

# Freethought Today

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## FFRF mourns its founder Anne Gaylor



Anne Nicol Gaylor in 1975.

Anne Nicol Gaylor, 88, principal founder of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, died June 14 at a hospice in Fitchburg, Wis. She was hospitalized May 30 after a fall in her independent living apartment in Madison.

Anne and her daughter, Annie Laurie, then a college student, formed FFRF in 1976 with a Milwaukee friend, John Sontarck. Anne served as president until 2004, when Annie Laurie and her husband Dan Barker became co-presidents. FFRF has gone from a small local organization to being the largest association of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics) in North America.

Anne lived long enough to enjoy FFRF's growth to about 23,000 members this spring and its major building expansion. The first event at Free-thought Hall's new addition belatedly celebrated her 88th birthday on Feb. 13.

Proving that atheists do indeed run charities, Anne also co-founded the Women's Medical Fund with FFRF member and chemistry professor Robert West and the late Peg West in the mid-1970s. The fund is considered the oldest continuously operating abortion-rights charity in the U.S. and has served well over 20,000 indigent women in Wisconsin. She handled WMF calls personally for 40 years, retiring as volunteer administrator in March.

Anne married Paul Gaylor, who became FFRF's chief volunteer, in 1949. He died in 2011.

The couple's four children — Andrew, twins Ian and Annie Laurie, and Jamie — survive her. Her granddaughters are Sabrina Gaylor, 25, and Lily Gaylor, 13. Survivors include her daughters-in-law, Lisa Strand, Nancy McClements and Carrie Gaylor; a son-in-law, Dan Barker; a brother, Tom Nicol, of Minnesota; and her dear friend since high school, Isabel Regan.

Anne's tombstone in the Nicol family plot in Sparta, Wis., will read at her direction: "Feminist — activist — free-thinker." She requested no memorial service. A full "In Memoriam" feature will appear in the August issue.

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A few FFRF staffers gathered in May on Regent Street in Madison, Wis., at the second prominent placement of its billboard, which debuted in mid-April at a site about four blocks from the State Capitol. Its message alerts legislators and the public on the dangers of a proposed raid of public schools to fund private, religious schools to the tune of up to \$800 million within 10 years. In mid-June, the billboard moved to a location on University Avenue.

## Mayor: Generic Jesus fits all faiths

"To me and many others, Jesus is not a religion, Jesus is in every religion across the globe," Will Rogers, mayor of Hawkins, Texas, told KLTW in early June. "He's in Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism."

To Rogers, Jesus is "the most Goo-

gled and most popular man in the world." The mayor, who owns a coffee shop next to a "Jesus Welcomes You To Hawkins" sign on city property, spoke out after getting a June 1 letter from FFRF Staff Attorney Sam Grover about "inflammatory and inappropriate"

government endorsement of religion. Imagine the public's reaction to a sign saying "Mohammed Welcomes You To Hawkins" or "No God Welcomes You To Hawkins," wrote Grover.

Students in the high school shop class built the 18-foot-wide sign, which was put up in 2011 before Rogers was mayor of the town of about 1,300 people. He was part of the community group that requested permission to use city land for the sign.

Rogers said the city council has debated leasing the property that the sign sits on to a private party. That would not cure the constitutional violation, especially given the sign's history, Grover said.

It replaced a First Baptist Church marker after representatives of the dozen or so area Christian churches agreed the Jesus sign represented everyone, reported KLTW.

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Jesus is clearly the homeboy for many in this Texas town.

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In memoriam

Norma Briggs, 1935–2015

Norma Briggs, 79, Oregon, Wis., a longtime member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, died April 30, 2015, during a sunset tour of her garden after falling and failing to regain consciousness.

She was born Norma Lynne Jones in Romford, England, near London, on June 5, 1935, to Florence Evelyn Lucas and William Albert Jones. She experienced evacuation during World War II. Her parents divorced when she was 2.

Norma enrolled in a girls boarding school in Kent at age 11, excelling academically, playing tennis and lacrosse. She met her future husband, Michael Briggs, in 1954, at the University of Exeter in Devonshire. They married on June 30, 1956, in a civil ceremony in Romford. Norma completed her B.A. with high honors in English. Mike earned a master's in teaching.

They moved to the U.S. in 1958 so Mike could do graduate work at Duke University. Norma worked as a recreational therapist and earned a master's in social work from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1962. In 1962 they moved with their two daughters to Nigeria, where Mike joined a Ford Foundation team to set up a national library and Norma ran a pre-kindergarten program from their home.

They moved to Madison, Wis., in 1966, when Mike accepted a position as African Studies bibliographer in the Memorial Library of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Son John was born in Madison in December 1966. Chukwumah Udeh joined the family during the Nigerian civil war, graduating from Edgewood College and earning his M.D. from the UW Medical School.

As a social worker, she conducted a federal study on the lack of women apprentices in skilled trades and worked as executive secretary for the Wisconsin Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, which developed historic reforms. Norma later directed the Equal Rights Division of the Wisconsin Department of Labor, Industry and Human Relations. She entered the law school at UW-Madison in 1981, embarking on a two-decade legal career, most of it as a solo practitioner and later in partnership with Mike.

In 1989, Norma represented Anne Nicol Gaylor and the Women's Medical Fund in a successful lawsuit forcing state Attorney General Donald Hanaway to withdraw Wisconsin's name from a Supreme Court amicus brief calling for the overthrow of *Roe v. Wade*. The Women's Medical Fund



was co-founded and administered until March 2015 by Anne Gaylor, then FFRF president. Hanaway was forced to write the Supreme Court a letter withdrawing the state's name from *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*.

Norma had a teaching certificate for the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, and was active in the society's John Muir (Wisconsin) Branch for almost 40 years, teaching children's classes and mentoring other dancers. She was also an expert Scrabble player. She and Mike were active in politics and feminism.

She died during a sunset tour of her garden after falling and failing to regain consciousness.

Survivors include her husband, Mike; their children, Carolyn Briggs, Helen Mueller, Marian Mead and John Briggs; and five grandchildren.

A gathering of family and friends was held June 6 at the Fitchburg Senior Center, followed by a potluck dinner at Norma and Mike's home in Oregon, Wis., preceded by a "wander in Norma's garden."

"Besides being so grateful for her legal representation in the Hanaway case, we knew Norma as our former neighbor. She even served as our attorney in the closing of our house," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "She was a wonderful hostess and an exceptionally talented gardener, moving from our block with its small parcels to the country where she could garden and landscape to her heart's delight — and the delight of everyone who saw her gardens."

Norma will be immortalized on a paving stone soon in the new Rose Zerkow Memorial Garden and Courtyard. She and Mike generously purchased a

paving stone to support FFRF's building expansion. Among the groups which the family designated for memorials is the late Anne Gaylor's Women's Medical Fund, Box 248, Madison, WI 53701, [wmfwisconsin.org](http://wmfwisconsin.org), a 501(c)(3) charity.

"Our warmest condolences to Mike and his family. We, and the world, will all miss Norma so much," added Gaylor.

Norma's family suggested that Donations in her memory may be made to the Women's Medical Fund, Box 248, Madison, WI 53701

FFRF welcomes 24 new Life Members

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is delighted to announce 24 new Lifetime Memberships have been received. New Lifetime Members are:

Linda Fairlie Beyer, Agnes Bouton, Charles Crannell (gift from Colette Crannell), Frederick J. Davis, Jeff DeBorde, Pamela June Diaz, Gilbert Fulmer, Craig Haggart, William Haymaker, Michael Heller, Doris Jackson, Robert Kressek, Joseph Leverich, Brett Marach, Joyce McChesney, Eric A. Mead, Bruce Lee Perry, Ted Rogers, Nancy Seager, David M. Shea, Gil Shiva, Dr. Yaroslav Urzhumov, Mark M. Wheeler and Tim Zeak.

States represented are Alabama, Ar-

izona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000 designated either as new membership or renewal, are deductible for income-tax purposes, ensure never another renewal notice and go into rainy-day reserves.

Our warmest thanks to Tim, Mark, Yaroslav, Gil, David, Nancy, Ted, Bruce, Eric, Joyce, Brett, Joseph, Robert, Doris, Michael, William, Craig, Gilbert, Pamela, Jeff, Frederick ("Jeff"), Colette, Agnes and Linda.

Generic Jesus fits all faiths

*Continued from previous page*

Not everyone agrees. The Big Sandy Hawkins Journal quoted a "local Christian" who wished to remain anonymous: "The sign is showing favoritism and speaking where the Bible is silent. It is presumptuous to assume Jesus welcomes anyone to anywhere but church, especially to a specific town on Earth."

Rogers said he thinks Hawkins could win in court. That's not at all likely, Grover said, citing multiple cases in which appellate courts have ruled otherwise.

The council heard input from both sides at its June 15 meeting. One man who wants the sign to stay said, "I say come and take it, baby. Draw the line."

An atheist said, "It doesn't matter what the majority says, we live in a constitutional republic. The constitutional republic is there to keep the majority from becoming too powerful."

Before the meeting, Rogers told KLTv, "If you don't believe that Jesus existed, then he would be fiction. If he's fiction, and you want to remove his name from everything, then you have to remove every fiction name from across the country. That means we couldn't say 'Superman welcomes you to town.'"

The council voted to survey the property to see if the sign is in fact on city property.

FFRF mourns founder

*Continued from previous page*

The New York Times and Associated Press reported her death, and it was on the front page of the Wisconsin State Journal, which called her "one of Madison's most controversial public figures and a person of national prominence." In the story, Robin Morgan, former editor-in-chief of Ms. magazine, called her "one of the great ones in the women's movement. Her integrity was always bracing, inspiring, magnificent."

