureate Steven Weinberg was the first official recipient of FFRF’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award, which he accepted in November 1999 at the annual convention in San Antonio, Texas.

Weinberg received the honor for a widely reprinted remark at a conference in April 1999 in Washington, D.C.: “Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it, you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.”

Weinberg, a professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Texas-Austin at the time, won the Nobel Prize in physics in 1979 with Sheldon Glashow and Abdus Salam for contributions to the “theory of the unified weak and electromagnetic interaction between elementary particles.”

Weinberg, 82, received the National Medal of Science in 1991 and the Benjamin Franklin Medal of the American Philosophical Society in 2004, with a citation that said he’s “considered by many to be the preeminent theoretical physicist alive in the world today.”

Continued from previous page

Just like [previous speaker] Anthony Pinn pointed out, this wisdom can be found in poets and songwriters. Heaven is a bad idea because you reach thermal equilibrium and nothing happens. It's boring! David Byrne knows this: "Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens." Leonard Cohen knows this: "The place was dead as heaven on a Saturday night."

I'd much rather be spending my Saturday night with the infidels talking about things than in heaven with the angels.

There is a fantastic novel written by Julian Barnes called *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*. In the last chapter, he puts forth his idea of heaven, in fictional form. And there's always a catch if you're in a novel version of heaven, right? His hero, who is sort of a working-class, blue-collar British duffer, dies and goes to heaven. He has a guide who explains, basically, here's how it works: It's heaven, you can have whatever you want. The catch is that you have to figure out what you want. It is up to your imagination and capabilities to ask for things. We're not going to make suggestions.

This guy knew what he wanted. He wanted to play golf, he wanted to have sex, and he wanted to have breakfast for three meals a day. So that's exactly what he got. For hundreds of years he became very good at it. He had sex with all sorts of women in various different combinations. He became so good at golf that he got a hole-in-one on every single shot on every single course in heaven.

Then he got bored and told his guide about it. The guide said, "Well, everyone has the option here of dying, of truly ending their lives."

"How many people ask for that option?" The guide responded, "Everybody asks for that option, eventually."

Because it's a mistake to think that there is some perfect way to be. This is the lesson of our ephemeral, entropy-driven life. So it's not just heaven is a bad idea. Happiness is a bad idea.

Don't get me wrong. I like happiness. I'm personally quite happy. What I'm against is fetishizing happiness. If you go to *The New York Times* best-seller list, if it's not "proof of the existence of heaven" books, it's happiness books. Not a lot of cosmology books on there yet.

Hedonic treadmill

We make a mistake because we think that there is some way, some situation we can put ourselves in, where we can reach perfect happiness, and then we can stay there forever. And that will be like heaven. But the nature of life itself is movement and change and evolution. There can't be a perfect state of being.

I'd much rather be spending my Saturday night with the infidels talking about things than in heaven with the angels.

There is science behind this.

Psychologists talk about the "hedonic treadmill." They study people to measure their level of happiness before and after some life-changing event. If you win the lottery you become happy, but a few years after you're at the same level of happiness you had before winning the lottery. If you get in a terrible accident and become paraplegic, you become unhappy, but a few years later you're the same level of happiness you had before the accident.

You can talk about the chemistry of it. The dopamine is flooding your brain, and you get used to that and want more dopamine but can't get it. But it's all based on a fundamental flaw. There is no way to achieve this perfect, everlasting happiness because that situation would be never changing. That's not that interesting and it won't make you happy. It's a fundamental contradiction.

So what do we have instead? Again, I refer to the wisdom of the poets. Muriel Rukeyser is a poet who has one of my favorite quotes: "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms." She's not one of these anti-science poets. She wrote a wonderful biography of Willard Gibbs, who is America's greatest 19th-century scientist.

Her point is: If you meet someone for the first time, and you're on a date or you're in Starbucks or whatever and they say, "Tell me about yourself," you don't give them a list of all your atoms. I'm a faculty member at Caltech, so maybe there it would happen. At Caltech it would be considered kind of sexy to list all of your atoms.

But most of us choose to take a step back. We tell a story about who we are and how we got there. That story gives meaning and success to our lives. It's not the attainment of any one state of being. It's a story with a beginning and a middle and an inevitable, according to the laws of physics, end. How well that story is received once you're done telling it is a measure of the success of your life.

Death is serious but . . .

I don't want to belittle the very real sorrow that accompanies death. We all

have friends, family members, loved ones who have died, and it makes you very sad and that is not a mistake. It is sad when we lose someone that we care about. Knowing that it's inevitable doesn't make the sorrow go away, but maybe it affects how you deal with that sorrow.

If I may put forward an inappropriate joke by comedian Robert Schimmel. He's quoted in a wonderful new book that recently came out by my friend Eric Kaplan called *Does Santa Exist?* It's a philosophical, ontological, epistemological look at the difficult question of Santa Claus. He relates Schimmel's joke, and Schimmel says, "You know, my son got cancer. And it was just the most horrible thing. I really thought there could be nothing worse than hearing that your son has cancer. Then I got cancer."

That was the joke, right there. He got cancer. I'm a physicist, not a comedian.

If you are ever in Paris, you can visit what are called the catacombs of Paris. There are many kilometers of tunnels underneath the streets where they have interred literally millions of human skeletons. In the 18th and 19th centuries, they weren't really good at building graveyards. When it would rain a lot, the skeletons would sort of float down the streets, so they dug up all the graveyards and put the bones in the catacombs.

It's a very serious and somber place in some ways. But the attitude is very different in Paris than you would get here in the United States. There is a somber air, inevitably, but there is also some fun, some whimsy there. Whoever was arranging the skulls and so forth would make little hearts. They have playful mottos and quotations on the walls. Here is one, roughly translated: "Thus ends everything on Earth, spirit, grace, beauty, talent. Ephemeral like a flower, blown away by the slightest wind."

The attitude is basically, "Haha, you're laughing now but you'll be here before long." The point is that death is serious. It's OK to treat it seriously, but the reason it's serious is because life matters. The life we have right now is not a dress rehearsal. It's the only performance we get to give.

The universe can be kind of overwhelming. We're a very tiny part of it, but we are a remarkable part. We are just collections of atoms, but we are collections of atoms that have attained the ability to think about ourselves, to reflect about the world that we live in and to write our own stories.

Our lives will not last forever. And that is what makes them matter so much. Thank you.

Heaven is a bad idea because you reach thermal equilibrium and nothing happens.

Secular invocation

Tim Earl
City Council, Portage, Mich.
June 23, 2015



Tim Earl

Usually at this point, you are asked to bow your heads. I will do no such thing. I'd rather you lift your heads in the name of human dignity and self respect.

The source of your inspiration shouldn't be in some otherworldly realm, but right here in front of you, in the form of the citizens who have elected you and care enough about their city to come here and participate in these proceedings.

There is no greater power on Earth than a united people working towards a common goal. And so I ask you as our leaders to take on this extraordinary task of being uniters, guiding us on the path to continued peace and prosperity.

We can only achieve that goal through mutual respect and tolerance of other viewpoints.

While history is replete with examples of religious differences leading to violence or persecution, lately we've seen a sharp increase in such incidents.

Virtually all religions, including the major religions of today, preach violence against followers of other faiths or no faith.

Yet when an act of violence is committed in the name of one religion, followers of other faiths condemn the entire religion as a reprehensible outlier, and a verbal and sometimes physical Holy War ensues.

And we also have members of the majority faith in America trying to use the legislative process to force everyone to live in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Religious freedom has been redefined as the right to outlaw actions that your religion finds objectionable.

The time has come to cast aside such sectarian divisions and face the future together as a diverse society united by our common humanity.

We must all work together to make this happen, but you as elected leaders bear a special responsibility to lead by example and resist the temptation to legislate religious belief.

So let's leave the religious displays at church and get to work on the business of the city.

FFRF member Tim Earl lives in Portage, Mich., with his wife and two daughters, ages 7 and 10. After leaving the Navy as a lieutenant commander in 2004, he started work as a fire safety consultant. He's a member of the city's Park Board. In 2011, he asked the council to stop prayers. The council didn't stop but invited him to give a secular invocation, which he has done since 2012.

Enter FFRF's "Nothing Fails Like Prayer" Contest, ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer.



Ingrid Laas photo

Sean Carroll signs a book for California Life Member Eddie Tabash, who first joined FFRF in 1990. (Which makes him deserving of his aura!)

Anne Gaylor, 88, dies; guarded wall between church and state

Freethought Today reprints with permission the June 16 New York Times obituary of FFRF's principal founder.

By Sam Roberts

Anne Nicol Gaylor, who transformed a local campaign for abortion rights into a national crusade to maintain the separation of church and state, died on June 14 at a hospice in Fitchburg, Wis., near Madison. She was 88.

The cause was complications of a fall on May 30, her daughter, Annie Laurie Gaylor, said.

Claiming descent from a carpenter's apprentice on the Mayflower, whose fellow passengers had sought religious freedom, and born to a nonbeliever, Ms. Gaylor became a principal founder in the 1970s of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which bills itself as the nation's largest group of atheists and agnostics.

Even in death, she held to her principles. Having already arranged to be cremated, she left a handwritten list of instructions with her family that explicitly ordered "No memorial," and specified that a small tombstone be inscribed "Feminist — Activist — Free-thinker."

No one could dispute those characterizations, not even the adversaries whose vitriolic passions she provoked, first by advocating abortion rights and raising money for poor women unable to afford to terminate their pregnancies, and then by singling out religion as "the root cause of women's oppression."

"My mother and I and a Milwaukee gentleman first founded the Freedom From Religion Foundation as a regional group when I was a college student in 1976," her daughter said. With her husband, Dan Barker, a former evan-



This photograph, by Paul Gaylor, appeared on the dust jacket of Anne's book, *Abortion Is a Blessing* (Psychological Dimensions, N.Y., 1975), recapping the battle to legalize abortion in Wisconsin. The now online book can be read at ffrf.org/publications/books/.

gelical minister, the younger Ms. Gaylor succeeded her mother as co-president of the foundation in 2004.

"The impetus for the group was our somehow becoming aware that they were opening county board meetings with prayer," she said. "We went down to ask them to stop this unconstitutional practice, and thought we would sound more powerful if we called ourselves a group. So we made up a name, and the rest is history."

Since then the group has challenged, often successfully, laws and regulations that proclaimed a National Day of Prayer and a Year of the Bible, established Good Friday as a state holiday in Wisconsin, required Bible instruction in a Tennessee school district, favored religious groups in awarding federal social service grants, permitted the Knights of Columbus to

display a statue of Jesus along a Montana ski run on property owned by the United States Forest Service, required invocations at commencement exercises, and granted clergy tax-exempt housing allowances.

The elder Ms. Gaylor never minced words, beginning with the provocative name of her group.

"I've never liked euphemisms," she told The Wisconsin State Journal. "If you have something to say, say it."

"More people have been killed in the name of religion than for any other reason," Ms. Gaylor said. She branded the Bible "a grim fairy tale" and preached that "nothing fails like prayer." She wrote a book titled "Abortion Is a Blessing" and declared unabashedly that "in the kind of world I want to live in, all children would be wanted."

Lucie Anne Nicol was born in rural Tomah, Wis. — between Madison and Eau Claire — on Nov. 25, 1926. Her father, Jason, was a farmer, feed store manager and atheist. Her mother, the former Lucie Sowle, was an elementary school teacher and died before her daughter turned 2.

She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in English in 1949, the same year she married Paul J. Gaylor.

In addition to her daughter, she is survived by their three sons, Andrew, Ian and Jamie; two granddaughters; and a brother, Thomas.

Ms. Gaylor operated an employment agency in Madison, then, with her husband, bought the weekly newspaper The Middleton Times-Tribune, which

in 1967 editorialized in favor of legalized abortion. In 1972, she co-founded the Women's Medical Fund to help poor women pay for abortions.

In 1989, the fund successfully sued to remove Wisconsin as a friend of the court in a brief seeking to overturn the United States Supreme Court decision upholding the right to abortion. As a volunteer, Ms. Gaylor continued to answer telephone inquiries at the fund's offices until earlier this year, when she had two strokes.

Her foundation, which began as "a dining room table cause group," she once said, was formed with her daughter and a friend, John Sontarck, and evolved into a national association in 1978 with her as its president.

The group invoked the 19th-century term freethinker to describe someone who forms an opinion about religion on the basis of reason, rather than faith, tradition or authority. The Gaylors formally described the organization's goals as educating the public about "nontheism" and protecting the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. The foundation now claims more than 20,000 members.

Ms. Gaylor's final instructions to her family were far more personal. After dictating the text of her tombstone, she wrote, "Please plant something flowering when weather permits." Then she told them: "Take care of each other."


The story states that Anne took Women's Medical Fund phone calls at the fund's offices. Actually, she took them at her home.



Andrew Seidel photo

Anne with feminist colleague Constance "Connie" Fuller Threinen, at the belated celebration of Anne's 88th birthday Feb. 13, the first event in FFRF's new Charlie Brooks Auditorium. Connie, a longtime member, describes herself as "an unabashed atheist." She first sought out Anne in 1967 after reading Anne's history-making editorial calling for legal abortion in the Middleton Times-Tribune, Wis.

View a retrospective online "slide show" recapping Anne's life and the early days at FFRF at <http://bit.ly/1Dsi6fB>.



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF 114TH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

Representative Mark Pocan
July 7, 2015
Recognizing the Life and Work of Anne Gaylor

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to recognize a constituent who dedicated her life's work to advancing principles of justice and fairness in her community, her state, and her country.

Anne Nicol Gaylor began her life in a small town near Tomah, Wisconsin. After graduating high school at age 16 and earning a degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison, she became a businesswoman and editor at *Middleton Times Tribune* where she successfully transformed the publication into an award-winning weekly. Anne notably founded the Women's Medical Fund which has raised and donated nearly \$3 million to low-income women who lack access to healthcare services. Throughout her career, Anne remained involved with the Women's Medical Fund and was a tireless advocate for women's rights.

In 1976, Anne founded the Freedom from Religion Foundation, the nation's leading defender in the fight to protect and preserve the separation of church and state. This organization grew from a small group of committed individual's discussing the advancement of civil liberties into a major national organization with more than 23,000 members.

Throughout her retirement, she remained active in the Women's Medical Fund, dedicating her time to providing direct service to those in need. Thanks to her tireless leadership, Anne received a number of prestigious awards and recognitions, including the Humanist Heroine Award from the American Humanist Association, Wisconsin National Organization for Women's Feminist of the Year Award, and NARAL's Tiller Award. These outstanding achievements and recognitions are a testimony to Anne's resilient spirit and tireless advocacy on behalf of the issues closest to her heart.

Anne's commitment to community and work as an activist, feminist, and free-thinker have been invaluable to Wisconsin.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I recognize Ms. Anne Nicol Gaylor today.

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Rep. Mark Pocan
Second District, Wisconsin

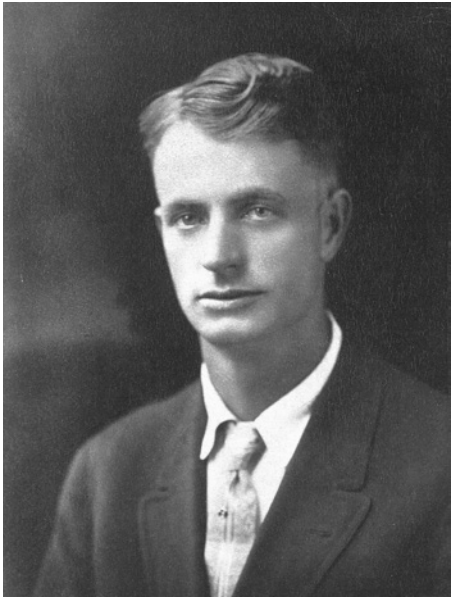
U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan read a statement memorializing Anne into The Congressional Record.



Lucie Sowle Nicol, Anne’s mother, who died before Anne was 2.



Depression-era photo on the Wisconsin farm with her father and brothers: Tommy, Jason Jr., Jason Sr., Anne and Bob.



Jason Nicol, Anne’s father and first-generation freethinker.



College-era glam shot.



Anne’s natural ringlets.



Half an orphan at almost 2.



Engagement photo: Paul J. Gaylor and Anne, 1949.



Extended family photo in mid-2000s taken in Door County, Wis. Standing from left: Son Andy, daughter-in-laws Lisa Strand and Nancy McClements, son-in-law Dan Barker, son Ian, sister-in-law Peggy Babunovic, husband Paul Gaylor, Anne Gaylor. Seated: Daughter Annie Laurie Gaylor, granddaughters Sabrina and Lily Gaylor.



Plaintiff Anne Gaylor on “Crossfire” in 1983. FFRF’s lawsuit challenging a “Year of the Bible” proclamation was educational and morally satisfying, if not legally conclusive.



Anne (center) on “The Phil Donahue Show,” summer 1978. The national appearance brought 467 “favorable” responses and helped launch FFRF the year it went national. Anne wrote about the interview, “Shrill! Abrasive! Acerbic! Inflammatory!” in her book, *Lead Us Not Into Penn Station*, in print at ffrf.org/shop/.



1984



Paul Gaylor photo

Celebrating FFRF’s 10th anniversary in 1988 with cake, Anne’s favorite convention treat. That’s Dan Barker next to her.



(Brent Nicastro photo)

Anne in her office about 1990, after moving into FFRF’s original Freethought Hall in Madison.



Paul Gaylor photo

Anne receiving an award from the National Women’s Political Caucus of Wisconsin.



Anne picketing the “installation” of a new Roman Catholic bishop in Madison, Wis., in the late 1970s. Her sign reads “Another sexist bishops? BIG DEAL!”



(Brent Nicastro photo)

Anne being interviewed the first year her famous winter solstice wording went up on a plaque in the Wisconsin Capitol.



Anne and Annie Laurie in front of the restored “Forward” statue, after spearheading a campaign to save the feminist statue embodying the Wisconsin state motto from a governor’s plans to banish the statue from the Capitol grounds in 1994. Of all of Anne’s activism, this was the most popular with the public. Her favorite achievement was writing the recall petition that got Judge Archie Simonson booted out of office in Dane County after he called rape a “normal reaction.”



Anne, about the time Isthmus weekly named her “Madison’s favorite religious leader.”



Anne, Annie Laurie and the late Catherine Fahringer, San Antonio activist and dear friend.

Anne Gaylor, gentle ‘lioness,’ leaves legacy

Sharing a few of the many hundreds of condolence cards, emails and other messages received by FFRF after founder Anne Nicol Gaylor’s death at 88 on June 14:

I remember the remarkable aura of gentleness and power that belonged to her. In her lifetime she did more than most of us can hope to do in bettering the lives of her fellow humans. She will be long remembered. — **Larry Lerner, California**

I won’t say rest in peace, Anne Nicol Gaylor, because you never rested, and you certainly would’ve hated euphemisms about death that suggest some kind of afterlife. But I will say thank you for your many efforts on behalf of women, and for pushing back against the corruption of our public institutions by religious interests. You were a #shero. — **Kelda Helen Roys, Wisconsin**

Anne was an inspiration to me — a woman of strongly held opinions who advanced her views through fearless but invariably polite discourse. So much strength in such a delicate package. I will miss what she represented to me — the hope that all can be made well by kind, constistence pressure. — **Jill (former FFRF volunteer) and Jeff Dean, Arizona**

The whole secular community is deeply indebted to her and obviously she leaves a great legacy. — **Ron Lindsay, executive director, Center for Inquiry**

She was one of the great ones of the women’s movement. Her integrity was always bracing, inspiring, magnificent. I will miss her on this planet. — **Robin Morgan, former editor in chief of Ms. Magazine, New York**

Years ago, I had the joy of listening to her interactions with more than one of my homeless clients who had called the Women’s Medical Fund for assistance. I remember distinctly how she asked about their circumstances, their future plans, and what sort of birth control they intended to use to prevent another unplanned pregnancy. Her interactions with them during these brief conversations were really quite remarkable. More importantly, the assistance provided by the fund she co-founded gave these women, who often faced significant despair, a bit of hope and a bit of caring just as they needed it the most.

I also think of Anne and the work of the Freedom from Religion Foundation every time a prayer is offered at the beginning of our Assembly meetings and each time a legislator makes it clear he or she is governing according to religion rather than science. While we still have a long way to go in the fight for separation of church and state, Anne was a pioneer in ensuring we stand up for this important principle. — **Wisconsin State Rep. Lisa Subeck**

It’s not just empty words kind people share at times like these when it comes to Anne Nicol Gaylor. She really did live a good life, devoted to helping women control their lives, and [leaving] a powerful legacy of promoting freethought and Freedom From Religion. Continued success to all who work for the Foundation and carry on

the Gaylor legany. — **Shirley McClellan, North Carolina**

She was an inspiration and moral compass and source of comfort and sustenance to countless people across our country. She brought honor and dignity to our state all these decades, something to be cherished all the more as it seems in short supply of late. — **Barbara Lawton, Wisconsin [former lieutenant governor]**

Although we mourn the loss of a great humanitarian, the world was lucky — and indeed, is a better place — to have had her activist mind and her compassionate heart for as long as we did. Like many of her admirers, I was impressed by the fact that such substantial principles and energy could be contained in such a “petite package.” — **Robyn Parnell, Oregon**

Anne was a force of nature, with a steel will. — **Anne Treseder, California**

We are saddened by the death of Anne, our brilliant, beautiful and bold co-founder. We remember how pleased Anne was with the Colony Square Hotel here in Atlanta in fall 1989 for removing all the Gideon bibles for the FFRF suites and rooms! She noticed the little details and moved mountains, too. — **Sally Mitchell, Georgia**

When I read of Anne’s death, two images came to mind. One of her, petite, standing next to a very large legislator (Gordon Roseleip?) and, of course, not in the least intimidated.

The other was of listening to her speak to the legislature, soft-voiced, never ranting, making her points clearly and succinctly — and hitting right between the eyes! — **Rosemary Dorney, Wisconsin**

Our society is indebted to her, without knowing how much. I admired her more than any person I have known. — **Karolina Johnson, Wisconsin**

Anne was a lioness among women. — **Jim Worrell, Oklahoma**

We remember the wonderful welcoming woman we met on our first visit to FFRF headquarters a number of years ago, as visitors from Alaska. Her warmth and graciousness made us feel one could not be a stranger at FFRF. — **Julie and Jim Ede, Alaska**

Anne was a very remarkable person who inspired without being “inspirational.” She was kind and gentle but determined to do good, proving even the soft-spoken had a will of steel. She lived not just a full life but a loving one as well. — **Lynn Lau (former FFRF staffer), British Columbia**

She was an exceedingly important if under-recognized figure in the history of freethought in the U.S. — **Stuart Bechman, Atheist Alliance International**

She carried herself with such warmth and grace, even in a hostile crowd. — **Jim and Cheryl Bredeson, Wisconsin**

It was an honor to have had the privilege to have known Anne Nicol Gaylor. It is with much sadness that we say “goodbye” to this heroic and dedicated human being. Her legacy lives on in the Freedom from Religion Foundation. — **Jim and Betty Grace McCollum, Arkansas [McCollum v. Board of Education]**

I am a Life Member of FFRF for many reasons. Anne Gaylor was a pioneer ahead of her time; she made nonbelief respectable. She had courage, energy, wit. Anne Gaylor was early to call out the hypocrites. — **Ellery Schempp, Massachusetts [Abington School District v. Schempp]**

Anne was a giant in the world of freethought. No one wants to see an obit of a friend — but Anne’s being in The New York Times is a kind of vindication of her life work. — **Philip Appleman, New York**

I just finished an enriching, impressive and truly enjoyable trip through your tribute to Anne Gaylor [<http://bit.ly/1Dsi6fBJ>]. “Impressive” is too tame a descriptor of the life of the woman who hurried our society along toward the secular tipping point that we are all beginning to enjoy. — **Stephen F. Uhl, Ph.D., Arizona**

Anne Nicol Gaylor took stands against ignorance and prejudice and fought many battles for which we can all be grateful. — **David A. Furlow, executive editor, Texas Supreme Court Historical Society Journal**

Stephanie Zvan observed that Anne is, “as a female atheist activist of a prior generation, always in danger of being written out of history.” Well, not on my watch: She was and always will be a personal hero of mine, and I have written of her many times, most recently for Secular Woman’s HerStory project. — **Monica Beck, New York**

I’m sitting at my computer in tears. I felt like she was a personal friend since my main battle also has been for abortion rights. And too, we are the same age with birthdays just two days apart. She was truly a trailblazer. A very-much needed one. In her success with FFRF, she created an organization that has meant so much to its members and to our country. — **Janet Brazill, Colorado**

She was gracious and had a fine, wry sense of humor. Much grateful for those rare qualities. — **George Hesselberg, senior reporter, Wisconsin State Journal**

She was such a hero to us all and losing her is a blow to our movement. — **Robyn Blumner, president, Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, District of Columbia**

Anne Nicol Gaylor’s request to create no memorial is, as she surely knew, superfluous, for the Freedom From Religion Foundation will surely serve as a permanent memorial. The obituary in The New York Times reminds us all what a dynamic force for good she was. We hope to follow her last request, to “Take care of each other.” — **Ed and Diane Buckner, Georgia**



Andrew Seidel photo

A flood of condolence cards and emails were received after Anne Gaylor’s death. Annie Laurie Gaylor, her daughter, sends warm thanks to everyone who has contacted her and FFRF and sent flowers or memorial gifts. New York FFRF state representative Sherry Chapin sent a beautiful “Anne Nicol Gaylor Memory Box.”

Meet some legal interns

Name: Seth C. Wrinkle.
Where and when I was born: Walla Walla, Wash., in March 1984.
Family: Father and stepmother, Curt and Cynthia Wrinkle of Milton-Freewater, Ore.; mother and stepfather, Debra and James Brumley of Prosser, Wash.; siblings Meredith Wrinkle and Alexa Aggeler of Portland, Ore.
Education: B.A. from the University of Oregon, 2010; J.D. from Lewis and Clark Law School, class of 2016.
My religious upbringing was: Vaguely Protestant.
How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: I was interested in church-and-state law but didn’t know quite where to begin. I was familiar with FFRF through its legal work, billboard campaigns and reputation, so I called the office to inquire about summer legal internships and ended up here in short order.
What I do here: Legal research and writing, mostly, also getting turned around walking around the Wisconsin

Capitol Square.
What I like best about it: I’m enjoying learning how a national nonprofit operates, how Establishment Clause advocacy works in real life, and what a pleasant and exceptionally walkable town Madison has turned out to be (and needs to be when you get turned around.)
My legal interests are: Constitutional law and crafting immaculate memo subject lines.
My legal heroes are: Harvey Birdman, Saul Goodman and She-Hulk [fictional attorneys].
These three words sum me up: Aphorist-ish, cicumlocutastic, cat fancier.
Things I like: Overwrought sentences, cats and Spotted Cow [beer brewed in New Glarus, Wis.].
Things I smite: I think smiting is rarely called for, don’t you?
I wish you’d asked me: “Haven’t you had enough coffee today?” No, I certainly have not.



Seth Wrinkle

Jake Swenson photo



The uproarious Liana Kapelke-Dale!