Tributes were pouring in as of press time. Go to [ffrf.org/news/news-releases](http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases)

for the press release and scroll to June 15.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Women's Medical Fund, Box 248, Madison, WI 53701, or to the newly created Anne Nicol Gaylor Memorial Scholarship, to reward free-thinking feminists, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Box 750, Madison, WI 53701.

Both groups are 501(c)(3) charities. The Women's Medical Fund is all-volunteer.

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A Note to Members

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# FFRF donates \$20K to relocate atheist author under fatwa

FFRF wired \$20,000 to Bangladeshi physician and activist Taslima Nasrin in March to help her relocate to the U.S. Nasrin, FFRF's 2002 Freethought Heroine, has long been the subject of Islamic terrorist sanctions called fatwas. Since 2004 she had lived in India after having been forced into exile from Bangladesh in 1994.

Nasrin had appealed to the humanist community for help after her friend, Avijit Roy, was brutally hacked to death on the streets of Bangladesh and his wife was severely injured. After Roy's death, two other atheist bloggers were murdered with machetes in Bangladesh.

"I vividly remember Taslima telling an international atheist conference in Germany three years ago that she was 'a woman without a country.' She told us the freethought community was her



Taslima Nasrin pictured between FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor.

country," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

"Our community will need to be prepared to give emergency help as we increasingly see atheists and critics of religion persecuted, imprisoned and slaughtered," Gaylor said at the International Atheist Conference in Cologne, Germany, in publicly announcing the grant May 24.

"Taslima Nasrin is targeted for death," said Dan Barker, FFRF co-president. "There are at least 13 nations where you can technically be put to death for espousing atheism."

Nasrin arrived in Buffalo, N.Y., in late May with the assistance of the Center for Inquiry, which is similarly involved with safeguarding secular activists threatened by religious extremists.

## Counsel opposing FFRF school board prayer suit skipped hearing

A religious legal group representing a California school district being sued over school board prayer by the Freedom From Religion Foundation failed to show up for a mandatory scheduling conference June 8 before the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

U.S. District Judge Jesus Bernal ordered counsel for the Chino Valley Unified School District Board of Education to "show cause why he shouldn't be sanctioned in the amount of \$500 for failure to appear." Attorney Michael Pepper of the Pacific Justice In-

stitute was told if he didn't respond in writing by June 15, it "may result in the entry of a default against Defendants," the judge's order warned. (Pepper did respond.)

FFRF, which has about 3,300 members in California, sued the school district in November to challenge heavily sectarian prayers opening school board meetings. After an outpouring of support from other district families and school employees, FFRF added 18 more plaintiffs to bring the total to 22.

FFRF filed a protective order to keep plaintiffs' identities confidential

and protect students and families from retribution.

The Pacific Justice Institute is a Sacramento-based organization known for its anti-gay activism. It circulates a book informing schools about "strategies to practically and legally evangelize your school," and calls the separation between state and church "a big lie."

FFRF is represented by attorney David J.P. Kaloyanides, with FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Market and Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel serving as co-counsel.

## Wish you the best, Jarvis!



Jarvis Idowu

Jarvis K. Idowu is the latest recipient of FFRF's \$1,000 Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Student Activist Award endowed by Annie Laurie Gaylor. Jarvis, who started interning with FFRF in 2013 in his first year at the University of Wisconsin Law School, has taken a job with the District Attorney's Office in Manhattan, N.Y. He received his law degree from UW in May.

Jarvis, 29, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., founded the Secular Law Students Society at UW. In his "Meet a Legal Intern" profile in 2013, Jarvis said his loftiest goal was "to be a district attorney by age 35 and to somehow play a role in making the 19% [nones] into the 51%."

It seems that he's well on his way. We will miss you, Jarvis!

## FFRF complaint grounds coach-led prayer in Ohio

Matt Campbell, University of Toledo (Ohio) football coach, will no longer be leading players in pregame prayer. FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a May 21 complaint letter to incoming UT President Sharon Gaber after being alerted by a complainant to a video showing Campbell leading the team in the Lord's Prayer before a 2012 game with Bowling Green University.

A coach leading a public university team in prayer is a "serious and flagrant violation" of the Establishment Clause, Markert noted.

UT's YouTube account published the video Oct. 19, 2012. It shows Camp-

bell telling the team to form a tight circle before he knelt to lead the prayer.

After the complaint was made public, First Amendment scholars contacted by the Toledo Blade all agreed that Campbell was very likely in the wrong. Howard Friedman, professor emeritus at the UT College of Law and editor of Religion Clause blog, agreed with the complaint's contention that players felt pressure to participate in the prayer because a coach led it. "It's really a question of whether they're speaking on behalf of the university or they're speaking in their private capacity," Friedman said. "Here, it's pretty clear [Campbell] is not speaking in his

private capacity."

H. Louis Sirkin, of the Cincinnati law firm of Santen & Hughes, said, "[I]f you have players that don't believe in God or whatever, or in prayer, I think it puts them in an uncomfortable position. I don't think it should be done in a public university."

In a statement reported June 12 by the Blade, Campbell said that in the future, "To ensure UT football continues to bring people together, players will determine on their own any personal preparation methods to help them mentally prepare to play the game we love." The FFRF victory was big news in Ohio and the sporting world.

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(Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)

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# Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

## God’s Grandeur

God will laugh at the trial of the innocent.  
—Job, 9:23

When they hunger and thirst, and I send down a famine,  
When they pray for the sun, and I drown them with rain,  
And they beg me for reasons, my only reply is:  
I never apologize, never explain.

When the Angel of Death is a black wind around them  
And children are dying in terrible pain,  
Then they burn little candles in churches, but still  
I never apologize, never explain.

When the Christians kill Jews, and Jews kill the Muslims,  
And Muslims kill writers they think are profane,  
They clamor for peace, or for reasons, at least,  
But I never apologize, never explain.

When they wail about murder and torture and rape,  
When unlucky Abel complains about Cain,  
And they ask me just why I had planned it like this,  
I never apologize, never explain.

Of course, if they’re smart, they can figure it out—  
The best of all reasons is perfectly plain.  
It’s because I just happen to like it this way—  
So I never apologize, never explain.

© Philip Appleman.  
From the book *Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible*

This poem is set to music on Dan Barker’s “Friendly Neighborhood Atheist” CD, which can be purchased at [FFRF.org/shop](http://FFRF.org/shop)



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](http://ffrf.org/shop).

## Overheard

As polls have shown consistently, a strong majority of Californians believe that terminally ill people should be able to end their lives peacefully and without pain when death is near. The state’s residents have waited too long. **Los Angeles Times editorial board endorsement of SB 128, the End of Life Option Act, on which the California Medical Association has taken a neutral position**  
*latimes.com*, 5-22-15



I recognize that for many North Carolinians, including myself, opinions on same-sex marriage come from sincerely held religious beliefs that marriage is between a man and a woman. However, we are a nation and a state of laws. Whether it is the president, governor, mayor, a law enforcement officer, or magistrate, no public official who voluntarily swears to support and defend the Constitution and to discharge all duties of their office should be exempt from upholding that oath; therefore, I will veto Senate Bill 2. **Republican Gov. Pat McCrory, announcing his veto (which was later overridden) of a bill letting local officials refuse to perform their mandated duties regarding lawful same-sex marriage**  
*Gaston Gazette*, 5-28-15

I’ve been fired from SHU for posting a pic on FB supporting LGBT “NO H8.” I’m sorry it was met with this response. I’ll miss my work here. **Tweet by Fr. Warren Hall, a Catholic priest and director of campus ministry at Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J.**  
*The Washington Post*, 5-16-15

Religions have thrived in part because they were able to keep secrets. They were able to keep secrets about other religions from their parishioners, who were largely ignorant of what other people in the world believed, and also keep secrets about their own inner workings and their own histories, so that it was easy to have a sort of controlled message that went out to people. Those days are over. You can go on the Internet and access all kinds of information. This is going to change everything. **Clergy Project co-founder and FFRF Honorary Director Daniel C. Dennett, interview, “The End of Religion as We Know It”**  
*Religion Dispatches*, 5-18-15

In coming weeks, Bishop David Zubik of the Pittsburgh diocese will ordain six priests, bringing the number of active priests in the diocese to 234. Twenty-five years ago, the diocese had more than 600 active priests. **News story, “Catholic priests spread thin as numbers dwindle”**  
*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, 6-7-15

I don’t think Religious Education should be on the curriculum. It should be replaced with first-aid, which is more useful in life. I was shocked to receive a letter for a school trip to a mosque, church and synagogue. I absented my child and have been debating for the

best part of a year whether to take my children out of RE lessons. **British atheist Claire Baker, 32, mother of a son, 12, and daughter, 8, in public schools**  
*The Daily Mail*, 5-26-15

Because of its contractual relations with the two companies, which continue to provide health insurance coverage and administration for medical services apart from contraception as a method of preventing pregnancy, Notre Dame claims to be complicit in the sin of contraception. **Judge Richard Posner, 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, majority 2-1 opinion denying a preliminary injunction to Notre Dame University in its challenge to the Affordable Care Act’s contraceptive coverage mandate**  
*Religion Clause*, 5-19-15

If you want to say a prayer to the father, the son or your cousin, that’s your business. If you want to pray, pray. Only he has to hear you, not your neighbors. **Bernard Parness, Deerfield Beach, Fla., resident, successfully lobbying the city commission to replace prayer with a moment of silence after a satanist applied to give the invocation**  
*Sun Sentinel*, 5-20-15

Toy Vey: The Rabbi Selling Kosher Vibrators  
**Story about Rabbi Natan Alexander’s e-commerce business in Elazar, an Israeli settlement in the West Bank south of Jerusalem**  
*Bloomberg Business*, 5-20-15

This event of organizing a prayer is not the business for the governor. **Amy Monsky, Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry president, on S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley headlining “The Response” Christian-themed rally June 13 for which she appeared in a promotional video and sent invitations on her official stationery**  
*Charleston Post and Courier*, 5-22-15

Many Muslims approach me and ask things like, “Don’t you feel lonely without having a God to turn to?” They even come up to me and take pictures with me when I wear our association’s T-shirt in public, as if I’m the latest tourist site in Istanbul. **Zehra Pala, Istanbul, director of Ateizm Dernegi, the first legally recognized atheist group in Turkey**  
*Deutsche Welle*, 5-26-15

NBC’s “A.D.: The Bible Continues” Falls to Another Low  
**Headline on a story about declining viewership of the sequel to “The Bible” miniseries**  
*Headline Planet*, 5-25-15

On May 4, I was particularly drawn to the article: “City outlaws discrimination against atheists, nonreligious.” Apparently, Madison, Wisconsin, is “an island of liberalism in a conservative-leaning state” and the home of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. The ordinance’s author is quoted: “It just seems to me that religion has spread into government more than I feel comfortable with. It just occurred to me that religion is protected, nonreligion should be, too.” Amen! **Local columnist Dorothy Dimitre, commenting on recent stories of note in San Mateo, Calif.**  
*The Daily Journal*, 5-20-15



# Plaintiffs sought to get God off money

This was originally a guest post May 19 at [FriendlyAtheist.com](#) and is reprinted with permission. Michael Newdow is a California physician perhaps best-known for his U.S. Supreme Court case to get “under God” out of the Pledge of Allegiance and for his ongoing legal battles to get God off coin and currency.

By Michael Newdow

Many people — monotheistic and atheistic alike — find the inscriptions of “In God We Trust” on U.S. money to be offensive for myriad reasons. In a court of law in a constitutional democracy, however, the only reason that matters is if the practice is unlawful.

And under American law, the practice is clearly unlawful.

It violates the first 10 words of the Bill of Rights (“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion”) and it violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Unfortunately, because constitutional principles can be twisted and perverted, the challenges to this practice under the Establishment Clause have, so far, failed.

Challenges under RFRA, however, are not as susceptible to misapplica-



Brent Nicastro photo

Michael Newdow

tion. This is because every Supreme Court justice involved in the three RFRA cases heard to date has agreed that, under RFRA, religious activity may not be substantially burdened without a compelling governmental interest and laws narrowly tailored to serve that interest.

There is obviously no compelling government interest in having “In God We Trust” on our money. We did fine for the 75 years before the phrase was ever used at all, and continued to do fine for the subsequent 102 years before such inscriptions were made mandatory on every coin and currency bill. Similarly, the vast majority of nations manage to function without religious

verbiage on their money.

Accordingly, for those who feel that being forced by the government to carry a message that violates their religious ideals is substantially burdensome, lawsuits are now being prepared in the seven (of 12) federal circuits that have not yet heard challenges to this governmental practice. Although the arguments demonstrating that the godly inscriptions violate the Establishment Clause will again be raised, the RFRA claim will (for the first time) be the lead argument in each case. Hopefully, in at least one of those circuits, two appellate judges will be willing to acknowledge the statutory violation.

Plaintiffs are now being sought to participate in these cases. The time commitment will be minimal (as you help write the prose relevant to your particular circumstances) and there will be no obligation to provide any financial contribution (although such help will certainly not be refused). We actually are quite far along in finding plaintiffs. What we need mostly are families with minor children since the Supreme Court has indicated that it is more likely to uphold constitutional (and, presumably, statutory) principles when children are involved. Please be advised that the identities of any families with children will be kept “under seal” in order to protect the children

from any harms. So if you feel strongly about this issue, I want to hear from you. A few organizational plaintiffs are missing as well.

Join in and help make our nation stronger as it continues on its trajectory toward truly equal respect and protection for people of all races, of all national origins, of all genders, of all sexual orientations and — as stated in the Constitution before any of those other characteristics — of all religious beliefs.

If you wish to participate — especially if you have minor children who you think will look back with pride as adults, knowing their parents gave them the opportunity to personally take part in strengthening our civil rights — please write to [NoMoreIGWT@gmail.com](#). We especially are looking for individuals from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico and Rhode Island.

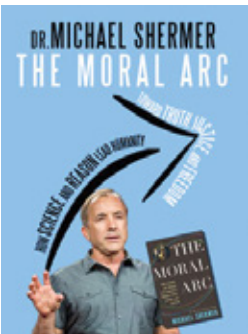
However, those who reside in Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin are also welcome to join in.

Thank you.

# How science, reason lead humanity to truth

“Skepticism with a smile” was originally published May 11 in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and is reprinted with permission.

By Stephen Hirtle



It has been less than 100 years since women were guaranteed the right to vote in the United States. The change was a result of the 19th Amendment, which was ratified in August of 1920. Most today would wonder how any moral society would not allow basic electoral freedoms to all its citizens.

In his latest book, *The Moral Arc: How Science and Reason Lead Humanity Toward Truth, Justice, and Freedom* (Henry Holt and Co., \$32), science writer Michael Shermer examines cultural changes that have created a more decent and ethical society.

The title draws on the words of Mar-

tin Luther King, stating that “the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.” However, he parts ways with King by stating that it is not religion that bends the arc, but scientific advances, logic, and reason, which has led to the moral progress that we have witnessed over the past 500 or so years.

Mr. Shermer goes on to argue that religion has often held back progress, and instead has been the source of societal wrongs ranging from witch-burning to the justification of slavery.

A proficient author, founding publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, and popular speaker at TED, Mr. Shermer uses various psychological studies and cognitive theories to inform his analyses. For example, science has shown that we are particularly bad at inferring long-term trends from data and instead focus on anomalies.

Our human tendency is to attribute cause to an unusual event, such as winning the lottery twice in one week, when it is most likely just a matter of chance. Superstition, or bad science, have lead to claims that witches must be possessed, women can’t be trusted with the vote, or gay couples should



Andrew Seidel photo

Stephen Hirtle

not be given the right to marry. Bringing science and reason to the table allows these claims to be examined clear of biases. This in turn leads to a more just society.

Mr. Shermer forcefully argues that it was scientific studies that made clear that cognitive superiority is not dependent on race or gender. He goes on to show that the more religious western nations, including the US, are in fact the most dysfunctional when it comes to rates of incarceration, teen pregnancy, suicides and other measures of the overall quality of life.

The shrinking human scale that technology provides has also helped bend the moral arc. Humans have always protected their families and their tribes from the outside. But what is the outside? Is it the next village, the next state, a foreign country?

According to Shermer, as our moral sphere grows to include larger communities, more type of individuals, and even other species, our empathy grows.

In fact, it is virtually impossible to imagine political differences between the northern and southern US states that would lead to another Civil War.

As diplomacy replaces the gun, the moral arc in societal relations continues to bend toward compassion. Mr. Shermer also provides insights into why moral progress may fail. For example, there is a ghastly analysis on how Nazi Germany was able to conduct unspeakable atrocities in the name of the state through a series of small steps that escalated in unspeakable ways during the war.

The book also speculates on issues such as animal rights, retribution and the future of moral progress. This is not to say that the book is without some problems. At points, the arguments become repetitive. The support provided varies from detailed analyses to less supportive anecdotes and stories.

At the same time, most chapters stand on their own, so even a partial read of the book would be worthwhile for the interested reader. As for the ultimate goal of human moral progress, Mr. Shermer argues that it is not one of utopia, but protopia, where each year is a little better than the last.

We see this today as more governments are questioning whether capital punishment is a just and fair punishment, more jurisdictions are giving rights to groups that did not have them before, and fewer people are dying from preventable diseases.

*The Moral Arc* is an intriguing book that gives us insights of how best to proceed along this noble path.

Stephen Hirtle, chair of FFRF’s Executive Board, is a professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh.



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](#).



# FFRF legal victories

## Schools back off baccalaureates

Fruita, Colo., Monument High School instituted a new policy on baccalaureates after getting a Jan. 28 letter from FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel. FFRF learned the school previously held a baccalaureate, organized by administrators and other staff, in the gym.

At the 2014 ceremony, teachers reportedly read bible verses and spoke about the virtues of being Christian, with choir and orchestra students required to perform. Students were threatened with lower grades and told that failing to attend would result in having to perform all the concert music alone in front of the entire class.

“The District agrees that its schools and staff members should not sponsor, organize or require attendance at baccalaureate events in which prayers or other religious messages are recited,” wrote the Mesa County Valley School District’s attorney in an April 28 response. The new policy assures ceremonies will be conducted “in a manner that is fully consistent with modern First Amendment jurisprudence.”

• • •

Olentangy Local School District in Lewis Center, Ohio, distanced itself from a baccalaureate ceremony after getting a May 13 complaint letter from Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert. An email invitation about the ceremony was sent to parents from an email address typically used to promote school events. It had no disclaimer that the ceremony was not school-sponsored and said to contact Olentangy High School teacher Linda Shank to sign up.

An assistant superintendent responded the next day to say that the district was taking steps to ensure employees maintained appropriate distance from the baccalaureate. FFRF’s complainant reported that further school announcements included a disclaimer that the baccalaureate was not school-sponsored and that students were no longer to contact school staff to sign up.

Shank, the teacher listed as the contact person, called Markert on May 19 and demanded to know the complainant’s name, a request Markert refused. FFRF carefully protects the identities of complainants, as it is allowed to do by law.

## Texas teacher admits ‘planting a seed’

San Angelo Independent School District in Texas is taking steps to ensure a teacher who bragged about praying with students will follow the law in the future. Central High School teacher Julie Upton Schniers wrote on Facebook that she was “a teacher who prays with [her] team before every speech and debate tournament knowing they don’t all believe and knowing it could get [her] fired some day.”

She also wrote it was her job to subtly influence her students toward Christianity by “planting a seed.”

“Almost more troubling than the constitutional violation is the willful and blatant manner in which Schniers is breaking the law,” wrote Staff Attorney Sam Grover in an April 28 complaint letter.