Name: Liana Kapelke-Dale. Lianas are vines that grow in the Amazon rain forest and have been written about by such illustrious poets as Federico García Lorca. I like to pretend Lorca was writing about me.
Where and when I was born: Milwaukee, Wis., in December 1987.
Family: My parents, Steve and Kathleen, who are both semi-retired academics and educators; and two older sisters, Jessica (a public health nurse in Madison) and Rachel (finishing up her Ph.D. in film theory in London).
Education: I have a B.A. in Spanish and a certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I’ll be starting my third and final year at the UW Law School this fall.
My religious upbringing was: Eclectic. I attended Quaker and Wiccan services as a child. I had my baby blessing and coming-of-age ceremony at Circle Sanctuary in Barneveld. They were both performed by priestess Selena Fox.
How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: I became an atheist at around the age of 20 and feel more

passionately about it (and the noxious pervasiveness of religion in the world) every day. I have a strong interest in science and freethought and a strong distaste for this country’s ridiculous need to pander to religious irrationality. I’d been wanting to work with FFRF since before I started law school.
One of the reasons I decided to go to law school in the first place was my interest in fighting Establishment Clause violations, but beyond that, I love FFRF’s irreverence and refusal to respect unconstitutional actions just because they were done in the name of religion.
What I do here: I’ve drafted a ton of letters of complaint regarding violations of the Establishment Clause, written memos for my supervising attorney about Good Friday state statutes and Muslim prayer in public schools and translated letters of complaint into Spanish for violations occurring in Puerto Rico. I might be working on an amicus brief soon as well.
What I like best about it: I love hearing that violations have been rectified. I like researching and drafting letters, especially for the more egregious vi-

olations, and I love the people I get to work with. FFRF is a great place to work, with a wonderfully open atmosphere.
Something funny that’s happened: I helped draft a letter to an official in Arkansas regarding an “Appeal to Heaven” flag that was flying over a county courthouse. The flag was taken down, and then Sarah Palin wrote an editorial condemning FFRF’s request. Making Palin mad was one of the highlights of my life so far.
My legal interests are: First Amendment rights, civil rights, Immigration Law, bioethics and much, much more.
My legal heroes are: Sonia Sotomay-

or and the Notorious RBG [Ruth Bader Ginsburg].
Things I like: Classic rock (especially David Bowie and other glam gods), writing and publishing poetry, Latin American travel, vintage fashion and my dog Bullett.
Things I smite: Religion and ignorance in any form. Also Antonin Scalia. That guy sucks.
I wish you’d asked me: My favorite song. For the record, it’s a three-way tie between “Rebel Rebel” (Bowie), “Beast of Burden” (the Stones), and “Gimme Danger” (the Stooges). Actually, there are way more, but I have limited space here.

when we fell from the moon

by Liana Kapelke-Dale

last night i dreamt we fell from the moon
pulled downwards by earth’s gravity

our hands curled tightly together
yours were locks and my fingers
the only keys that could open them

we hurtled silently toward the great circular blue
like divers into a deep yawning ocean
that had waited an eternity to embrace us

but when we finally hit the atmosphere
our bodies combusted in blue flame
breaking into particles of dust

the white flakes that were once
solid bone and resilient flesh

floated down to earth like snow
collecting on the ground
as though it were christmas morning

and the moon smiled at the sight of children
making angels that did not melt

“when we fell from the moon” won the UW-Madison Flash Fiction’s annual graduate student competition this year. Liana is a poet and law student whose other interests include classic rock, vintage fashion and Latin American travel. Her work has been seen most recently in journals such as Duende Literary Journal, Devilfish Review, Emerge Literary Journal, and you are here.

In the news

Okla. commandments lose in court

The Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled 7-2 on June 30 that a 6-foot-tall Ten Commandments must be removed from the State Capitol grounds, reversing a September ruling in favor of the Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission, which argued the privately funded monument, installed in 2012, doesn't endorse religion. A citizens group, led by a Baptist minister and retired school teacher and assisted by the American Civil Liberties Union, sued in 2013.

The high court said the state Constitution forbids the use of any public property to benefit any religious purpose. "The Ten Commandments are obviously religious in nature and are an integral part of the Jewish and Christian faiths."

"Quite simply, the Oklahoma Supreme Court got it wrong," state Attorney General Scott Pruitt said in a statement to Bloomberg News. "The court completely ignored the profound historical impact of the Ten Commandments on the foundation of Western law."

Pruitt wants a rehearing "in light of the broader implications of this ruling on other areas of state law. "In the interim, enforcement of the court's order cannot occur," he said.

Colo. voucher scheme ruled illegal

The Colorado Supreme Court ruled June 29 that Douglas County School District's voucher program violates the state Constitution. The case was brought by Taxpayers for Public Education and several other plaintiffs.

The district implemented the Choice Scholarship Pilot program in 2011, reported KVDR, using \$4,575 in taxpayer scholarships to up to 500 qualifying students to help pay for tuition at parochial and other private schools.

Mark Silverstein of the ACLU of Colorado said the ACLU and others will challenge any appeal the district might file or any attempt to modify the voucher program that includes private schools.

"The decision means that money set aside for public education in Colorado can only be used the way it was intended to be used — for the betterment of education in Colorado public schools," said Cindra Barnard, Taxpayers for Public Education president.

Jewish gay 'converters' ordered to pay

A New Jersey jury found on June 25 that a "gay conversion" program claiming it made people heterosexual was fraudulent. The jury ordered JONAH (Jews Offering New Alternatives for Healing), its founder Arthur Goldberg and counselor Alan Downing to pay five plaintiffs a total of \$72,400.

According to a Southern Poverty Law Center press release, plaintiff Benjamin Unger was encouraged to beat a pillow (representing his mother) with a tennis racket. "I had a huge gash and my hands were actually bleeding from hitting it so much," said Unger, now 27.

Trial testimony alleged three men were encouraged by a JONAH counselor to undress in front of a mirror and touch their genitals while he watched. Male counselors also engaged in and advocated "healthy touch" with young men, including prolonged cuddling.

"This is not legitimate therapy," testified Lee Beckstead, a psychologist with expertise on sexual orientation. "It's worse than snake oil."

Iceland abolishes blasphemy law

Iceland's parliament abolished the blasphemy provision of the nation's criminal code, the BBC reported July 3. The law had been in place since 1940 and carried a maximum sentence of three months in prison.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the nation's official church, supported the change, which was opposed by the Catholic Church, Pentecostal Church and the Church of Iceland's eastern province. The Catholic Church submitted a comment on the bill: "Should freedom of expression go so far as to mean that the identity of a person of faith can be freely insulted, then personal freedom — as individuals or groups — is undermined."

The Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association said the new law has provisions to ensure hate speech can be prosecuted.

AHA successful in bible belt cases

Hall County School District in Gainesville, Ga., agreed July 20 to settle a 2014 suit by the American Humanist Association, which alleged some district schools' athletic programs promoted Christianity.

The settlement calls for the district superintendent to issue a memo detailing the law and standards for religious neutrality to principals in its 36 schools. The district will host training before the start of the school year for administrators, who will educate staff and coaches on their constitutional duties. The district also agreed to pay the plaintiff's legal fees of \$22,500.

The association announced a week earlier that U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves granted its motion for contempt against Rankin County School District in Flowood, Miss., for violating a consent decree. The district agreed in 2014 to stop allowing events that included proselytizing, but later held an award ceremony that included Christian prayers and sermons and also promoted a Gideon bible handout.

Reeves fined the district \$7,500 and again ordered it to stop sponsoring prayers at graduations, assemblies, athletic competitions and other events.

Little Sisters lose in 10th Circuit

The Affordable Care Act doesn't infringe on the religious freedom of faith-based nonprofits that object to covering birth control in employee health plans, the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled July 14. The case involves the Denver-based Little Sisters of the Poor, which runs more than two dozen nursing homes, and four Christian colleges: Southern Nazarene University, Oklahoma Baptist University, Mid-America University and Oklahoma Wesleyan University.

Religious groups are already exempt. "But the plaintiffs argued that the exemption doesn't go far enough because they must sign away the coverage to another party, making them feel complicit," reported The Associated Press.

The three-judge panel distinguished between this case and another, noting that the religious nonprofits have an exemption process that wasn't available to Hobby Lobby.

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty said it intends to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Happy 91st, Ken!



Dan Barker photo

Ken Proulx, who has been a special member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation since 1992, and for whom the new "Above Us Only Sky" Ken Proulx Cupola is named, is pictured with his birthday cake on July 8, 2015, the day he turned 91. Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor supplied the cake, and Ken supplied the aphorisms and quips!

- "They talk about plastic surgery to make you look younger. The trouble with that is you can't fool a flight of stairs."
- "The aging process — it keeps chewing on you in one direction."
- "That damned disease [religion] separates people. It's a learned lunacy — nobody's born that cuckoo."
- "One of the great shortcomings of the human species is that they're vulnerable to indoctrination. You can see that at work with ISIS."
- "There aren't many good things to

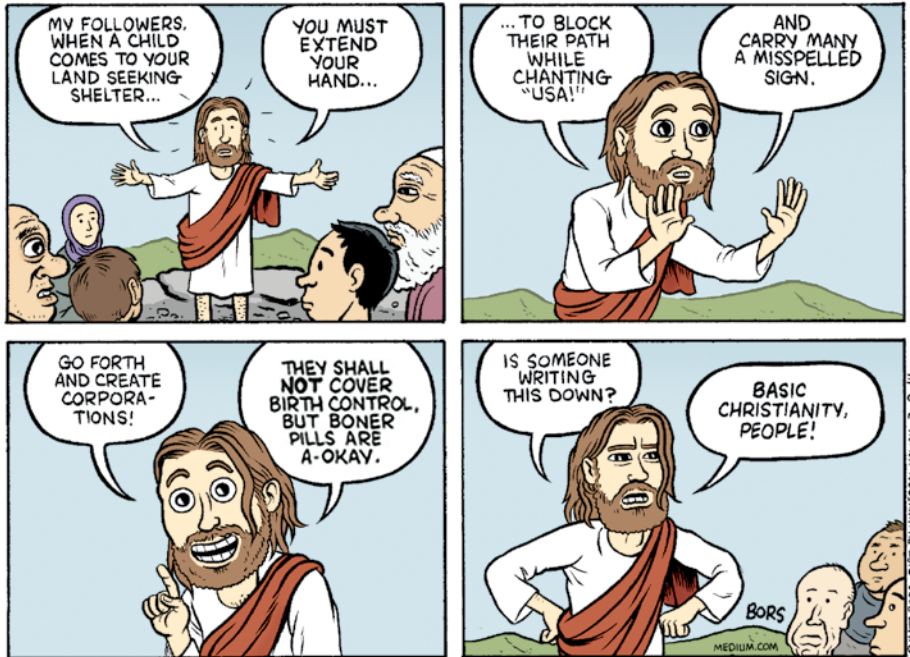
say about a war, but World War II did get me away from the church. I went three years without seeing the inside of a church — and nothing happened to me, and that got me thinking." [Ken was born into a Catholic family.]

• "We've got a big chunk of the population still stumbling around in the 14th century. We need to concentrate, as the Daniel Dennett book puts it, on *Breaking the Spell*."

• "When you think about it, the church is worse than the Mafia, because it not only robs you of your money, it robs you of your mind. [Religion is] an offer you must refuse."

Ken added, "I'm rewarded by having couples marry in Ken's Cupola."

By the way, Ken, who worked at American Motors, where he installed instrument panels for 24 years, is still driving his 1973 AMC Matador (304 cubic inch engine).



They said what?

We had people on their faces on the courthouse lawn, interceding for our nation.

Johnny Teague, Church at the Cross pastor in Houston, on the first two Prayers Across Texas rallies, which he has planned for all of the state’s 254 county courthouses
The Baptist Standard, 6-17-15

The Jesus of many churches is a weakling — someone our Rangers cannot relate to.

Army Chaplain John McDougall, an Afghanistan vet and author of *Jesus Was an Airborne Ranger*, who got into trouble for wearing his uniform in a video promoting the book
USA Today, 6-11-15

If the city council says, “We need you God, we need your help” [it will help the city]. Where there is God, there is usually peace.

Tru Saunders, urging the council in Flint, Mich., to approve a proposal to start meetings with prayer
Flint Journal, 6-19-15

Friend, as a trusted leader in the Conservative movement I need to ask you an important question. Should I run for President of the United States? I have been praying about this decision for a long time and if I do decide to seek the Republican nomination for President I need to know you’ll stand with me. If you think I should run please let me know by donating \$10, \$35, \$75, \$100, \$250 or even \$500 today.

Email from Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, 6-19-15

My relationship with God drives every major decision in my life. Each day I pray and then take time to read from the Bible and from a devotional named “Jesus Calling.” As you can imagine, the months leading up to my announcement that I would run for President of the United States were filled with a lot of prayer and soul searching. Here’s why: I needed to be certain that running was God’s calling — not just man’s calling. I am certain: This is God’s plan for me and I am humbled to be a candidate for President of the United States.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, letter to potential donors
Scott Walker for America, 7-13-15

Whatever the issues are, whether this is a crime against Christians or this is a crime against blacks, whatever it was, at the bottom of it, it’s just a sin issue more than a skin issue.

Kenny Grant, the black pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga., on the church massacre in Charleston, S.C.
WJCL-TV, 6-18-15

Hirsute flabmeisters spreading out in the pew, wearing wrinkled, very-short shorts and garish, unbuttoned shirts; mature women with skimpy clothes that reveal way too much, slogging up the aisle accompanied by the flap-flap-flap of their flip-flops; hyperactive gum-chewing kids with messy hair and dirty hands, checking their iPhones and annoying everyone within earshot or eyesight.

Thomas Tobin, bishop of the Diocese of Providence, R.I., “People coming to church in summer are slob”
Religion News Service, 6-16-15

We are not going to bow, we are not going to bend, and if necessary, we will burn.

Rick Scarborough, Texas Baptist pastor, telling Pastor E.W. Jackson that Christians should be willing to die by self-immolation to fight gay rights
rightwingwatch.org, 6-19-15

The only form of sex that the official state religion of secular fundamentalism despises is the sex described as ideal in God’s book, the Bible. All other forms of sex [are] highly desirable and indeed brave and courageous to practice, but what you and your spouse do, that’s retrogressive and negative.

Rabbi Daniel Lapin, American Alliance of Jews and Christians, speaking at the Faith & Freedom Coalition’s “Road to Majority” conference in Washington, D.C.
roadtomajority.com, 6-19-15

If you come into the faith, you must abide by the laws, and when you decide to defame it deliberately, the sentence is death.

Fouad ElBayly, 2007 comment in which the Johnstown, Pa., imam called for the death of atheist activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali and who received \$12,900 in 2014 to teach Muslim inmates at a federal prison in Cumberland, Md.
The Daily Caller, 6-19-15

Let the Supreme Court send the bishops and the priests to jail, whomever they want, but the church cannot go against the law of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Nuevo Laredo Bishop Gustavo Rodríguez Vega, on a Supreme Court ruling that legalizes same-sex marriage in all of Mexico’s 31 states
LifeSite News, 6-25-15

If, even as the price to be paid for a fifth vote, I ever joined an opinion for the Court that began: “The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity,” I would hide my head in a bag. The Supreme Court of the United States has descended from the disciplined legal reasoning of John Marshall and Joseph Story to the mystical aphorisms of the fortune cookie.

Justice Antonin Scalia, dissenting in the 5-4 decision granting marriage rights nationwide to same-sex couples
scotusblog.com, 6-26-15

We closed our last shop because emotionally we could not continue on. Saddened, broken, and traumatized by the events surrounding and including the loss of our beloved daughter, we also had to deal with being publicly mocked and scorned by the undiscerning.

Email to a reporter from Leilani and Dale Neumann, faith-healing parents convicted in 2009 of reckless homicide for letting their daughter Kara die of untreated diabetes, announcing they’ve opened a coffee shop in Rothschild, Wis.
Wausau Daily Herald, 6-24-15

We know who you race mixing whores and sympathizers are. We have been watching you for years, writing down your addresses and license plate numbers, and taking your pictures for our data bases. Do not come running to us for help when those animals have kicked in your front door in the middle of the night and have raped and

murdered your children!
“God Give Us Men” flier urging boycotts of specific businesses that was distributed for Father’s Day by the Traditionalist American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Pryor Creek, Okla.
Pryor Creek Times, 6-22-15

I don’t believe there’s such a thing as an atheist. Because there’s too much documentation. Our calendars are based on Jesus Christ.
“Duck Dynasty” star Si Robertson, interview with the Christian Post
The Raw Story, 7-6-15



Phil Hands © Wisconsin State Journal

FFRF on the road



New Mexico

Co-President Dan Barker visited FFRF’s Albuquerque chapter on June 27 and talked about his new book *Life Driven Purpose* and FFRF activities. With Dan are former chapter president Ron Herman and new president Angela Combs. Botts Hall in the Special Collections Library was nearly full of chapter and community members and area FFRF members getting acquainted with the chapter.



Superior freethought

Co-President Dan Barker discussed FFRF’s recent legal activity, his new book *Life Driven Purpose* and more July 5 with the Lake Superior Freethinkers, FFRF’s chapter in Duluth, Minn. From left are Tom Patten, Bobbie Mistretta, Dan, Bill Guse, Dave Broman and Bill van Druten. (Thanks to Bill Guse for the fine accommodations at his lakeside cabin.)

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Craig Burden, 28, W. Lafayette, IN: Voyeurism using a camera or video device and vicarious sexual gratification involving a victim younger than 14. Burden was fired as worship and music pastor at Calvary Baptist Church after being arrested, a church spokesperson said.

Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputies were notified of the alleged offenses, Lt. Tom Lehman said. "It's not a one-time incident." He didn't specify where and when the alleged voyeurism occurred. *Source: Journal & Courier, 7-11-15*

Alexander Nealy, 36, Plant City, FL: Felony cargo theft. Nealy, pastor of Bay City Refuse Worldwide Ministries in Tampa and a truck driver, is charged with 5 other men with stealing merchandise meant to be delivered to stores.

"When Pastor Nealy realizes his warehouse has been broken into, he calls the Hillsborough Sheriff's Office to report a burglary and theft of his stolen property that he stole from Macy's and Bloomingdale's," Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said, adding, "You can't make this stuff up."

Nealy was arrested after detectives searched storage units and found more than 600 boxes of high-end designer purses, shoes, fragrances and clothing valued at about \$267,000. *Source: WFLA, 7-10-15*

Cameron Patterson, 26, Lake St. Louis, MO: 2 counts of child molestation. Patterson, a youth pastor at Ballwin Baptist Church and Wentzville School District employee, is charged with sexually assaulting an alleged victim between the ages of 12 and 17 hundreds of times over a period of 5 years.

Patterson allegedly apologized to the female victim on multiple occasions by email, court documents said. One email said, "I have seen reports of teachers and youth pastors being arrested for having inappropriate and often sexual relationships with a student, and I have asked myself the question if I am that teacher or youth pastor." *Source: St. Louis Today, 7-9-15*

An unidentified Catholic priest was charged with 9 sexual offenses alleged to have occurred in the 1980s in the Diocese of Lismore, **New South Wales, Australia.** The man is also a part-time police chaplain. *Source: NSW Police Force, 7-9-15*

Steven Lipford, 56, Euclid, OH: Rape, kidnapping and gross sexual imposition. At the time of the alleged crimes in 2007, Lipford was a church maintenance man. He's now pastor at Zion's Joy Empowerment Church.

He was linked to the alleged assault of a 21-year-old woman in the church basement after a rape kit was recently tested as part of a statewide initiative. He served prison time for a sexual battery conviction in 1990 involving a minor. *Source: Plain Dealer, 7-8-15*

Ryan S. Rodgers, 36, Central City, LA: Sexual battery and 7 counts of indecent behavior with juveniles. Rodgers was a youth minister at Liberty Park Baptist Church from 2003-09 and more recently served several churches in Orleans, Jefferson and Plaquemines parishes.

The male victims allege Rodgers sexually abused them for over a year, mainly in his apartment, and bought them underwear to pose in. There may be more victims, New Orleans police said. *Source: al.com, 7-1-15*

Brogenet Cinor, 48, Sunrise, FL: Sexual battery on a child less than 12. Cinor, who authorities said has been practicing as a voodoo priest for almost a decade, allegedly molested a girl in 2009 after she went with her mother to him to be cleansed of evil spirits.

Sunrise Police Officer Cindi McCue said police were notified in 2014 after the girl told her father what allegedly happened. Two other women had earlier alleged they were coerced into having sex because Cinor told them they were possessed, police said.

"This is a very concerning crime for us, especially because of the young age of the victim," McCue said. "She was 11 years old, engaging in sexual activity under the guise of fear." *Source: Sun Sentinel, 7-3-15*

Francisco J. García Rodríguez, 60, Autlán de Navarro, Mexico: 2 counts of sexual abuse. García Rodríguez, a Catholic priest, allegedly molested an 11-year-old girl twice in February while he was staying overnight with the girl's family in La Huerta. *Source: Yucatan Times, 6-30-15*

Jan R. Ostonal, 35, Mississauga, Ontario: 3 counts each of sexual exploitation and sexual assault. Ostonal, a youth pastor at the Keys of the Kingdom Ministries in Toronto, is accused of molesting a girl, now 17, between January 2012 and March 2015.

Police think there may be more victims.

Source: Hamilton Spectator, 6-30-15

Raymond P. Buhrow, 64, S. Middleton Township, PA: 2 counts each of indecent assault of a person less than 13 and unlawful contact with a minor, misdemeanor corruption of minors and misdemeanor indecent assault of a person less than 16. The alleged victims are sisters, now ages 16 and 14. Buhrow is accused of touching their breasts and genitals while he was pastor of Calvary Temple Holiness Church between 2009-14. *Source: WPMT, 6-29-15*

John J. Farrell, 62, Harden, Australia: Act of indecency against a person aged under 16, 18 counts of sexual assault and 8 counts of sexual assault of a person under 16. Details of the incidents weren't immediately released but allegedly occurred while Farrell was a Catholic priest at several parishes. He was ordained in 1981, with his last assignment ending in 1992.

The Diocese of Armidale settled suits in 1998 and 2005 in which 2 former altar boys accused Farrell of molesting them. *Source: Armidale Express/Eureka Encyclopedia, 6-29-15*

Jeremy Mitchell, 26, Martinsville, IN: Child solicitation and 3 counts of sexual misconduct. Mitchell, youth pastor at Eastview Christian Church, is accused of having an inappropriate relationship with a girl under 16.

Mitchell has resigned, said Rick Miller, Eastview senior minister. "It's so hard to believe because it's so far out of character for him."

Mitchell declined Fox 59's interview request. *Source: WXIN, 6-29-15*

Robert Gamel, 64, Los Banos, CA: Possession of matter depicting sexual conduct of a person under the age of 18. Gamel, pastor of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, allegedly downloaded nude photos of a teen parishioner that the teen posted online, court records said.

Gamel told several people "about [his] anonymous Instagram account and how none of them would ever suspect who he was on Instagram," the affidavit said. He's been moved from the rectory to a location where he reportedly ministers to senior citizens. *Source: Los Banos Enterprise, 6-26-15*

James Rapp, 76, already incarcerated in Oklahoma for molesting teen boys, was charged in **Jackson, MI**, with 6 counts of criminal sexual conduct in addition to 13 similar counts filed in May. Charges stem from alleged incidents when he was a priest working at Lumen Christi Catholic High School from 1980-86. *Source: mlive.com, 6-26-15*

Leroy Lowe, 50, Arlington, TX: Suspicion of sexual assault on a child by one in a position of trust, sexual exploitation of a child and child enticement. Lowe was arrested on a Colorado warrant for alleged incidents last Valentine's Day weekend with a 17-year-old female member of Potter House Church in Denver, where he was executive coordinator.

Family members alleged he was banned from the church before being fired in March. *Source: Denver Post, 6-25-15*

John Tovey, 64, Napier, New Zealand: Indecent assault and 2 counts of sexual violation. Tovey, an Anglican priest, is charged with alleged incidents with a female between April 2014 and Jan. 2.

Bishop of Waiapu Andrew Hedge has suspended Tovey's "permission to officiate" indefinitely. *Source: Dominion Post, 6-24-15*

James Callozzo, 73, Youngstown, OH: 3rd-degree sexual imposition. Callozzo, pastor of Nativity of Christ Ukrainian Orthodox Church, is charged with following an 18-year-old man into a Perkins restaurant bathroom, talking explicitly about the younger man's genitals and grabbing them. *Source: Post-Gazette, 6-23-15*

Todd Christian Hartman, 32, Newport Beach, CA: 3 counts of possessing and distributing child pornography. Hartman, a youth pastor at Vineyard Church, was arrested at a home he shares with his mother, where a search allegedly turned up about 300 images and 400 videos of children as young as 8 in sexually explicit positions.

Hartman was scheduled to go on a youth retreat but was barred after investigators notified church officials about his online activities. *Source: Orange County Register, 6-19-15*

Jose M. Zamarripa, 27, Ogden, UT: Aggravated sex abuse of a child, sexual exploitation of a minor and dealing harmful materials to a minor. Zamarripa was choir director at Rios De Agua Viva church when he allegedly became sexually involved with a 12-year-old girl from the church. Police Lt. Lane Findlay said the complaint alleges they exchanged sexually explicit



notes, text messages and nude photos. *Source: good4utah.com, 6-18-15*

Jacob D. Kepple, 35, Scottsville, VA: 2 counts of taking indecent liberties with a child by a custodian. Kepple was youth pastor at First Baptist Church in Charlottesville at the time of the alleged incidents between 2009 and 2012. He resigned in July 2014.

Authorities said the alleged victim, now an adult, participated in church activities that Kepple oversaw. *Source: Newsplex, 6-16-15*

Reynaldo H. Nevarez, 23, Ontario, CA: Sodomy with a person under 14 years, continuous sexual abuse of a child under 14, forcible lewd acts upon a child, rape by foreign object, oral copulation/sexual penetration with a child 10 years or younger. Nevarez met the alleged victim when Nevarez was a volunteer at Iglesia Fuente de Vida church. The abuse allegedly continued for about 4 years. Nevarez teaches private music lessons to students he meets at churches, the affidavit said. *Source: Inland Empire News, 6-10-15*

Peter J. Hercock, 71, Nelson, New Zealand: Unlawfully entering a building, 2 counts of rape and 5 counts of indecent assault of a child under 16. Hercock, a former Catholic priest and chaplain at Sacred Heart College, allegedly molested 3 girls at schools in the 1970s and 1980s. He left the priesthood in 1981.

The diocese paid \$25,000 to a former pupil in 2003 after she claimed she was molested by Hercock, then talked into having sex with him in the 1970s when she was 18. *Source: Nelson Mail, 6-8-15*

Darrell Ranel, 56, Baton Rouge, LA: 2 counts of aggravated rape. Ranel, director of Black Creek African Methodist Episcopal Church, is accused of raping a girl when she was 11 in 2014. He'd allegedly been in a relationship with the girl's mother. *Source: Times-Picayune, 6-8-15*

Pleaded / Convicted

Christopher McKenzie, 51, Costa Mesa, CA: Guilty by jury of 20 felonies, including lewd acts with children under 14, using and attempted using a minor for sex acts, distributing pornography to a minor, possession of child pornography and attempted lewd acts on a child under 14. McKenzie, a Sunday school volunteer at Rock Harbor Church, was convicted of assaulting or attempting to assault 6 boys as far back as 1996.

His accusers testified how he groomed them by going to movies, buying them fast food or paying them to watch pornography with him. He used a story about an artist needing nude models to persuade them to pose naked in his apartment.

They testified he would rub them with oil during photo shoots and touch their genitals. A victim testified he was molested from age 8 to 16. *Source: Daily Pilot, 7-1-15*

Timothy Bariteau, 37, Brookings, SD: Guilty by jury of sexual contact with a child under the age of 16. Bariteau, former pastor

at Morningside Community Church, was arrested in California, where he had been living. The crime allegedly occurred in April or May 2014 when he was a Morningside pastor. *Source: KDLT, 6-25-15*

Geronimo Aguilar, 45, Richmond, VA: Guilty by jury in Ft. Worth, TX, of 2 counts each of aggravated sexual assault of a child and indecency with a child and 3 counts of sexual assault of a child under 17. Aguilar was charged with having sex with sisters ages 11 and 13 in 1996-97 when he was pastor at New Beginnings International Church in Ft. Worth.

He later founded the Richmond Outreach Center but was fired in 2014 after being indicted. The older sister testified the abuse lasted for 2 years and included rape. *Source: AP, 6-24-15*

Jeffery London, 51, Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Guilty by jury of using a cell phone to lure an underage boy into sexual activity. London, youth pastor at Bible Church of God and dean of students at Eagle Academy charter school, was charged federally after a jury found him not guilty of 27 child sex abuse charges involving several boys in state court last year.

The victim, now 20, testified at the federal trial that London began molesting him from the time he was 7 until he was 16. "Can I get some daddy action tonight?" said a text message he sent the boy in 2011. "How about doing me up a little in the car and I will give u extra 5.00," London wrote in another text, an affidavit said.

Two other young men testified London forced them into oral sex and attempted or had anal sex with them. He didn't take the stand in his own defense. He allegedly molested dozens of boys, including several who lived with him in the unlicensed foster home he called "London's hotel." *Source: Sun Sentinel, 6-16-15*

Mark Haynes, 56, West Chester, PA: Pleaded guilty to using the Internet to entice a minor to engage in sexual conduct, transfer of obscene material to a minor, distribution of child pornography, possession of child pornography and destruction or concealment of evidence. Haynes was parochial vicar at Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 2010 when he posed as a 16-year-old girl on a teen dating site.

Posing as "Katie," he asked girls for sexually explicit photos. He was also charged with online distribution in 2014 of images and videos of children being sexually assaulted, again posing as "Katie." *Source: Pottstown Mercury, 6-8-15*

Sentenced

John A. Pinkston, 78, Dallas, GA: 10 years in prison and 10 years on probation after he was found guilty by a jury of child molestation and sexual battery. Two minor girls testified Pinkston touched them sexually in 2014 at Congregation of God Seventh Day, a church he founded and led.

"Not only did he not take responsibility, when he took the witness stand, he spit in everyone's face with the nonsense that he used to try to manipulate that jury," Cobb County Assistant D.A. Chuck Boring said in a statement. *Source: Journal-Constitution, 7-10-15*

Colman McGrath, 76, Glasgow, Scotland: 200 hours of community service, 3 years' probation and placement on the sex offender registry after admitting indecent assaults on 3 boys between 1972-82. Two victims were seminarians and the other belonged to the Catholic parish where McGrath was pastor.