The school district responded May 1, saying it was conducting an investigation and would “promptly take all remedial actions necessary to ensure compliance with applicable legal standards.”

## School moves testing from First Baptist

Kindergarten testing in Portage, Mich., will no longer take place in church. Previously, Woodland Elementary School held its mandatory screening at First Baptist Church, where religious pamphlets were reportedly distributed to students and parents.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote in an April 1 complaint letter, “It is outrageous and illegal for a public school to allow a church to proselytize 5-year-old students with religious materials at a mandatory school-sponsored event.”

The superintendent responded May 1 to say that the district was able to find an alternative secular location.

## FFRF rains on Day of Prayer planning

Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission employees will no longer be allowed to plan a National Day of Prayer event on government time using the public dime. FFRF received a report that the employees plan an annual gathering held offsite during work hours. Planners reportedly advertised their office phone numbers as contact numbers for this year’s event and handed out fliers promoting it to other employees at work.

“Commission employees’ promotion and apparent coordination of this event at work using work resources poses constitutional separation of state and church concerns,” wrote Staff Attorney Madeline Ziegler in a May 4 letter.

Commission counsel responded May 7, agreeing it was inappropriate for employees to be thus involved and ensuring they’d be made aware of restrictions.

## Utah school board stops Mormon prayer

The Alpine School District Board of Education, American Fork, Utah, no longer starts meetings with a Mormon prayer. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel wrote to the district Jan. 13 to object to the illegal prayer. Courts have consistently ruled “It is beyond the scope of a public school board to schedule or conduct prayer as part of its scheduled meetings,” Seidel said.

An attorney for the board responded May 8 that the board has discontinued prayers.

## Connection cut to Loaves & Fishes

Cedar Ridge High School in Round Rock, Texas, will no longer direct its charitable efforts toward a religious group. FFRF received word that teachers solicited students during class time to donate to Mobile Loaves & Fishes — Miracles on Wheels and offered a party for the class that donated the most. The group’s main activity is a “truck ministry.”

“It is laudable for CRHS to encour-



**A public high school teacher in Lindale, Texas, has removed a classroom poster in the wake of FFRF Staff Attorney Sam Grover’s March 27 complaint letter. Spanish teacher Sue Rogers displayed a poster showing a drop of blood falling on a globe with the bible passage John 3:16 inside the droplet. The words “rape,” “murder” and “violence” were written on the globe, as were “homosexuality,” “abortion” and “cursing.” Other words were misspelled, including “betrayel,” “callouse” and “hyppocrites.” Superintendent Stan Surratt claimed the poster was student artwork but eventually confirmed it had been removed.**

age students to become active, charitable and involved in their community by volunteering and donating, but the school cannot use that goal as an avenue to support a religious organization with a religious mission,” explained FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor in a letter to the Round Rock Independent School District.

The school district responded May 14. While denying teacher involvement, it said “District administrators will remind all teachers to refrain from soliciting donations to student fundraising endeavors.”

## Dogmatic ‘Courageous’ off school screen

Students at Willow Glen High School, San Jose, Calif., will not be subjected to future screenings of the Christian movie “Courageous.”

A math and science teacher showed the movie to students, boasting on social media that his students “are hearing the Gospel as direct as if I were preaching it to them on the streets.”

The plot focuses on four police officers who resolve to honor God and be better fathers after one of their daughters is killed. The “Critics Consensus” on the rating site Rotten Tomatoes says, “While the filmmaking is fairly competent, ‘Courageous’ is overall worthless to anybody who doesn’t subscribe to its dogmatic agenda.”

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a Feb. 13 complaint letter. An attorney for the school district confirmed on May 4 that “Courageous” would not be shown again.

## Prayer before lunch is reined in

The Lancaster County (S.C.) School District is taking steps to ensure an Indian Land Elementary teacher will no longer force her students to give prayers in class. FFRF learned that teacher Kathryn Watkins reportedly selected students at random to lead a prayer before lunch, continuing to select students until one gave a Christian prayer.

“A prompt by a teacher for a student to lead the class in prayer carries the stamp of approval of the school. Ms. Watkins goes further by requiring one student to recite the prayer, and all students to listen, before they are permitted to eat lunch,” wrote Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott in a May 8 letter.

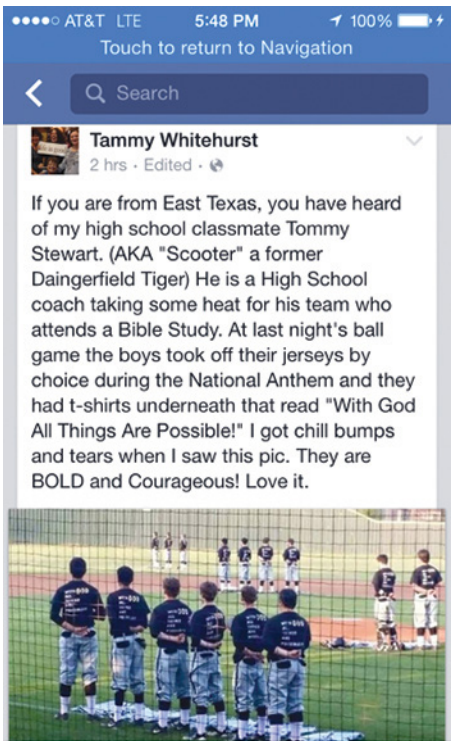
School attorney Kathryn Mahoney wrote back May 26. FFRF’s concerns were addressed with the teacher, who now understands she’s not to lead a prayer or ask students to do so, Mahoney said.

## No more breaks on rent for churches

“Mobile churches” that set up shop at the Sahuarita Unified School District in Arizona will now be charged full rent. Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter April 30, outlining allegations that several churches were far exceeding the scope of their contracts, using more space for more time than they paid for and “paying” with in-kind donations that were of dubious use to the school such as an expensive sound system. “These issues expose SUSD to severe legal and financial liability,” he noted.

FFRF’s complainant reported on May 27 that signs advertising the churches were removed and that the school district told churches they could only use the space they had actually rented.

## Legal complaint



**Staff Attorney Sam Grover has written two complaint letters about a Pittsburg (Texas) High School coach proselytizing players with bible study at school and religious shirts he and the team wore at a game. After the school responded that bible class would no longer be held at school, the second letter took issue with the shirts. The school district hasn’t responded to the April 21 letter.**



## Meet a member



Justin Scott

**Name:** Justin Scott.  
**Where I live:** Manchester, Iowa.  
**Where and when I was born:** Maquoketa, Iowa, Dec. 21, 1981.  
**Family:** Wife, Brandi, and two sons, Kinnick, 4, and Peyton, 18 months. Baby No. 3 is due in July!  
**Education:** West Delaware High School, Manchester, 2000; associate of applied arts, specializing in photojournalism and portraiture (graduated with top photojournalism portfolio), Hawkeye College, Waterloo, 2012; associate of applied arts in graphic communications, Hawkeye College, 2005; associate of arts in general studies, Hawkeye College, 2002.  
**Occupation:** Photographer and graphic designer, social media consultant.  
**How I got where I am today:** By the grace of science and a great wife.  
**Where I’m headed:** However far the cosmos allows me to and however far the Christian Right pushes me.  
**Person in history I admire:** Madalyn Murray O’Hair, because of how courageous, outspoken and unapologetic she was. What Madalyn did for our efforts is out of this world and we owe a ton to her.  
**A quotation I like:** “Now, we must all fear evil men. But there is another kind of evil which we must fear most, and that is the indifference of good men.” (From “The Boondock Saints” movie. Of course it had to come from a Catholic priest — eye roll!)  
**These are a few of my favorite things:** My wife, my kids, the Iowa Hawkeyes, Chicago Bears and Chicago Cubs, Freethought Today showing up in my mailbox, the courage to do and say what’s not popular, being a leader in the atheist/secular movement.  
**These are not:** Excuses, extreme conservatism, apathy, indifference, really slow drivers.  
**My doubts about religion started:** During my formative years. I noticed at Sunday school and confirmation in the Lutheran Church, which I was not given a choice in taking part in, that I spent more time quoting Chris Farley and Adam Sandler from the previous night’s episode of “Saturday Night Live” than paying attention to what the pastor was saying.  
It wasn’t until my wife and I welcomed our second son in 2013 that I really acted on those doubts by challenging what I had been forced to believe and becoming the proud atheist that I am now.  
**Before I die:** I’d like to see an openly atheist president of the United States and openly atheist member of the Su-

preme Court.  
**Ways I promote freethought:** By creating and leading the Delaware County Coalition of Reason and hosting “Free-thinker Gatherings” in my hometown, through posts on social media, by debating believers and apologists and challenging their firmly held beliefs, by being outspoken and positive about atheism.  

### Indiana’s loss = Iowa’s gain

Justin Scott was featured in a March 31 story in the Des Moines Register headlined “Iowa dad leads effort to lure Indiana business.” The story told how Scott came to the defense of a former Iowa resident and friend now living in Indiana with plans to marry his gay partner.  
After an Indiana “religious freedom” bill sanctioning discrimination became law, “Scott, by all accounts a bundle of energy, was inspired to act,” the story said. “He began to fire off scores of tweets. He grabbed a list of Iowa cities ranked according to population and began phoning the directors of chambers of commerce.”  
Actor and Iowa native Tom Arnold responded positively, as did members of advocacy groups. Donna Red Wing, executive director of One Iowa, suggested emphasizing “that Iowa is open for business” and is a state that embraces diversity and inclusion. The Register editorialized that discriminatory laws “give Iowa a selling point” in attracting businesses.  
Scott followed up with an open letter:  
*To the countless businesses, organizations and events that are deciding to boycott the state of Indiana due to Gov. Mike Pence’s decision to sign SB 101, aka the “Right to Discriminate” bill into law: I would like to personally invite you to bring your business to Iowa!*  
*Iowa is one of the gems of the Midwest that has been known for standing for equality and diversity and we would love to have your business here where our state motto is “Fields of Opportunities,” which is exactly what we hope you’ll take advantage of.*  
*For the record, this letter has nothing to do with the fine people and businesses in Indiana. I have visited Indiana — Indianapolis to be exact — and had a wonderful time. The land is beautiful, the businesses are great and the Indiana people are very hospitable and friendly. I am not anti-Indiana. Instead, I am pro-Iowa.*  
*. . . I have reached out to many elected leaders, businesses large and small, along with many advocacy groups for various interests and visitor/tourism groups seeking support for this letter and will continue to do so. I plan on adding their names to this letter to show you the outpouring of support from those that live in and love our great state!*  
*Please let me know if you have any questions about Iowa or bringing your business to Iowa. We are #OpenForService! Thank you for your time and consideration!*  
Kyle Munson’s story in the Register includes, “Thus a lone Iowa dad and small businessman has become a leading voice among Hawkeyes reaching out to Hoosiers. I think history will judge him kindly.”