"The Archdiocese of Glasgow wishes to apologize to the victims of Father Colman McGrath," a statement said. *Source: BBC News, 7-1-15*

‘She was 11 years old, engaging in sexual activity under the guise of fear.’ — Cindi McCue, Florida police officer

Ralph W. Barnett, 74, Peoria, IL: 3 years in prison after pleading guilty to aggravated criminal sexual abuse. Barnett, pastor at Bethel Presbyterian Church, told the judge he stopped

molesting the preteen girl on his own after 5 years and was remorseful.

Judge David Brown scoffed at Barnett's claim he "just happened" to begin abusing the girl in 2003 and then just stopped in 2008. "It doesn't 'just happen' that you enter into a sexual relationship with a child for several years," Brown said.

The victim didn't tell her family till about 2013. *Source: Journal Star, 6-25-15*

Omar Johnson, 34, St. Andrew, Jamaica: 2 years in prison on each of 2 counts of fraudulent conversion, to be served concurrently. Johnson, pastor of Bethel Seventh-day United Church, was accused by a 54-year-old complainant of fraud involving 5 vehicles she owned and \$60,000 she allegedly gave him to buy a music system for the church.

Johnson's lawyer Charles Williams asked the court to consider that his client has paid the complainant \$80,000, had prayed and had no previous conviction.

"He pleaded guilty, showing remorse, and he has been in custody for three months now. He can do better; there is hope for him." *Source: Jamaica Observer, 6-24-15*

Michael Blanchard, 56, Norfolk, VA: 10 months in prison after pleading guilty to making false statements. Blanchard, pastor of Corner Stone Christian Center since 1992, submitted disability compensation claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of 90 veterans, acting without their knowledge and forging their signatures.

He asked that checks be mailed to his address but none were ever sent.

At sentencing he told the judge, "I was wrong. I lost my way." *Source: Virginian-Pilot, 6-24-15*

Derrick "Duke" Hampsch, 35, Vincennes, IN: 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to sexual misconduct with a minor. Hampsch, youth pastor at First Baptist Church, was charged with molesting a girl in 2010 at a church event in Anderson when she was under age 14.

Hampsch has pleaded not guilty in a Knox County court to similar charges in Vincennes. *Source: Herald Bulletin, 6-23-15*

Israel Berrios-Berrios, 59, Naranjito, Puerto Rico: 11 years in prison after pleading guilty to transporting a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual conduct in 2008. Berrios-Berrios, who was a priest and director of a Catholic school at the time, was charged with taking a 15-year-old altar boy on a 4-day cruise to the Bahamas. *Source: AP, 6-18-15*

Francis W. Cable, 83, Sydney: 16 years in prison on convictions for raping at least 17 boys over a period of 15 years. Cable, also called Brother Romuald, was a teacher at a Catholic Marist Brothers school from 1960-74.

Victims and their relatives cheered after he was sentenced. "You have the mark of the devil on you, and I need to get the devil out of you and this is how I have to do it," Cable allegedly told a victim after raping him. *Source: Morning Herald, 6-18-15*

Cesar Chin, 65, Winter Springs, FL: 2 years' probation after pleading guilty to failure to report child abuse. The alleged perpetrator, **Normail R. Perez,** is charged with sexual battery on a child involving 3 girls during a period of at least 7 years. His wife, **Irma G. Torres,** is also charged with not reporting the abuse, even though she witnessed it at least once, deputies said.

Chin leads a Spanish-speaking congregation whose name translates roughly as "Church of Jesus, Our Only Hope." *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 6-17-15*

Walter Masocha, 51, Stirling, Scotland: 250 hours of community service and registration on the sex offender registry for a year. Masocha, a Zimbabwe native and founder of Agape for All Nations Church, was found guilty of sexually assaulting the deaconess of the church and of kissing and fondling a 14-year-old girl between 2012 and 2014.

The deaconess, who can't be identified, cried after sentencing. "He molested me and now he walks free," she said. "So many other women who he has attacked will now not come forward because they are scared of what may happen. These women will think, what is the point?" *Source: New Zimbabwe, 6-16-15*

Alan Baker, 78, Loudwater, UK: 54 months in prison after pleading guilty to possession of indecent images and 4 counts of indecent assault. Baker used his position of trust as a church elder in Wooburn Green to "engineer" meetings with 2 children in the 1970s and 1980s, the court heard.

Police found photos and videos during a 2014 search of Baker's home. Judge John Cole said Baker had edited several videos, superimposing his own head on the body of someone molesting children. Several boxes and bags filled with boys' underwear were also found. *Source: Bucks Free Press, 6-15-15*

Derek Hutter, 38, Garland, TX: 10 years to life in prison after pleading guilty to child enticement. Hutter, youth pastor at South Garland Baptist Church, met the victim, age 13 in 2014, at church and convinced her to send him sexually explicit photos of herself. They then started a "continuous" sexual relationship at the church

and at his home. *Source: WFAA, 6-10-15*

William R. Best Jr., 48, Valley Grande, AL: 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to 1st-degree rape and incest. Best was pastor at Living Waters Worship Center until April 2014, when he was charged with having sex with a minor multiple times, starting when the victim was 14. *Source: al.com, 6-9-15*

Clint M. Landry, 58, Fairbanks, AK: 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to attempted enticement of a minor. Landry, a Catholic priest at Sacred Heart Cathedral, was suspended in 2014 after a janitor read an open email on a public computer in Landry's living space. The email included a sexually explicit image of a 13-year-old girl.

That led to an investigation which revealed Landry had negotiated the cost of viewing live pornography with a Filipino contact multiple times in 2013-14.

"In at least three of these communications, the defendant sought access to sex shows involving children younger than 11," prosecutors said. *Source: Dispatch News, 6-8-15*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

A Perth, Australia, man is suing trustees of the **Christian Brothers** and the **estates of 7 individuals**, alleging he was physically and sexually abused by **Brothers Verdon, Dick and Daly** between 1971-1973 at Castledare Boys Home.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has heard from 11 former residents of the facility. They named 16 Christian Brothers as alleged abusers. *Source: Yahoo News, 7-2-15*

"John J. Doe" and "John Doe 2" filed suit in Cook County Circuit Court against the **Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago**, alleging they were molested by convicted former priest **Daniel McCormack** between 2002-04 when he coached St. Agatha Parish basketball teams.

McCormack was defrocked in 2007 and has been living at a state-run mental health facility since his release from prison. *Source: CBS Chicago, 6-19-15*

"John Doe" filed suit against the **Archdiocese of Chicago**, alleging defrocked Catholic priest **Norbert Maday**, now 77, molested him at St. Bede the Venerable starting in 1979 when Doe was a 10-year-old altar boy and continuing until 1981.

The complaint alleges that Maday had boys sit on his lap while he drove his car, gave them alcohol, watched pornographic movies with them and set up an electronic game system in his bedroom to lure boys there.

Maday is a registered sex offender now living in Wisconsin. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 6-12-15*

Legal Developments

Modern Orthodox Rabbi **Barry Freundel**, 63, is appealing a 78-month prison sentence after a guilty plea in May for secretly recording 52 women in various stages of undress in a District of Columbia synagogue's ritual bath. The appeal contends the sentence was wrong because the recording was a single discreet act, not 52 separate ones and that he should get no more than a year in prison.

The prosecution countered that Freundel was told he was pleading guilty to 52 individual counts of voyeurism and that by doing so he faced a maximum sentence of 52 years, adding that crimes committed against separate victims are not usually merged into a single sentence. *Source: FailedMessiah.com, 7-10-15*

A **North Carolina** Court of Appeals pan-

el ruled the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine doesn't require dismissal of a suit by alleged abuse victim "John Doe 200" against Bishop **Michael Burbidge** and the **Raleigh Catholic Diocese**. The suit alleges Fr. **Edgar Sepulveda** of Santa Teresa Mission engaged in sex acts with a 16-year-old boy, who went to police in 2009. Sepulveda, 52, was charged but the case was dismissed in 2012. He has been removed from public ministry. The plaintiff is now an active-duty U.S. Marine. *Source: The Robesonian, 7-9-15*

The judge said Baker had edited several videos, superimposing his own head on the body of someone molesting children.

A "well-known" **rabbi from northern Israel** accused by at least 8 women of sexual assault was arrested at Ben-Gurion Airport on his way out of the country. The rabbi was due to be identified by the press after the Nazareth District Court permitted publication of his name, but the issue was appealed to the Supreme Court. He remains in custody. *Source: Arutz Sheva, 7-8-15*

Eliezer Berland, 77, apparently fled the Netherlands after the Dutch Supreme Court denied his appeal of an Israeli extradition order and he was told to report to police. Rabbi Berland left Israel after being accused by several alleged victims of sexual assault. He was arrested in September 2012 during a layover at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport on his way from South Africa to Ukraine.

Prosecutors suspect Berland went to a country that doesn't have an extradition treaty with Israel. *Source: Yeshiva World News, 7-6-15*

The **Connecticut** Supreme Court upheld a \$1 million award in a clergy abuse case and rejected an argument by the Catholic **Archdiocese of Hartford** that a 2002 law extending the statute of limitations was unconstitutional. A jury in Waterbury awarded a former altar boy \$1 million in 2012, deciding that Fr. **Ivan Ferguson** molested him. Ferguson died in 2002.

The archdiocese claims it first learned of Ferguson's proclivities in 1979 when he taught at Northwest Catholic High School. At the trial, testimony showed that when former Archbishop John Whealon confronted him, Ferguson admitted to the abuse and was sent to a Massachusetts treatment facility. Two years later, Whealon appointed him director of a Derby parochial school.

Ferguson was later accused of abusing Doe and his childhood friend at the church rectory in Derby. *Source: Hartford Courant, 6-26-15*

The **Minnesota** Supreme Court reinstated the sexual misconduct conviction of St. Paul Catholic priest **Christopher Wenthe**, who has already served a 1-year sentence for taking advantage of a 21-year-old woman in 2003 who came to him for counseling. The state Court of Appeals had ordered a new trial.

Dissenting Justice Alan Page [a former Minnesota Viking] said the appeals court got it right: "Like possession of a knife, which is not criminal until it occurs within a school zone, sexual penetration by a member of the clergy is not criminal unless and until it coincides with a meeting at

which spiritual counsel is sought or received." *Source: Star Tribune, 6-14-15*

Thomas Belczak, 61, resumed his duties as pastor at St. Kenneth Catholic Church in **Plymouth, MI**, after an investigation by the FBI and Archdiocese of Detroit determined he wouldn't be criminally charged with theft. "Father is not a thief. Father will never be a thief," said parish-ioner Robert Frigerio. "I'm 73 years old, and I'm in tears."

Belczak was removed in October after suspicions arose he was involved like his brother **Edward Belczak**, a priest in Troy, was with financial improprieties. Edward Belczak and his church administrator, Janice Verschuren, were indicted in 2014 on allegations they stole about \$700,000 from St. Thomas More Church in Troy.

Thomas Belczak agree to work with a delegate appointed by the archdiocese in order to better scrutinize parish finances. *Source: Detroit Free Press, 6-20-15*

Larry Jones, 66, McAlester, OK, was fired as Missionary Baptist Church pastor after being charged last year with possessing obscene or indecent writings for his sexual fantasy involving 3 girls as young as 6 from the church. His wife called police after discovering the story, but Jones is fighting the charge as infringing on the First Amendment. There's no indication he acted on the fantasy.

District Judge James Bland heard oral arguments, ordered written briefs and chided prosecutors for not amending the charging language as advised. "The state has the ability to refile with amended language."

The state contended in its rebuttal that "obscene material is not protected speech." *Source: News-Capital, 6-22-15*

Jozef Wesolowski, 66, the defrocked former apostolic nuncio to the Dominican Republic, was admitted to intensive care in a Rome hospital the day before his trial was to start in a Vatican courtroom. His illness or condition weren't disclosed.

He's the first high-ranking prelate to be criminally charged by the Holy See and has been under house arrest for possessing child pornography and alleged sexual assaults on youths on the island nation, where he was recalled from in 2014. *Source: news.va, 6-15-15*

Allegations

Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office investigators removed documents and equipment in June from St. Bernardine Monastery in Holidaysburg, where a Franciscan friar accused of molesting children fatally stabbed himself in 2013. Brother **Stephen Baker**, 62, was a religion teacher and coach at Catholic facilities in several states and was athletic trainer at Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown from 1992 to 2001.

Nine days before he died, the Diocese of Youngstown, OH, said it settled with 11 former students who claimed Baker molested them while at John F. Kennedy High School in Warren from 1987-90.

"In my opinion, there were individuals who knew about Stephen Baker and didn't take proper action," said plaintiffs' attorney Richard Serbin of Altoona.

The investigation may be expanding to the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese, where more than 20 clerics have been accused of assaulting children over nearly 30 years, sources said. [See related item below under "Other" category.] *Source: Tribune-Review, 6-26-15*

Senior **Irish Catholic Church leaders** set up inquiries into sexual abuse by clergy solely to protect the church from scandal, Seán Brady, now cardinal and former primate of All Ireland, told an inquiry into historical abuse in Northern Ireland. He and others were sworn to secrecy about the tribunals so that the "good name" of the church could be protected, Brady said.

Brady was testifying about Fr. **Brendan Smyth**, a serial child rapist who continued to abuse for decades after the church learned that he was a pedophile. The commission also heard testimony that the Garda Síochána and the Republic's health service were aware of allegations about Smyth as far back as 1973.

Smyth admitted in 1994, the year he was sentenced, that he'd molested "between 50 and 100 children. That number could even be doubled or perhaps even more." That comment wasn't made public till now, said inquiry counsel Joseph Aiken.

He died in 1997 at age 70 of a heart attack in the prison exercise yard. The Norbertines held his funeral before dawn and covered his grave with concrete to deter vandalism. *Source: The Guardian, 6-25-15*

Steve Karro, 55, Miami Beach, FL, charged in May with lewd and lascivious molestation of a child under 12, is shown on video handing the alleged victim's mother an envelope said to contain \$500 several days before his arrest, sources said. Karro, substitute rabbi at Shaare Ezra Sephardic Synagogue, "intentionally touched/grabbed the buttocks" of an 11-year old girl in April, according to the arrest report, for "cleansing" because she was showing "negative energy."

The mother gave the envelope to police, said her attorney, Jeff Herman. "This family has

Continued on page 22



Letterbox

Amazing, gracious describe Anne Gaylor

A lovely lady was seated alone, next to an empty chair in the back of the hall. I approached and asked, “Are you Anne Nicol Gaylor?”

“Yes, I am,” she replied. Excitedly, I exclaimed how happy I was to meet her and added that I wished I knew her much sooner. She smiled a knowing smile at me. Softly, I sat down next to her.

I had come a long way through unfathomable religious evil, plus a long train and bus ride, to attend this conference. She shared a private conversation. Two moms, two Annes. I will always treasure this chance meeting. It was unexpected and delightful.

Many of us had spent a lifetime wanting to sing out the truth. She did it for us. Her knowledge, her grace, her words, are a gift for all of humanity, forevermore.

Thank you, Anne Nicol Gaylor! Our love is with you.
Ann F. Slowey
Pennsylvania

Anne sped our ‘salvation’ from religion

It is sad to know that another free-thinker/atheist has left this world. It is also inspiring to remember all the positive things Anne Gaylor gave to so many of us. She made an enormous contribution to my life and my late husband Marvin’s. Having been fundamentalist Christian, becoming a free-thinker is a life-changing event.

Anne wanting her tombstone to read “Feminist — Activist — Freethinker” reminds me that I became a free-thinker/atheist after studying women’s history. Understanding how women were/are discriminated against by all religions changed my thinking about god and “man’s” religions. No human was born of a man and yet they claimed superiority.

All my resentments about my place in the church surfaced and I left it. Marvin followed as he would not go to church without me. It took him longer to totally reject religion. He enjoyed the music. I could not tolerate the words to the music.

So I thank Anne and everyone at FFRF and others who contributed to our “salvation” from religion. Her life was a testament to her humanity and care for others. She lived a good life and we will miss her.

The meadowlark is singing its song to the world. Anne sang her song. Many have listened to it and have/had a better life for her song of “Freedom From Religion.” Thank you, Anne.
Freda Van Houten
Arizona

• • •

I never met Anne Nicol Gaylor in person but knew much of her work, especially regarding equal rights for women and medical help for poor women (I assume against great odds sprinkled with some degree of ignorance). Her intelligence and courage inspired many others to join the struggle for justice. My condolences to Anne’s family and friends.

What has and is happening to women in the name of religion is so appalling. The worst of all human behavior (religious fanaticism) still prevails in much of the world and to some degree here at home. Women’s clinics

that perform abortions are being shut down in some states.

I’m happy that FFRF has provided funds for Taslima Nasrin to relocate to the U.S. That she lives under a death threat for espousing atheism clearly shows how religion can bring out the vilest human impulses. I’m sure she’ll be happy to be among many friends in America and the threat of death will be largely lifted from her shoulders.

Fred Rakevich
Washington

Freethought Today hard to manipulate

I love Freethought Today and enjoy the entire publication, so much that I hesitate to make a suggestion, which has nothing to do with the content. This may sound petty, but the dimensions of the paper are very difficult for me to manage at times. It is larger than a magazine format, not as wide as a newspaper and the folding for mailing purposes makes it, in my humble opinion, awkward to manipulate. I realize that if it were smaller it may change the size of the print or drastically diminish the content.

I honestly know nothing about such things, and maybe I am the only person who has a problem with this, but I believe somebody much smarter than myself can figure out a way to make holding and reading such an awesome and informative piece of work even more enjoyable.

Steve Mills
South Carolina

Editor’s note: We’re sorry for the inconvenience and will keep your suggestion in mind if at some point our printer offers another tabloid size option.

Bonnie Annie Laurie v. the ‘Irish gorilla’

I normally avoid Fox News like the plague, but when I got the email that Annie Laurie would be on “Hannity,” I set my VCR (yes, I still have one, and it works) to catch the 1 a.m. showing.

It’s too bad they only had you up there for such a short time, but you held up well, considering you had to face down not only the “Irish gorilla” (as Al Franken once called Hannity) but Todd Starnes and Wild Bill Donohue!

And if you’d been there a few minutes longer, you would have faced down Geraldo as well!

Andrew C. Jones
Michigan

• • •

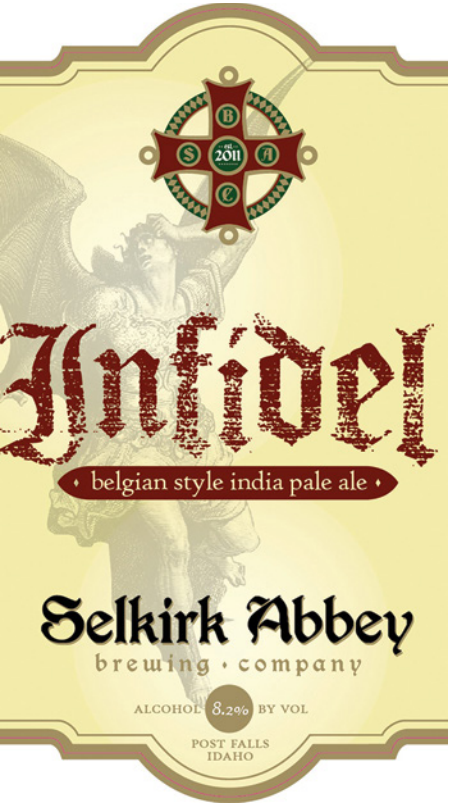
I sent this to Mr. Hannity tonight:
Your discussion of the Ten Commandments at the Oklahoma Capitol was a complete disgrace. It was three male bullies never allowing Annie Laurie Gaylor to finish a sentence. Is this Christian behavior at its best or sexist male behavior at its worst?

Dick Hewetson
California

Hands that help better than lips that pray

My wife and I look forward to lunches and tutorial Xbox sessions with Jason, our 5-year-old nephew. He’s a quick study and loves learning new things.

On July 4, he grabbed his favorite LEGO video game and I rolled a chair up next to him in front of the moni-



It’s not for the masses

“With a name like that, this may just become my new favorite beer!” writes Gary Bennett, Idaho. The brewery calls Infidel “unbowed and unrepentant. This free spirit makes no apologies and asks for no forgiveness.”

tor. I told him he should try playing by himself, and if he had any trouble, I would help him. His response: “My momma said I should ask God when I need help.”

Considering his momma doesn’t read the bible, doesn’t own a bible and is unchurched, I was caught a little off guard; although it did occur to me that she has a generic rendering of the Last Supper hanging in her kitchen, gift from a Catholic aunt, who brought a bunch of them up from Mexico for nearly everyone on her side of the family.

Anyway, when Jason ambushed me with his newfound omniscient tutor, I said, “Well, let’s see how that works out for you.”

It wasn’t long before he found himself unable to construct a LEGO bridge to assist Indiana Jones and his partner trying to cross a hazardous obstacle. He shoved his controller at me in frustration and demanded, “Help me! I can’t make a bridge!”

I said, “Why don’t you ask God to help you?”

Without any hesitation he answered, “Because he’s not here! He’s up in the sky, in heaven!”

“Listen carefully: You’re way too smart to be relying on infantile paradoxical apologetics!”

“All right,” he said, placing the controller gently into my palm. “Please show me how to make the bridge again.”

Later, en route to our local “fireworks extravaganza,” Jason was inexplicably content in the back seat with his Game Boy. We were waiting for the light to turn green when I noticed an SUV ahead of us filled with semantic anarchists. I recognized their official license plate frame immediately: NO RELIGION — JUST A RELATIONSHIP.

I tweaked the rearview mirror so I could observe Jason’s deep absorption in a Power Ranger struggle of apparent epic proportions. I wondered what kind of superstitious absurdity his license plate frame might convey a few years down the road.

“Hitchens was right,” I muttered. “Religion poisons everything.”

“Uh-huh,” echoed my wife, plucking an eyebrow in her visor mirror.

“What poison?” Jason asked, in a worried tone.

“Never mind,” we replied in unison.
Mike Middlesworth
California

Synagogue voyeur deserved what he got – prison

You probably know by now that the Washington, D.C., rabbi who recorded videos of women as they disrobed and participated in a ritual bath was sentenced to six and a half years in prison. What you may not know is that his attorney pleaded for him to not receive jail time but instead to be sentenced to “community service” because the man was “humiliated” and had lost his social status as a clergy member. Really? He was humiliated? Whose fault was that? And what “community service” would you entrust to such a person?

In America before the Civil War, there was a group of people who styled themselves the Nothingarians. Their motto was: “No God, no government, no marriage, no money, no meat, no tobacco, no skirts, no church, no war and no slaves!” I would gladly agree with them about religion, tobacco and slavery. All of the others ought to be negotiable on a case-by-case basis.

David M. Shea
Maryland

God’s cancer timing was just impeccable

Overheard while on vacation in Acadia National Park in Maine: While being seated for lunch at a restaurant, my wife and I were given a table next to a couple with an electronic bible. The man asked the woman to read from it before they ate their meal. “Which version do you want?” she asked. (I wish I had thought to suggest the Jefferson bible.) Then their conversation turned to her ailing 90-year-old father, who had gone to live in a nursing home and was recently diagnosed with cancer. The woman said, and I quote, “Isn’t it wonderful? God timed the cancer so perfectly.”

Tom Waddell
Maine

Gov. Haley’s slaying comment was out of line

While watching a news program dealing with the recent church slayings in South Carolina, I heard Gov. Nikki Haley say, “Now these blessed souls are in heaven.” I was taken aback that an elected official would blatantly infringe on the “separation of church and state” principle.

I am always saddened and disgusted when people take it upon themselves to kill others in the name of hate. However, this does not give our elected officials the right to profess their views publicly on religion.

Linda Mills
Washington

Another ‘in your face’ religious experience

I write to tell you of one of those “in your face” religion experiences that offended me and really should not exist. I speak of the [198-foot-high] cross erected at the junction of Interstates 57 and 70 near Effingham, Ill. I was a trucker for many years and often stopped in Effingham for fuel and coffee. There

was no escaping this damnable cross, which offends everyone passing by who is not a Christian. Self-righteous people think they are doing the world a favor by shoving erroneous religious ideas in everyone’s face. Like mushroom farmers, they keep people in the dark and cover them with B.S.

There is nothing we can do to remove the cross. It’s on private property and built with private funds. Let’s hope American Muslims will buy some roadside property in Effingham and erect a big sign stating “Jesus HATED that [BLEEP-BLANKETY-BLANK] cross.”

Keep up the good work separating church and state and I’m sure both God and Harry Truman would approve.

**Pete Buehler
Florida**

Editor’s note: Dan’s suggests Jesus HATED that Effing cross.”

To put it simply . . .

Thank God I’m an atheist!

**Eric Mead
Colorado**

Editor’s note: Thank you, Eric, for your new Lifetime Membership.

Priest spurred little girl’s turn to atheism

I was raised Catholic in a small town where Catholics were the minority. But they had enough power to require the school to send all Catholic children to religious instructions once a week, off school property, during the school day. We had two priests, both tall, silver-haired men, mean as hell. Each drove a brand-new black Cadillac.

My dad was the cook in our house. One night while making spaghetti, he realized he needed noodles and sent me to the store about a minute away. I had just reached the parking lot when a big black Cadillac driven by our very drunken priest headed straight at me. He slammed on his brakes, rolled down his window and yelled at me, “You — get over here.”

This was 1947 when I was 11. Kids did as they were told. When I got to the car, he reached out, grabbed my blouse and tore it down the front, yelling and calling me a “whore” and a “slut” and other names indicating I would soon join Satan in hell.

My dad, waiting for his spaghetti, came out on our front porch just in time to see the priest tear his daughter’s clothing. He took a flying leap off the porch and told me to “go home!” I think the priest’s body was saved from being beaten because he was so drunk.

You might think that would have gotten me out of attending religious instructions, but no such luck. I still had to face this sadist every week, still scared as hell. As far as I was concerned, I didn’t have to wait to get there, I already had a front row seat. I probably didn’t know it, but I became an atheist that day.

**Jeanne Owers
Texas**

There’s more to religious music than religion

Over the last several years, I have noticed a tendency in some summaries of FFRF actions to equate school music programs, particularly those involving choral and instrumental music delivered during the winter solstice season as having suspicious religious content.

This open atheist and former high

school music teacher must object to that characterization. The musical literature associated with the Christmas myth is among the most moving music ever conceived. Because of this “musical offering,” my students were able to perform the Heinrich Schütz “Wienachistorie,” a landmark piece of the early Baroque, and the Christmas section of Handel’s “Messiah” without the Hallelujah Chorus (which is a part of the Easter section, by the way). Each of these performances presented a learning environment for the students, unencumbered by a belief in the mythology of the religion to which they were dedicated.

The crucial element is not presenting these works as a testimony to religion, but as a testimony to art. If done that way, there is no conceivable reason why they should not be presented by a public school.

To me, there would be no question if “Amazing Grace” became the anthem of the school’s choral program, but as a representative of American hymnody, it does have relevance among an assortment of other songs and hymns of similar topic.

It is a fine line to walk for those of use who are not troubled by the god myth but who still recognize the greatness of art created within the sphere of that myth.

**Ken Harrison
California**

Editor’s note: Well-said, Mr. Harrison. David Randolph, FFRF honoree, Lifetime Member and director of the renowned (secular) St. Cecilia Chorus, made similar points in his 2009 Freethought Today piece, “No such thing as religious music.” (He died the next year at 95.) A caveat is that FFRF encounters way too many instances of public school staff and visitors from the outside pushing the boundaries and not acting “in good faith” in order to proselytize, especially with music in the lower grades.

Next seismic shift should be atheism

The Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage signifies a seismic shift. I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in New York City. Even in that bastion of progressivism, homosexuality was unmentionable in “polite” society. Now, 60% of Americans are good with gay marriage, and it’s become the law of the land. Seismic shift.

Other revolutionary social changes have occurred in my lifetime. In the civil rights era, for instance, when the South finally lost control over its former slaves, a century after losing the Civil War. Southerners now have black mayors, police chiefs, school superin-

tendents, business leaders. Seismic, baby. That was followed by a feminist revolution, when birth control became widespread and abortion legal, when divorce and single motherhood became socially acceptable, working women became the norm and professional women commonplace. Way seismic.

No revolution is total. Blacks are overrepresented in poverty and crime statistics. Women earn 77% of men’s pay. Gays will be fighting legal actions by the dead-enders for years. Racism, sexism and homophobia will live as long as human beings walk the Earth.

So what marginalized, oppressed group — agitating through these next two decades — will ride the next seismic shift into cultural acceptance? Why not us?