**Justin Scott enjoys a Pearl Jam concert last fall. “It was such a great show! Eddie [Vedder] did a cover of John Lennon’s ‘Imagine,’ which to an atheist has a much more powerful message. He finished with ‘Yellow Ledbetter,’ my favorite Pearl Jam song of all-time, so I was in ‘heaven.’ ”**

### Back to the drawing board

Justin Scott made another recent effort on behalf of secularism by proposing that the Manchester City Council adopt a provision similar to the historic ordinance adopted in April making “nonreligion” as well as “religion” a protected class in Madison, Wis. FFRF sent an Action Alert to Iowa members in the Manchester area asking them to urge support for Justin’s proposal.  
After he had briefed city officials, the council made it an agenda item for its April 27 meeting. Unfortunately, the council decided not to move forward with it.  
City Attorney James Peters called it an “interesting proposal” but recommended against adoption, writing that a city the size of Manchester (pop. 5,200) lacks the necessary resources and calling it overly broad.

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### They said what?

I believe Jesus is soon to return to take all of His followers to Heaven with Him in what is referred to as The Rapture. While this will be deliverance for His people, can you imagine the impact on our nation, let alone the world, when suddenly every single authentic Christian disappears? Institutions will collapse. Banks will close. The stock market will plunge. Planes will fall out of the sky. Cars will crash on the road. Government in America at every level will disintegrate. Families will be torn apart.  
**Evangelist Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, announcing “Mayday! Mayday! A Distress Call for Prayer” on May 15-23**  
*World Net Daily, 4-30-15*  
No Pimpin’! Straight Preachin’!  
**Billboard invitation to church from Citadel of Praise Pastor Spencer Ellis, Detroit**  
*My Fox Detroit, 5-23-15*  
I’m encouraging you to join me in praying for each of the Supreme Court justices as they consider whether to make same-sex marriage the law of the land. Today, please pray for Justice Antonin Scalia, who was appointed to the court 29 years ago by President Reagan. Pray the Lord will speak to his heart regarding the profound impact this decision will have on Bible-believing Christians in this country.  
**Facebook post by Franklin Graham, son of Rev. Billy Graham**  
*facebook.com, 5-13-15*  
The big picture here is women do earn less in America because they choose to. They would rather go to their daughter’s piano recital than stay all night at work, working on a proposal, so they end up earning less. They’re less ambitious. I think this is sort of God’s way — this is nature’s way — of saying women should be at home with the kids. They’re happier there.  
**Fox News guest Gavin McInnes, commenting on the gender pay gap**  
*“Hannity,” 5-14-15*  
I think that we better pay attention. The city of Seattle, that part of Washington, is just shotgun full of Muslims.  
**Shahram Hadian, Everett, Wash., former Muslim and now Christian pastor, speaking to the Republican Women of Bonner County in Sandpoint, Idaho**  
*East Idaho News, 4-23-15*  
He put me in charge of failing programs worth billions of dollars. I have no ability to do that, no training to do that. God did that. He sent me to Iraq to negotiate foreign military sales deals through an Arabic interpreter. I have no ability to do that. I was not trained to do that. God did all of that.  
**Maj. Gen Craig Olson, Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts, speech at a National Day of Prayer Task Force event May 7**  
*Air Force Times, 5-15-15*  
We love homosexuals. I had an uncle that was homosexual that died of AIDS. Deeply loved him. We love the homosexuals. But we do not agree with homosexuality because the Bible is against it.  
**Lawrence Bishop II, Solid Rock Church, Monroe, Ohio, “Pastor Rides Bulls Inside His Church to Attract New Believers”**  
*ABC “Nightline,” 5-19-15*



## In the news

### Dad’s suit claims evolution is religion

Kenneth Smith, parent of a student in Jefferson County, W.Va., filed a federal lawsuit May 12 against local, state and federal education officials, claiming the teaching of evolution violates his child’s constitutional rights, reported the Charleston Daily Mail.

Smith’s complaint says teaching evolution constitutes “the propagation of religious faith” and hinders his daughter’s ability to enter college to study veterinary medicine.

According to the National Center for Science Education, the complaint cites no relevant case law, including *McLean v. Arkansas* (1982), which said, “It is clearly established in the case law, and perhaps also in common sense, that evolution is not a religion and that teaching evolution does not violate the Establishment Clause.”

### Laws allow adoption, marriage bigotry

Michigan Republican Gov. Rick Snyder signed several bills June 11 that let faith-based adoption groups in Michigan refuse to serve prospective parents if it would violate their religious beliefs.

According to the Detroit Free Press, in the 2014-15 budget year, \$19.9 million in state and federal funds went to adoption and foster care agencies, with about \$10 million of that going to faith-based groups that the laws cover. Every Republican senator except one voted for the bills, which were opposed by all Senate Democrats.

All eight amendments proposed by Democrats were tabled. The Michigan Catholic Conference praised the bills’ importance to “the state’s long-standing partnership with faith-based child placement agencies.”

...

The North Carolina Legislature overrode Republican Gov. Pat McCrory’s veto of a bill that lets magistrates recuse themselves from performing marriages based on any “sincerely held religious beliefs” and lets register of deeds personnel opt out of issuing marriage licenses for religious reasons.

The Senate vote June 1 to override was 32-16. The General Assembly vote June 11 was 69-41.

### Virginia board owes \$74K for praying

U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert Ballou recommended approval May 9 of payment of \$74,090 in legal costs and fees to the American Civil Liberties Union from the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors, Chatham, Va., in a four-year-old case over meeting prayers. U.S. District Judge Michael Urbanski’s original award ruling was earlier upheld by a panel of the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Richmond.

ACLU of Virginia Legal Director Rebecca Glenberg noted that supervisors led exclusively Christian prayers and asked the audience to stand. Supervisors now hold silent prayer and citizens are encouraged to pray from the podium during the public comment part of board meetings.

### ‘Weekend of Prayer’ signed into law

A law signed April 24 by Republican

Gov. Bill Haslam recognizes the first weekend of August as a “Weekend of Prayer over Students” in Tennessee. SB 202 passed the state Senate 33-0 and the House 95-2.

Co-sponsors Sen. Rusty Crowe, R-Johnson City, and Rep. John Holsclaw, R-Elizabethton, worked with First Priority Blue Ridge of Johnson City, a Christian organization that unites churches with middle and high schools.

Staff Attorney Sam Grover told the Johnson City Press that “FFRF recognizes the value of education and the importance of giving thanks to those who dedicate their lives to teaching the next generation but imagines educators would prefer that Tennessee legislators spend their time addressing real issues within the state rather than pandering to religious constituents.”

### Indiana RFRA births Church of Cannabis



**The Deity Dozen’s first injunction: “Don’t be an asshole. Treat everyone with love as an equal.”**

On July 1, the day Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act becomes law, the First Church of Cannabis will hold its first service, the Indianapolis Star reported. “We’ll say a short prayer and go poof,” said Bill Levin, Indianapolis, who formed the church March 26 in response to the state RFRA. Marijuana is considered a sacrament.

Levin expects as many as 1,000 people to attend the first service. He’s still looking for space to rent and said he’s raised about \$10,000 for that purpose.

**Colorado teacher sues over Cowboy Church**

Robert Basevitz, who teaches in the Fremont, Colo., RE-2 School District, is suing the district in federal court, alleging that Florence High School “operates largely to promote the evangelical Christian ideals” of the Cowboy Church at Crossroads and Pastor Randy Pfaff. The evangelical church rents school cafeteria space for Sunday services, hosts prayer every morning before school at the flagpole and bible study and pizza during lunch in a school classroom, the Denver Post reported.

“This is not one or two isolated incidents. On a single day, there were no less than five school-sponsored religious events,” said Paul Maxon, attorney for Basevitz, who is Jewish. Events were also announced over the school intercom system.



**U.S. District Court Judge Freda Wolfson ruled May 12 that Shannon Morgan’s suit can move forward against the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission for rejecting her 8THEIST license plate application. Morgan, of Maurice Township, sued in 2014, alleging that she then used BAPTIST as a test and the state web-site accepted it. The state is claiming 8THEIST was rejected due to computer error, even though another applicant’s ATHEIST was also rejected. The court held that Morgan has standing and ruled she adequately stated claims of facial overbreadth, vagueness that encourages arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement and prior restraint.**

After filing a formal complaint, he was transferred to work at an elementary school, Basevitz said.

### Voucher schools dubbed ‘hustler academies’

Parents of students at Daughters of the Father Christian Academy, a voucher school in Milwaukee, protested after the school stopped bus service in early May, reported WITI Fox 6 News. Parent Laura Martin said Bishop Doris Pinkney, the school’s founder, wouldn’t give her a reason.

But Dairyland Bus Co. sent a letter to parents that said service stopped because the school stopped paying its bill. The school was earmarked to receive \$1.1 million from voucher students through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and \$31,000 from Milwaukee Public Schools for student transportation.