Atheists are certainly stigmatized enough, but we’re pushing back. Organizations like FFRF are mounting legal challenges and launching PR campaigns with media buzz, TV ads, billboards. Public figures are coming out. If my timetable is accurate, America could be swearing in its first openly atheist president any time after the 2032 election.

Let’s hope she’s black and gay.

**Marty Rush
Colorado**

‘666’ not allowed to start SS numbers

I came across this little “Did You Know?” item in the July/August issue of the AARP Bulletin: “Out Satan! Since beginning to assign card numbers, Social Security made sure that none would ever start with 666, the three digits labeled ‘the number of the beast’ in the Bible’s book of Revelation.”

That’s a revelation indeed! I guess whoever determined this also determined that 666 loses its evil power in the middle or at the end of the Social Security number, where it’s allowed.

**Joan Reisman-Brill
New York**

Op-ed helped mother accept my atheism

I read this [see clipping, “We are also free not to believe in God”] after my mother, who knows I’m an atheist and believes in her god, brought it back from Cape Cod, Mass. It was published in “The Cape Codder” in Brewster. She said, “This is a beautifully written article which has given me new insight into what you actually think as an atheist.”

She followed that with, “When you

first told me you don’t believe in God, I remember saying that I didn’t raise you that way. I was wrong to say that. You are free to believe or not believe and I now know that people don’t need to believe in God to be good!”

Those were amazing words to hear from her. We have had wonderful discussions about religion, and though neither of us will change our mind, it is a lot better now than it was when I first told her that I am an atheist.

Thanks for all you do!

**Lori Wieser
Florida**

Penance: ‘Go in peace and emit no more’

Gary Bennett forwarded this letter written by Gary Carlson, Boise, to the Idaho Statesman. It was headlined “Carbon confession.”

I just downloaded the pope’s environmental encyclical Laudato Si. I am already having nightmares about my future confessions:

Bless me father for I have sinned. In the past month I have used 1,500 kilowatt-hours of electricity, 25 therms of natural gas and 60 gallons of gasoline. I am sorry for these emissions and the carbon footprints of my past life.

The priest then replies: My son, I understand it is difficult to be holy and green. Seldom can we change completely overnight. I urge you to take small steps. For your penance turn up your summer thermostat to 90 degrees and your winter thermostat down to 60 degrees. Carpool once a week.

Our Holy Father will be visiting the United States this year. Please help him offset his own carbon footprint and assuage your guilt by donating \$10 to the Vatican Bank’s carbon credit fund. But please, never refer to it as a carbon indulgence. Go in peace and emit no more.

Yikes: ‘Christ-followers on every team’ scheme

Eric Tawney, Ohio, shared his letter to Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, written in response to FFRF’s legal complaint:

I recently read that your office awarded a \$300,000 grant to a Christian organization called Athletes In Action. I am very distraught that you believe your office has the right to grant money, paid for by me and fellow Ohioans, to a religious organization.

I am not a Christian and feel that you have violated my rights as an Ohio citizen by granting this money to a group that obviously promotes only Christian values and even states so on its website: “CHRIST-FOLLOWERS ON EVERY TEAM, EVERY SPORT, EVERY NATION THROUGH HELPING ATHLETES TAKE THEIR PASSION, FAITH AND SPORT TO NEW PLACES.”

I am shocked that, as an attorney sworn to uphold the laws of this great nation and our great state, you of all office-holders, believe this is legal. Please correct this obvious lapse in judgment.



What Is a Freethinker?

freethinker [free-thing-ker] *n.*

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

Black Collar Crimes

Continued from page 19

been attacked by members of the Jewish community,” Herman said. “They’ve been ostracized by some people.”

Karro told a reporter the money was for something else and said the mother knew what it was for and is targeting him for personal gain. *Source: WPLG, 6-22-15*

Nadine Dorries, 58, a Conservative member of Parliament and novelist, alleges she was molested in Liverpool at age 9 by the late Anglican vicar and family friend **William Cameron**. Dorries, whose stories detail child sexual abuse, said police were never told.

Dorries alleges it started when she went to the vicarage at Cameron’s invitation to look at his stamp collection and was also shown a Playboy magazine and photos of him and his wife having sex.

“It has taken me 49 years to talk about it,” she said. “It has been slowly coming out and each time I say the words it gets a bit easier.”

The Diocese of Liverpool in a statement said the allegations would be “thoroughly, appropriately and sensitively investigated.” *Source: Irish Independent, 6-8-15*

Removed / Resigned

Editho Mascardo was placed on administrative leave from Holy Family Catholic Church, **Modesto, CA**, due to allegations of inappropriate conduct with a minor. Bishop Stephen Blaire of the Diocese of Stockton said allegations were reported to police. No details of when and where the alleged conduct may have taken place were released.

Mascardo was ordained in 1983. *Source: Modesto Bee, 7-10-15*

Denis M. Heames, parochial administrator of St. Mary University Parish, **Mt. Pleasant,**

MI, was placed on administrative leave due to boundary violations related to his priestly ministry, Bishop Joseph Cistone of the Saginaw Catholic Diocese announced. “It is important to assure you that these actions in no way involved minors,” Cistone said.

The parish is on Central Michigan University’s campus. Heames was ordained in 2008. *Source: Midland Daily News, 7-7-15*

Jeremiah N. Murasso was placed on administrative leave from two Catholic parishes in **Waterbury, CT**, due to an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. Murasso was the former director of the now-closed Highland Heights orphanage and is a school and pastoral psychologist. *Source: New Haven Register, 7-2-15*

Ysrael Bien, Sherwood, OR, was put on administrative leave as pastor of St. Francis Catholic Church during an investigation of how a camera disguised as an electrical outlet ended up in a church bathroom. Bien hasn’t been charged but a search warrant was obtained for his computer, hard drive, USB flash drive, iPhone and iPods.

A church member found the camera April 26 and gave it to Bien, who didn’t contact police until May 20, when he reported it as stolen.

“Finding a hidden camera in a church restroom should have been the cause for prompt and decisive action,” Portland Archbishop Alexander Sample said in a statement. “It is deeply troubling that well-established church protocols for the protection of parishioners were not followed.” *Source: The Oregonian, 6-28-15*

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of **Gonzalo Galván Castillo**, 64, as bishop of the Diocese of Autlán, **Mexico**. Galván Castillo has been accused of covering up alleged abuse by Horacio López, a priest accused but never charged with assaulting an 11-year-old boy in

2002. *Source: AFP, 6-25-15*

Tullian Tchividjian, 42, grandson of evangelist Billy Graham, resigned as pastor at Coral Ridge Presbyterian, **Ft. Lauderdale, FL**, after admitting he had an extramarital affair.

In a statement, Tchividjian blamed “ongoing marital issues. As many of you know, I returned from a trip a few months back and discovered that my wife was having an affair. Heartbroken and devastated, I informed our church leadership and requested a sabbatical to focus exclusively on my marriage and family. Sadly and embarrassingly, I subsequently sought comfort in a friend and developed an inappropriate relationship myself.”

Tchividjian and his wife Kim were married in 1994 and have 3 children. In 2009, he succeeded the late James Kennedy as Coral Ridge senior pastor. Kennedy was an architect of the Religious Right.

Kim Tchividjian countered to a reporter that Tullian’s “statement reflected my husband’s opinions but not my own.” *Source: Washington Post, 6-21-15*

Marc Schneier, 56, rabbi of the Hampton Synagogue in **Westhampton Beach, NY**, has been expelled from the Rabbinical Council of America. Schneier was expelled due to allegations he had an extramarital affair with a congregant 5 years ago.

The woman with whom he’s said to have had the affair, Gitty Leiner, became his fifth wife. The alleged affair was disclosed in his divorce papers. *Source: Times of Israel, 6-7-15*

Other

David Kaczmarek, 53, hanged himself at St. Joseph’s Friary in Hollidaysburg, PA, the coroner’s office said. Kaczmarek was provin-

cial secretary. His body was found 2 days after the state Attorney General’s Office raided the nearby St. Bernardine Monastery, where a friar accused of molesting children killed himself in 2013. Kaczmarek was not a target of the investigation, a source said.

St. Bernardine’s and St. Joseph’s Friary belong to the Immaculate Conception Province of the Franciscan Friars.

“Over 30 years, I’ve identified over 90 child predators, but this person was not on my list,” said plaintiffs’ attorney Richard Serbin. “He is unfamiliar to me.” *Source: Tribune-Review, 7-1-15*

The **Anglican Church of Canada** apologized for the “immoral sexual behavior” of **Goichi Gordon Nakayama**, a British Columbia-based priest who ministered to the Japanese-Canadian community after World War II and later admitted to sexually abusing parishioners.

“I made mistake. My moral life with my sexual bad behavior. I sincerely sorry what I did to so many people,” he said in a confession to church leaders in 1994.

The church never contacted police or made the admission public. Nakayama was ordained in 1932 and left the church in 1995, the same year he died. *Source: CBC News, 6-15-15*

Pope Francis has created a **new Vatican tribunal** to hear cases of bishops who fail to protect children and vulnerable adults from abusive priests. The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, a group of 9 cardinals, put together the proposal approved by the pope.

The new office will be set up within the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Source: Vatican Radio, 6-10-15*

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

Sharing the crank mail

This issue of FFRF’s crank mail, printed as received, comes to you unsponsored, by any one denomination, for obvious reasons.

Religen: Because of people like you you have ruined our US just look back when they took god out of schools and government things started changing for the worst right down the gutter just look back I was very proud to be an American but know I hope you all go to hell. — *Frank Sheldon, Florida*

Sam Grover: In My opinion your as worthless as tits on a Bora hog! Maybe you should Pack your Bags And go fight with ISIS And get out of the Land of the free! — *No name*

Religion: May you and your organization burn in hell. — *Dirk Studebaker, Indiana*

Christianity abusers: I herd you assholes at people against Christians are starting you’re shit again. Whining and crying like a bunch of pussy bitches. Because sheriff Judd in FI was asked to and spoke at a Christian church. the least you lying bitches could do would be honest and say you only hate Christians and no one else. I love this sheriff. He had the balls to tell you Christian haters to fuck off. In case you people missed the interview I will say it all you people at FFR FUCK OFF! — *Jake Smittef*

Religion: Allow me to enlighten you because obviously you’re an ignorant piece of shit. The recognized religion of the United States has been Christianity for centuries. I want to see the sheriff wear his unifom while he preaches. Now you want to sue over that? You’re a leach. A worthless member of society. I hope you feel good about yourself when the city can’t afford a new library because you wanted to sue over this bullshit. Get a life, you worthless scum sucking piece of shit. — *Peter Goesinya, Florida*

Fraudulent org: Just look forward to the day when you have stripped Christianity from our land and Muslims take over. Try to run your disrespectful org then. I bet this org would fold and the brave atheist will turn toward Mecca in a flash of cowardice. — *L. Klotz, Katy, Texas*

Death of Founder: I am certainly sorry for your loss. As Anne Gaylor passed from this life and closed her eyes she did not cease to exist. She was sent to hell because she rejected Je-

sus Christ. Its too late for Anne but not for you. If you are reading this you can call out to Jesus right now and ask Him to forgive you and come into your heart. Please take time to talk with Him today! — *Barry Granger, Augusta, Ga.*

Anne: Glad Anne is dead! Bet she wishes there was a God now! Lol — *Billy Ray Goddfrey*

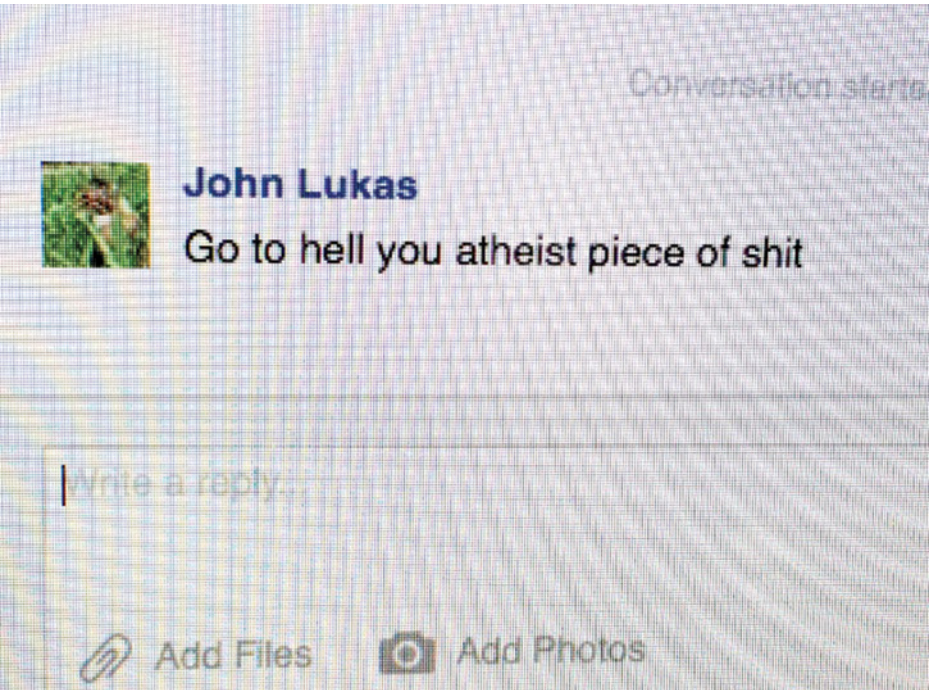
Big mountain montana: Why don’t you people stay in Wisconsin and mind your own business. Just a bunch of whining Liberals. I hope you all die in a fire!!!! — *Jason Cargill*

Leave our City Alone: Congratulations! You have succeeded in bringing a small little town in Alabama together as Christians. A Christian flag flying at our city hall went unnoticed most all days because we drive by everyday and don’t usually pay attention to something that has been there for years. You may think you have a victory! But my friend the only victory here is in Jesus Christ. Because our little town will ban together as the Christians we are. You have not heard the last of us. — *Michelle Bradley*

constitution: have any of you so called educated morons ever read the constitution?? the falsely claimed statement “separation of church and state” IS NOT IN THE CONSTITUTION! i have 2 copies of our constitution and I HAVE READ IT! this statement came from a letter between (I could be wrong on the exact names) benjamin franklin and another person explaining the FREEDOM OF RELIGION of citizens of and visitors too the united states of america. you bunch of hell bound morons!!! — *jon carry, zephyrhills, florida*

awesome Fox appearance: Caught your awesome act on Hannity. I’m always sad when I see someone so sexually hot that is so impossibly stupid. Since you’re so hot, I just hope you’re only brainwashed, and not really that insanely ignorant. So, in summary, you’re second only to Rachel Mad cow in the ability to make me vomit....but I would still.....with you. — *Michael Obama, Texas*

sherriff grady: He made a perfect example of how better the world could be if everybody was a christia. And by wearing. His uniform which he earned by the way. He showing an amazing example of what a christian should be. Ypur group threatening to sue him is now only ap-



paling but disgusting. Instead of trying to sue him. How about trying to help him out. Maybe invite him to talk law. At your next meeting. — *Patrick McCarthy, Florida*

President Obama: If you can sue sheriffs, why not take on the President! Scared? Why don’t you do so thing good, stop wasting money on the little things! Stop the president from shoving Islam down the throats of Christian Americans. — *C. Wolfe, Martinville, La.*

Butt Your Nose Out: Please mind your own business! I would say I’ll pray for you, but since you don’t like people to do that, how about “Fuck off”? — *Erica Seevers*

Hawkins Jesus sign: In case you didn’t pay attention in school, our county was founded on prayer and religion. When we take it out of school, we wind up with a bunch of whinny asses like you guys. I saw a man in a store last week with two small children wearing a tee shirt that said “SuperFucking Man”. I suppose that that is OK with you and perfectly normal and good for everyone since that is freedom of speech? This is where our piss poor nation is headed! — *Jake Benton, Texas*

Mind yalls Damm business: Mind yalls own Damn business and worry about whAt goes on around y’all and yalls beliefs are yalls leave ours alone. — *Johnathan Kaercher, Tyler, Texas*

Ffrf: Ya’ll shove it up,your ass. — *Alex Jones, Demopolis, Ala.*

The Ten Commandments: You god Satan is waiting for you in his flaming dominion and I hope you enjoy the heat. I choose to worship the TRUE GOD and neither You, the Courts or Obama the Muslim Beast can force me to do otherwise. GO TO HELL YOU EVIL BASTARDS! — *Thomas Greene*

Billboard: Y’all have that come out of the closet and build a billboard well, how about this fir a billboard? I’M PROUD TO BE A CHILD OF GOD!!! HE’S THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME!!! WITHOUT HIM, I WOULD BE NOTHING!!! I WOULD HAVE NOTHING!!!! WITH GOD, I HAVE ALL I’LL EVER NEED. HE IS MY EVERYTHING. Let’s see you fix a billboard of that!!! — *Karen King*

Gideon Bible: I was in a hotel and was shocked to see your sticker inside a Bible place there by the Gideons. How dare you put something in a book that doesn’t belong to you. If you don’t want to read it, then don’t. But I have the right to read that Bible if I want to. — *Patricia Goedecker*

whats up libtard scum: I have a sculpture of your prez made out of shit, it’s being sent to you by UPS. it’s fine art, enjoy and may GOD bless you LOL. — *kunt quiller, connecticut*

Kristin flipped first; soon it was mutual

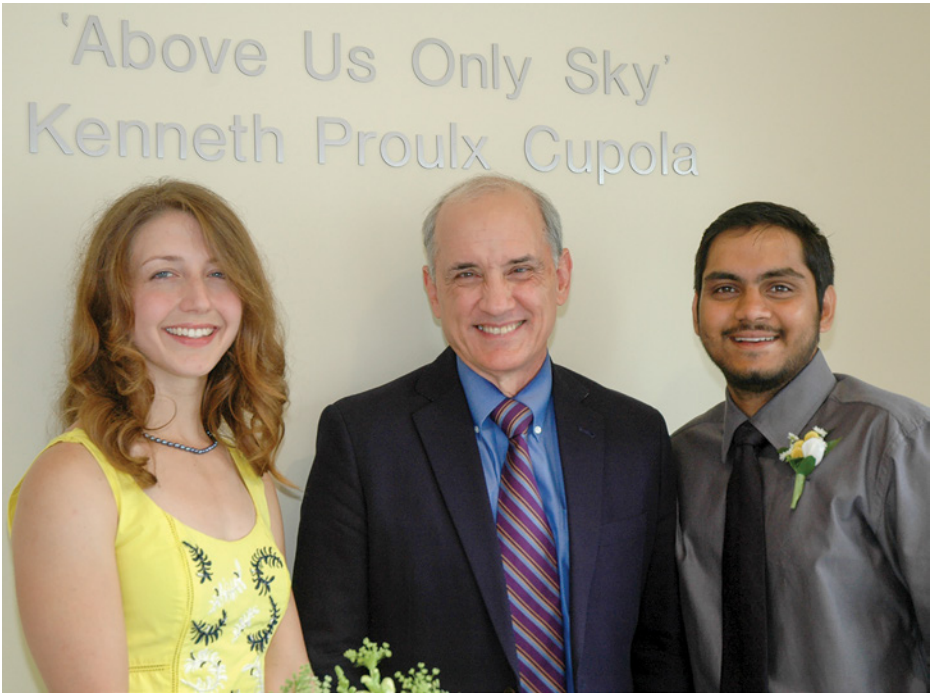
OFFICIANT DAN BARKER:

Welcome friends, families, and honored guests. We are here to celebrate love. Love organizes our large and sometimes unpredictable world. Because despite all of our differences, love is one thing we all share. It's the great unifier — our one universal truth. That no matter who we are, where we've come from, what we believe, we know this one thing: The greatest gift bestowed upon humans is the gift of love freely given between two persons.

All of us here today have our own love stories. Some are short, others long. Some are yet unwritten, while others are just getting to the good part. There are chapters in all of our stories that are sad or disappointing — and others that are exciting and full of adventure.

Varun and Kristin's love story began one spring evening on the banks of Koshkonong Creek. When Kristin flipped her kayak, Varun was there to help pick her up. Little did they know this would be the first of many times when one would be there for the other. Since then their romance has been fueled by coffee, Thai food and outdoor adventures.

Now here we are a little over a year later to celebrate the commitment they



Kristin Haider and Varun Ramesh with officiant Dan Barker in the “Above Us Only Sky” Kenneth Proulx Cupola. It attaches to the Charlie Brooks Auditorium in FFRF’s Freethought Hall addition, where the July 11 wedding was held. Betsy Moyer, friend of the couple, sang “All I Want Is You” by Barry Louis Polisar.

have made to each other. This is a time to pause, look back and smile at all the moments that brought them here. And a time to look ahead at all the moments that are still to come.

I'm here — we're all here — because we want those moments for you. We're here to hope with you, to support you, to be proud of you and to remind you that love isn't happily ever after, love is the experience of writing your story. It's not one moment, not even this moment. It's every moment. Big ones like saying “I love you,” moving in together, getting engaged, but mostly a million little ones that come in between the

big moments. Falling asleep next to one another, making dinner together, spending holidays with your families, gardening together, getting a big hug when you get home from work.

These everyday moments fuse together into one big experience. And even though this experience is so incredible, words fail us when we try and explain it. That's just the way it is with love — it's meant to be felt, not described.

But trying to describe love is one of our favorite pastimes. So today, we have some words about what love is, coming from one of the people who loves you the most.



Joining Kristin and Varun for this photo were Marlene Haider and longtime Minnesota FFRF member Bill Haider, the bride's parents, and Kristin's sister Liz, who gave a reading. The reception was held at Sardine restaurant in Madison.

PROMISES:

Kristin, will you have Varun to be your wedded husband, to share you life with him, and do you pledge that you will love, honor, and care for him in tenderness and affection through all the varying experiences of your lives?

Kristin: I will.

Varun, will you have Kristin to be your wedded wife, to share you life with her, and do you pledge that you will love, honor, and care for her in tenderness and affection through all the varying experiences of your lives?

Varun: I will.

VOWS:

Kristin and Varun [separately, to each other]: “You are my one true love.

I pledge my love to you and take you to be my [husband/wife]. I promise to love you through the good and the bad, the joy and the sorrow. I will be honest and faithful, and will make you coffee in the mornings. I promise to be patient and kind, and always respect you for who you are. I will support your choices and encourage you in pursuing your dreams. You will always be my best friend.”

PRONOUNCEMENT:

Now that Kristin and Varun have publicly pledged their love to each other before this community of witnesses, I now pronounce, by the authority invested in me and in me and in accordance with the laws of the state of Wisconsin, that they are husband and wife. Varun and Kristin, you may now kiss each other.

CLOSING:

As a blessing for Varun and Kristin, I want to close with these lines from an Apache Indian ceremony:

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other.

Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now there is no more loneliness.

Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you.

Go now to your dwelling to enter into the days of your life together.

And may your days be good, and long upon the earth.

PRESENTATION:

I now have the pleasure of introducing to you for the first time, as a married couple, Kristin Haider and Varun Ramesh.

This ceremony was composed by the couple, with contributions from Dan Barker.

Kristin and Varun are living in Madison. A Minnesota native, she works in the USDA Agricultural Research Service plant breeding and genetics lab on the UW campus as a biological science technician. She studied ecology at Penn State University and received her M.S. degree in 2014.

Varun is working on a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering at UW-Madison. He's originally from Hyderabad, India, where his parents, Ramesh Sampath and Jayasri Ramesh, and his sister, Ayesha Ramesh, live. He moved to Wisconsin in 2011 and received his master's in mechanical engineering in 2013.

Historic occasion

Puerto Rican writers Yolanda Arroyo Pizarro (left) and Zulma Oliveras Vega were married July 17 in the island's first-ever gay wedding. Luis Ramos, vice president of Humanistas Seculares de Puerto Rico (HuSe), officiated at Art D'Chocolat, a French restaurant. Ramos said, “Early last year, HuSe recognized that we would need to offer our LGBT friends and other atheists and nonbelieving couples easy access to weddings. Many couples feel that a wedding in front of a government judge is too bland, and there is no space for an exciting celebration. So we decided to obtain our secular wedding celebrant certificates. Since the U.S. Supreme Court decision, which applies to Puerto Rico as well, we have received an enormous number of wedding requests, and we are happy to oblige. Even though there's plenty of opposition from the religious majority on the island, we're ready to help anyone who wants a nonreligious wedding.”



Jesus Christ, supercharged

Robert Navrotski writes from Pennsylvania: “This was at a gun show I set up at in Berea, Ohio, at the fairgrounds. It must have been the nut who came up to my table and started to talk about how he can heal people with the power of Jesus. I asked him if he's allowed to be out in public by himself.”

Plan now for Freethought Hall grand opening, 38th annual convention, Oct. 9-11, Madison, Wis.

Ron Reagan, Taslima Nasrin, activists, authors featured

It's time to make plans to attend the Freedom From Religion Foundation's 38th annual national convention the weekend of Oct. 9-11, 2015, at **Mono-na Terrace Community and Convention Center**, 1000 Glen Drive, Madison, hotel rooms now to rent (see sidebar).



Irreverent newsmakers, authors, attorneys, commentators and music will be featured. Keynoter **Ron Reagan**, the “unabashed atheist, not afraid of burning in hell” featured in FFRF’s TV and radio ads, will speak at Friday night’s opening of the formal conference.

Before the conference Friday morning, from 9 to 11:30 a.m., will be the official grand opening of FFRF's five-story addition and renovation, including complimentary juice, rolls, coffee and tea in the Charlie Brooks Auditorium, and a self-guided tour with friendly staffers stationed throughout. Short films about Freethought Hall and its construction project and a memorial to FFRF principal founder Anne Gaylor will loop for those interested.

Legal and activist workshops will take place from 3 to 5 p.m. concurrently with a lakeside reception at the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed convention center. (See general schedule in sidebar.)

Speakers:

Joining Reagan as confirmed speakers are:

Taslima Nasrin, who has been under a fatwa for about 20 years from Bangladesh imams, was receiving escalating death threats and was on the same “hit list” as three atheist bloggers hacked to death on the streets of Bangladesh. She relocated from India with help from FFRF and the Center for Inquiry this June. She will receive FFRF’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award, reserved for public figures who “tell it like it is about religion.”



Nasrin had worked as an anesthesiologist in Bangladesh, became a poet and columnist and wrote a novel, *Shame* in 1993, when the first fawa was issued against her. She received a Free-thought Heroine Award from FFRF in 2002. Nasrin has said, "Religion is the great oppressor, and should be abolished."

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 FFRE, 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 Free-thought 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.

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.

To receive an expenses-paid trip to the convention, persuade your prayerful local governmental body to let you to give a secular invocation, and enter FFRF's Nothing Fails Like Prayer contest (see details on page 10 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 Free-thought Hall at Saturday's dinner, which will also include the annual drawing for "clean money" (pre-"In God We Trust").

General schedule

After the Friday morning tour of Free-thought 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/sightseeing 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.

Hotel accommodations:

To avoid disappointment, reserve your hotel rooms now at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace Hotel, 9 E. Wilson St., next door to the convention center. Phone toll-free to 1-866-403-8838 or locally at 1-608-255-5100. Room rates are \$169 single or double. The group code is FFRF, or book online at ffrf.org/convention2015/. The hotel site links directly to reservations. The cutoff is Sept. 7 or until rooms last.

Additional rooms are 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/trip/quad. Let them know you're with "Freedom From Religion" when you reserve your room there at 1-800-325-3535.

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.

Dessert is **Chocolate Lush Cake**, a flourless chocolate cake laced with real punch and finished with Irish Crème Anglaise. Specify if need gluten-free dessert.

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION'S <h1 style="margin: 0;">38TH Annual</h1> <h1 style="margin: 0;">NATIONAL CONVENTION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">October 9-11 2015</h2> MONONA TERRACE - MADISON WISCONSIN		
Return with payment to: FFRF, Attn: Convention, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701		
CONVENTION REGISTRATION	NUMBER REGISTERING	COST
FFRF member(s)	_____ x \$60	\$ _____
Non-member spouse or companion accompanying a member	_____ x \$65	\$ _____
Non-member(s) (Save \$5 by becoming an FFRF Member. \$40 Individual Membership)	_____ x \$100	\$ _____
Student(s)	_____ x \$10	\$ _____
FOOD REGISTRATION All meals but vegetarian are gluten-free. Indicate number of orders per entrée and check if you have gluten-free requirements.		
Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast Buffet	_____ x \$20*	\$ _____
Saturday Night Dinner	_____ x \$40*	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Champagne Tilapia	<input type="checkbox"/> Cranberry Chicken	<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable / Vegan Strudel
<input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free	<input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free	<input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free
*Includes 20% Gratuity & Sales Tax		
		Total \$ _____
Number planning to attend Freethought Hall Open House, Oct. 9, 9-11:30 am.		

Name	Please include names of all registrants
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Address _____ City / State / ZIP _____

Phone / Email

Contact information for in house use only.