“What we call them now are hustler academies,” said Gail Hicks, a retired special education teacher. “The schools are chaotic. The children aren’t learning, because if you have a business, you are there to make money. It’s not about education.”

Teachers at the school don’t need state licenses. The academy’s principal has an expired substitute teaching license. Pinkney has filed for bankruptcy three times since 1995. Court records show she made about \$132,000 in 2014 despite never having held a teaching license. She told the bankruptcy court she’s now only making \$96,000 a year. Teachers have all agreed to pay cuts to keep the school going, she told Fox 6.

**Irish voters approve same-sex marriage**

The Republic of Ireland became the first nation in the world to approve same-sex marriage by popular vote in a May 22 referendum. Of the nearly 2 million voters, about 62% voted yes.

Irish bishops in a May 17 pastoral letter read at all Sunday Masses urged parishioner’s to support only traditional marriage. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland issued a statement after the vote expressing deep disappointment.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vat-

ican’s secretary of state, said he was “very saddened” by the result. “The church must take account of this reality, but in the sense of reinforcing its commitment to evangelization. I think that you cannot just talk of a defeat for Christian principles, but of a defeat for humanity.”

Same-sex marriage is now legal in 20 countries.

...

Atheist Ireland is protesting payment of about \$34,000 for Catholic and Presbyterian chaplains at Dundalk Institute of Technology, a public technical college, Talk of the Town reported May 27.

Concerns surfaced after a student complained about receiving emails from Fr. Paddy Rushe, the full-time Catholic chaplain.

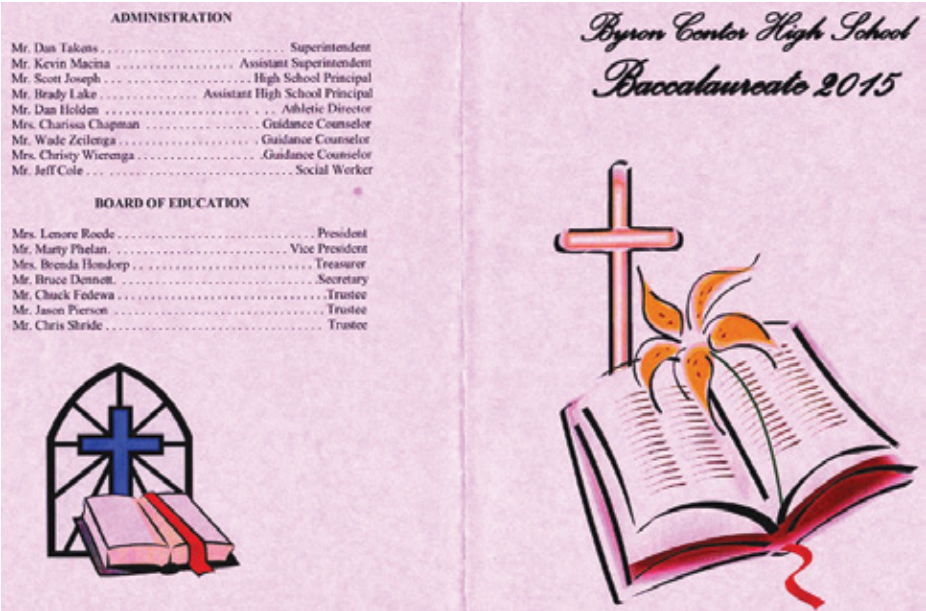
**‘Hate list’ updated with religious groups**

The Southern Poverty Law Center added four organizations in May to its list of active anti-LGBT hate groups:

- ATLAH World Missionary Church, New York City, displayed a “Jesus Would Stone Homos” sign, and Pastor James David Manning preached that Starbucks are “ground zero for spreading Ebola and other diseases.” He was fooled by a satirical story that said Starbucks lattes are flavored with semen, and warned congregants that “they’re getting their semen from sodomites.”
- Stedfast Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas. Pastor Donnie Romero gave a sermon saying God wants “sodomites” put to death.
- Probe Ministries, Plano, Texas, which has posited that gays may be possessed by demons.
- The Jewish Political Action Committee of Brooklyn, N.Y., which put up signs saying AIDS is divine punishment and claimed that Judaism deems male homosexuality a greater sin than murder.

“[I]f an organization is knowingly putting out false propaganda to demonize a particular population — in our view, that qualifies them as a hate group,” said Heidi Beirich, director of SPLC’s Intelligence Project.





## Michigan no-no

The Michigan Association of Civil Rights Activists, led by FFRF Life Members Mitch Kahle and Holly Huber, sent a May 27 complaint letter and open-records request to Byron Center Public Schools over district involvement with baccalaureate May 17. A recording captured the evangelical Christian content of the event in a school building, including praise for creationist Ken Ham and a prayer that started “Dear Lord, first I want to give thanks that we are here today in a public school worshipping you . . .” Staff encouraged seniors to “sign up for reading, leading a prayer, Praise Team and Special Music at the [mandatory] class meeting” May 14. Staff produced the program and promoted the event on the high school’s website and electronic billboard.

## Florida, Nevada ‘choice’ schools contested

Leon County Circuit Judge George Reynolds III ruled May 18 that the Florida Education Association, Florida School Boards Association and other plaintiffs have no legal standing to sue over the state’s private school choice program, funded by tax credits for giving money to groups that provide scholarships to students. About 70,000 of those students attend private school, most of them religious, reported the Tampa Bay Times.

“In this case, plaintiffs object to tax credits extended to third parties,” Leon ruled. “Because plaintiffs do not challenge a program funded by legislative appropriations, plaintiffs do not have taxpayer standing to bring this action.”

Similar decisions have come from Arizona and a few other states. Plaintiffs have 30 days to appeal.

...

As reported by the Las Vegas Review Journal, on June 2, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval signed SB 302 creating an extensive school choice program. Under the bill, the parents of a child who has attended public school for 100 consecutive days may move the child to a private school (including a religious school), a tutoring facility or to home schooling and have the state pay into an educational savings account for the student an amount equal to 90% (or 100% for low-income and disabled) of the statewide average basic support per pupil. Currently 100% of the statewide average is about \$5,700. Payments under the new law will start Jan. 1, 2016.

Opponents say the bill is unconstitutional because it allows taxpayer money to be spent on religiously oriented private schools. The Nevada Constitution, Art. 11, Sec. 10, provides: “No public funds of any kind or character whatever, State, County or Municipal, shall be used for sectarian purpose.”

## Appeals courts uphold Obamacare mandate

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia denied an en banc hearing May 20 to reconsider Priests for Life’s suit for exemption from the Affordable Care Act’s birth

control coverage mandate. A panel in November ruled 3-0 against the anti-abortion ministry. “The dispute we resolved is legal, not religious,” Judge Nina Pillard, an Obama appointee, wrote for the court.

A 7th Circuit panel voted 2-1 on May 19 to deny a preliminary injunction to shield Notre Dame University from the mandate. Both courts used similar reasoning.

“The regulation allows Plaintiffs to continue to do just what they did before the [Affordable Care Act]: notify their insurers of their sincere religious objection to contraception, and arrange for contraception to be excluded from the health insurance coverage they provide,” Pillard wrote. “[T]he dissenters perceive in Hobby Lobby a potentially sweeping, new RFRA prerogative for religious adherents to make substantial-burden claims based on sincere but erroneous assertions about how federal law works.”

## Islamist group banned from Bangladesh

Bangladesh has banned Ansarullah Bangla Team, a radical Islamist group suspected of involvement in the murder of three secular bloggers hacked to death this year. Avijit Roy, Washiqur Rahman and Ananta Bijoy Das were attacked with machetes in separate incidents. Roy’s wife was wounded.

Group members were charged with the murder of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider in 2013, Agence France-Presse reported May 26.

## Lawsuit claims coach pushed Pentecostalism

Natalia Mendieta, a student at Delaware State University in Dover, is suing the university, former coach LaKisya Killingsworth and former athletic director Candy Young in U.S. District Court, alleging she lost her volleyball scholarship because she objected to rules the coach made requiring attendance at church and bible study.

Mendieta, a Catholic, claims players were penalized if they didn’t attend the Pentecostal Calvary Assembly of God with Killingsworth, who also distributed bibles and “strongly encouraged” players to join the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The suit, filed June

9, alleges Killingsworth’s decision to suspend Mendieta’s scholarship was approved by Young.

Another player’s parents objected to the school in the spring of 2014 about Killingsworth proselytizing, the complaint said, with the player eventually quitting the team.

University spokesman Carlos Holmes said Killingsworth left DSU to “take another post elsewhere.”

## Top Minnesota Catholic clerics resign

Archbishop John Nienstedt and Auxiliary Bishop Lee Anthony Piche of the Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis resigned June 15 in the wake of misdemeanor criminal charges filed against the archdiocese as a corporation by Minnesota prosecutors for alleged failure to protect children from clergy sex abuse, reported The Associated Press.

The Vatican also announced that a church tribunal has indicted Jozef Wesolowski, its former ambassador to the Dominican Republic, on charges of sexually abusing minors and possessing child pornography. He will be the highest-ranking Vatican official ever to stand trial for a sex crime.

Nienstedt and Piche resigned under the code of canon law that allows resignation due to illness or other “grave” reason. BishopAccountability.org said 18 bishops have resigned after being publicly criticized for covering up abuse.

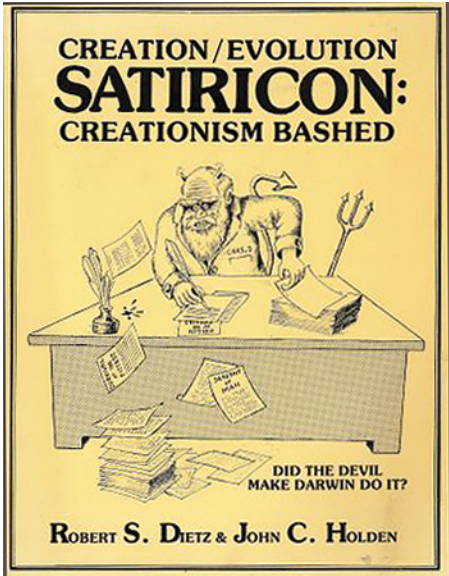
David Clohessy, executive director of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, said the pope’s acceptance of the two resignations “doesn’t feel like reform” and said Francis should move to defrock top church leaders in the archdiocese.

Wesolowski, who has already been defrocked, faces jail time if convicted by the Vatican tribunal.



## Miami vice

Floridian Sheila Miguel wonders “What happened to family, career, humanity, planet? What a warped message to send to [Catholic] high schoolers, and to anyone else driving by.”



## Art for truth’s sake

John C. “Jack” Holden, Washington, combined a long career as a geologist with a sideline as an illustrator/author. *Creation/Evolution Satiricon* was published by Book Maker in 1987.



Figure 7. Creationists offer a cartooned view of science that is often hard to address in public debate. Creationism itself, meanwhile, has tempted a few cartoonists to take up their pens. John Holden, a paleontologist by training (and co-author with R. S. Dietz of a cartoon commentary, *Creation/Evolution Satiricon*), has pondered the implications of Henry Morris’s explanation of lunar craters as the result of cosmic battles between Satan’s angels and those of the Archangel Michael.

Jack Holden’s illustration for a 1998 *American Scientist* article on the scientific fallacies of creationism.



# The Clergy Project, then and now

By John S. Compere

The Clergy Project is the brainchild of FFRF Co-President Dan Barker, Richard Dawkins (our planet’s best-known evolutionary biologist), Daniel Dennett (professor of philosophy at Tufts University) and Linda LaScola (researcher and co-author with Dennett of the 2010 groundbreaking study “Preachers Who Are Not Believers”).

It started with informal conversations among these four leaders of the secular movement about providing online support for former and current religious professionals who no longer believe in a supernatural being.

The formal launch was March 20, 2011, with 52 charter members. Initial financing was provided by the Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. FFRF took the new project under its wing and provided financial and organizational support for the first three-plus years of its existence. Four years later, the Clergy Project has become its own nonprofit 501(c)(3) with total active participants of 640, its own board of directors and seven active committees.

Participants come from 30 different countries and 43 of the 50 U.S. states. There are 39 Christian sects/denominations represented and a few participants from Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Scientology. The male/female ratio is 86% to 14%, primarily because the idea of women in ministry has been strongly discouraged or forbidden by most religious groups until fairly recently.

All applicants are carefully screened. No attempt is made to recruit new members because the leadership is clear that the mission is not to try to convince believers to give up their faith. Instead, it’s to help those who, for their own reasons, are no longer able to believe try to figure out how to make a huge sea change in their lives. It may well be the most challenging career change anyone can make.

The percentage of those still actively engaged in ministry varies over time but is usually about one-third of total participants, with the other two-thirds being those who have left the ministry but who still want support and to be supportive of others in the same situation.

A generous grant from Todd Stiefel



“Atheists in the Pulpit” participating May 9 in a Clergy Project panel at the American Humanists conference in Denver were (left) Terry Plank, Michael Thomas Tower, Gretta Vosper, John S. Compere and Teresa MacBain.



Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science

Women with ties to the Clergy Project are shown at the Center for Inquiry’s 2013 Women in Secularism conference in Washington. From left are Mary Johnson, a former nun who worked with Mother Teresa and later wrote *An Unquenchable Thirst*; Teresa MacBain, former pastor; R. Elisabeth Cornwell, Clergy Project co-founder and former Dawkins Foundation director; Catherine Dunphy, original project member and author of the upcoming book about it, *From Apostle to Apostate*; project co-founder Linda LaScola, author of *Caught in the Pulpit* and Daniel Dennett colleague; and Gretta Vosper, current Clergy Project board secretary and executive committee member.

of the Stiefel Freethought Foundation has enabled transition assistance grants for qualifying current ministers who need help making a career change. They aren’t asked to sign a note but are encouraged to begin paying back their financial assistance when and if their new career allows them to do so.

Here are some comments from participants about what the project has meant for them. (Even though they are in leadership and are thus, by definition, open with their deconversion experiences, we are using only first

names for reasons of privacy and varying needs for anonymity.)

### KEITH:

When I deconverted, I thought I was alone. No one I knew could relate. At best they could not understand the reasons for my deconversion, and at worst they feared for my soul and either judged me or avoided me. The Clergy Project suddenly gave me a sense of being surrounded by people who understood. I no longer had to wonder if I was the crazy one.

The reality is that very few ministers still believe what they so naively and enthusiastically held dear when they entered seminary. But once one is in the role, and personal income depends on toeing the party line, the stakes are just too high to be honest about one’s own maturing of faith. I am convinced that most ministers, even if they have not gone so far as to deconvert, secretly hold views that are far from what their eldership would find acceptable.

Secondly, no one can understand the depth of pain and loss that those of us carry who have given our best years to the church, and great sums of time and money to become eligible to be ordained and approved by our denominations, only to arrive at midlife and find it all irrelevant. There are no do-overs. We can’t go back to business school, or follow natural dreams of normal careers.

No one understands the complete

identity crisis, regrets and sadness that dog us daily. That is, unless they have been through the same experience. In my 20 years since deconversion, I had met maybe one or two people that got it, but the Clergy Project is an entire community of kindred souls.

### DREW:

I’ve only been with TCP since July 2014, so that might make me the official rookie committee member, though I had left the ministry and the faith two years before that. The wealth of support and community I found here was exactly what I was looking for.

After taking part in my first podcast interview as a member in November and helping out with the Facebook page in February, I joined the communications committee in March, focusing on administration of the public website and Facebook page.

My experience just keeps getting better and better, and I can’t wait to see what’s next!

### JOHN:

I joined TCP almost three years ago, not because I felt alone after my “deconversion” (I have several atheist friends locally) but because I thought it sounded like an organization with which I would be happy to be associated.

I was very pleased when I was asked to be come a screener for prospective members and get a lot of satisfaction out of interviewing them and introducing them to the project. I look forward to many more years of being active in this organization.

### CAROLYN:

Although it had been 40 years since leaving Catholicism and 18 years as a nun, I found that joining TCP in 2011 provided me with an appropriate place to seriously examine my transformative journey to atheism. The opportunity to reflect and put words to the rejection of religious belief, and receiving feedback from other members, was valuable in clarifying my thoughts.

In the process, a stronger appreciation of godless life emerged.

### GRETTA:

After a decade of struggling to transition a liberal congregation into one in which my beliefs could be shared with integrity, the Clergy Project came into my life. It reminded me that despite being an anomaly, I am not alone. The encouragement and support offered through its forums has been enormously helpful during the more challenging periods within my ministry.

Even the challenges from those who can’t imagine why I’d want to remain in the church have contributed to the confidence I now have in my leadership and the work I do in my congregation. [Gretta’s church followed her into humanism.]

### EARL:

Although some members, like me, have left their ministries due to changed convictions years ago, we still find a need for support from those who share this common experience. It is not easy to set aside deep-seated beliefs and a profession devoted to helping others in many ways other than religion as such.

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Slightly irreverent views, news, music and interviews



The scars of being alienated from close friends and even family never fully heal. So, we are helped by the Clergy Project even as we are able to help younger members cope with what is nothing less than a traumatic experience.

LON:

Everyone’s story is different, but my pursuit of truth did not lead me to embrace atheism until six years after I left vocational ministry to return to my blue-collar roots. I was accepted in the project in November 2011. I’m a numbers guy, so I’ll share that TCP kicked off on March 9, 2011, with fewer than 20 charter members. [By its formal launch on March 20, it had 52 members.]

Four years later, we have well over 600 participants. I kept track from the start of member numbers, religious affiliation and states and countries of residence, frequently posting my observations. I now maintain the participants list and perform various forum administrative duties.

I’ve observed that not only can people be good without god, but that godless active and former clergy are the cream of the crop. By the providence of happenstance, I am most privileged to help keep this esteemed community going and growing.

MICHAEL:

Even years after leaving the ministry, I’m plagued by thoughts of the damage I wreaked during that time. Learning about TCP through Freethought Today let me know that I wasn’t alone in my circumstance or dilemma. Simply knowing it exists is comforting; being a part of it is fortifying.

I can give a little help to other “no-longer believers” struggling to claw their way out of the clutch of a religious career. And maybe (oh how I hope!) I’m compensating for some of the destruction I imposed years ago.

TERRY [board president]:

The Clergy Project has provide me an opportunity to be of service to those struggling with a new life without the supernatural and the community support that their current or former affiliations provided. Having been “out” for 30 years, I don’t have any struggles, nor do I have much need to discuss things with those with a similar background.

I participate first as a member supporting and encouraging those with issues and concerns, while volunteering what expertise I’ve developed over the years through careers in ministry, psychotherapy, website and social media consulting and humanist celebrant. TCP has enriched my life through close friendships with men and women around the world as we work together to accomplish our mission, separated though we are by the miles.

There are no dues. The project relies on financial support from those who share its goals and philosophy. To contribute by credit card, go to [clergyproject.org/contributions/](http://clergyproject.org/contributions/) or send a check to Clergy Project, 8800 49th St. N, Suite 311, Pinellas Park, FL 33782.

John S. Compere, Ph.D., is a Clergy Project charter member and vice president. His book, *Towards the Light: A Fifth-generation Baptist Minister’s Journey from Religion to Reason*, details his deconversion more than 40 years ago.



Onward, secular students, marching to a different drummer in Uganda.

BiZoHa is groundbreaking secular orphanage

The following was first published online May 22 by the Institute for Ethics & Emerging Technologies.

By Hank Pellissier

Is every orphanage in the world operated by a religious organization? Nope. Not anymore.

Steps to launch BiZoHa Orphanage were taken earlier this year by four members of the Brighter Brains Institute, a think-and-do tank located in San Francisco’s East Bay. BiZoHa, believed to be the world’s first atheist orphanage, is situated in Muhokya, in Kasese Province, near the Rwenzori Mountains of western Uganda, close to the Congo border.

Children living there will not be indoctrinated in any religion and instead will be tutored by the secular staff of the nearby Kasese Humanist Primary School. KHPS is aligned with godless groups like the Foundation Beyond Belief and Atheist Alliance International, plus other irreligious organizations in Australia, the United Kingdom, United States, Germany and Canada.

BiZoHa raised its start-up funds via a GoFundMe campaign in February that asked for \$4,506 to construct a home for 20 to 25 orphans. The request went “viral” with astonishing quickness. Humanist writer Zoltan Istvan’s reportage on VICE Motherboard blasted the news into public consciousness. On Facebook, it was shared by tens of thousands of godless enthusiasts.

Thirty-three people donated \$100 or more. One benefactor tossed in \$1,000. Ninety-seven people contributed. The campaign was enriched beyond expectations in only 29 hours.

A brick building will shelter 25 orphans and staff. The construction cost was only \$3,122. The remaining funds helped with installation of a 30-foot-deep latrine, brought in a pipeline for water and seeded most of the orphanage’s 7 acres with crops to provide economic self-sufficiency.

Bwambale M. Robert is director of KHPS and will be BiZoHa director. Establishing the orphanage has long been his dream. Orphaned at age 5, Bwambale worked his way through



Hank Pellissier hands Bwambale Robert a microscope that can identify intestinal parasites.

high school as a barber, subsequently received a university scholarship and matriculated in biology. He’s the author of the book *Orphans of Rwenzori: A Humanist Perspective*.

Bwambale intends to make BiZoHa economically self-sufficient in one year. This goal will be achieved by selling corn, beans, cassava, peanuts and lettuce grown on its 7-acre crop farm and by selling drinks in a roadside stand on the popular Fort Portal Mponde Road that leads to destinations like Bushenyi, Mbarra town, Queen Elizabeth National Park and Bwera.

BiZoHa is an acronym of the three main U.S. fundraisers. “Bi” is Biba Kavass, an award-winning economics teacher at Southwind High School in Memphis, Tenn., where she started the state’s first high school KIVA Club and encouraged students to write the upcoming book *Microfinance in Action: A Guide for Teenagers*.

“Zo” is Zoltan Istvan, author of *The Transhumanist Wager* and feature writer/columnist at Gizmodo, VICE, National Geographic, Huffington Post, Psychology Today and other publications.

“Ha” is Hank Pellissier, journalist and interim managing director of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technology and Brighter Brains Institute director. I was the founder/co-producer of the world’s first Atheist Film Festival, in 2009.

Uganda has 3.5 million orphans, or about 9% of the population. Children are parentless due to AIDS, civil war and other violence, accidents and abandonment. Up to 70% of orphans

become criminals as adults. Among girls, 60% end up in prostitution, where the HIV/AIDS rate is 37%.

Education is limited. When they “age out” of orphanages, many become street kids, sniffing glue, stealing, scavenging in garbage dumps and begging. Many are subjected to illness, filth, malnutrition, sexual abuse and child trafficking.

The main building in which the children and staff will be housed is already finished. It has a cheery humanist symbol on one side and a list of all significant contributors on another side.

Dr. Bruce Chou, a California anesthesiologist, contributed \$1,000 for the nearly completed “Dr. Bruce Chou Classroom.” Andrea Vogt, from Germany, donated \$925 to construct the “Andrea Vogt Roadside Stand,” which is about 50% complete. Another contributor added \$500 to purchase a solar panel to help meet electrical needs.

Currently (late May), there’s a second GoFundMe campaign in progress that has raised an additional \$2,500. Funds will be used for a variety of needs, including staff salaries. Full-time workers will receive \$700 annually, a decent wage in rural Uganda.

Anyone interested in helping can donate at <http://www.gofundme.com/BiZoHa2> or email questions to [brighter-brainsinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:brighter-brainsinstitute@gmail.com).



“Cowyeow” comments online on the change at BiZoHa from church to secular: “I have seen heaven and it is covered in red paint like it is Chinese New Year!”



FFRF Freethought Heroine Award, 37th annual convention, Los Angeles, Oct. 24, 2014

# Hamilton: ‘Extreme religious liberty’ is tyranny



Marci Hamilton

Marci Hamilton, recipient of FFRF’s Freethought Heroine Award, is a leading state/church scholar who holds the Paul R. Verkuil Chair in Public Law at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, New York City. She holds degrees from Vanderbilt University, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pennsylvania. Hamilton clerked for Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and is the author of *God and the Gavel: The Perils of Extreme Religious Liberty*, newly updated in 2014. Professor Hamilton wrote FFRF’s amicus brief before the Supreme Court in Hobby Lobby’s challenge of the contraceptive mandate. Her websites are [sol-reform.com](http://sol-reform.com) and [RFRAperils.com](http://RFRAperils.com) and her blog is at [hamilton-griffin.com](http://hamilton-griffin.com).

By Marci Hamilton

It’s an honor to be here. Thanks to Annie Laurie for inviting me and for this wonderful honor.

I’m going to talk tonight about what it has been like being inside the RFRA war, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act war, and what the future holds for these extreme religious liberty statutes and civil rights.

I have been fighting for 20 years the idea that religious believers and institutions should have a right to take actions that harm others. That is really what is wrong with the current balance of church and state in the United States. We’ve created a culture of narcissistic religious believers, who believe sincerely that their rights should trump anybody else’s rights — that they’re right and everybody else is wrong.

It was illuminating to read the crank mail in Freethought Today on the airplane. The person next to me thought I had lost my mind because I was laughing so hard. I had two favorites. One was, “I am a high school student who is also a Christian. Your organization is making it hard for me to express my religion in public.” No, it’s not. Then there was: “This makes me very angry. I would really appreciate it if you let us believe in our god, the god who holds the universe in his hands. Let us be pro-life and let us not believe in the lifestyle of homosexuals.” No one is stopping you.

They seem to believe they have a right to own the public square. There is a lot of talk about religion in the United States; there’s never been more talk about religion in the United States.

This talk of the public square is an attempt to own the public square rather than share it.

Another favorite was, “My goal is to destroy, dissolve this organization. 75% of Americans claim to be of Christian faith, which makes us the majority, and in a traditional Democratic Republic the majority rules. When the majority unites we will smash this website organization or company like the sledgehammer to an ant.” This one brought to mind James Madison, who crafted the First Amendment and repeatedly said things that today’s religious lobbyists don’t want repeated. Madison believed that the greatest thing to fear in a republican democracy is faction. And when he used the word “faction,” he meant interest groups.

But at the same time, he said in “Memorial and Remonstrance [against Religious Assessments,” 1785] that we must be aware and be concerned about ecclesiastical establishments. With the framing of the First Amendment, he understood that the problem for religion and the problem of religion is that we need freedom, but we also need disestablishment.

He believed that people who were believers would overreach. And of course that whole generation believed it; why wouldn’t they? They escaped Europe because they were being oppressed for their religious beliefs. But many of them came over here and oppressed others, not knowing any other way.

It’s really the miracle of the First Amendment, and frankly, the way the Supreme Court has interpreted it, that has created diversity and the right to be or not to be a believer in the United States.

I always tell my students that one of the most interesting aspects of the Constitution is that there is only one absolute right in the entire document — every other right the government can trump if its interests are strong enough. The one absolute right is the right to believe anything you want. That is the miracle of the United States. And that’s the right that is protected regardless of what the government ever tries to do. The right to believe what one wants, however, is not packaged with a right not to be criticized or a right to dictate public policy. Quite to the contrary.

## Roots of RFRA

So how did I get into this crazy RFRA war? I was clerking for Justice O’Connor the year *Employment Division v. Smith* was decided [in 1990]. That quite simple case was used as the launching pad for extreme religious liberty statutes. It involved two Oregon drug counselors who took peyote as part of a religious ceremony and were fired. When you’re a drug counselor, you’re not supposed to use illegal drugs.

To paraphrase, the Supreme Court said, “In the vast majority of our cases, we have said that if there is a law that’s neutral, not discriminatory, and it applies to everybody who does the same thing, that law is constitutional.” That description was correct. I can tell you as a clerk that year that none of us thought that *Smith* was going to be the most politically important case of the year. No one thought much of it at all.

But it was the religious lobbyists who jumped on the minute *Smith* came down and said, “Oh no, that’s not what the standard was. No, Justices, you are wrong. You know what, since the Supreme Court’s so stupid not to know its own cases, we’re going to go across the street to Congress, and we’ll say to Congress, you need to restore religious liberty.”

So they marched over to Senators Orrin Hatch and Ted Kennedy. They are the two that made things happen. What they were handed by the Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion is the so-called, the most brilliantly named statute in American history, the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act.” The “Restoration” in the title is a lie. It was not restoring anything that had been in place before. It was putting in place what the religious litigants had failed to obtain for years.

The coalition asserted that *Smith* was the end of religious liberty and they got Congress on board. What’s worse is they got the ACLU, People for the American Way and Americans United for Separation of Church and State on board, too. Everybody thought this was a wonderful thing to restore religious liberty.

In 1993, after three years of lobbying and three years of testimony by members of religious and civil liberties groups, including 450 pages of telling Congress that the Supreme Court was stupid, that the Supreme Court didn’t know its own doctrine, didn’t even know what its own cases said, members of Congress said to each other, “You know, if the ACLU and the Christian Legal Society are on the same page, we cannot go wrong. This has to be good.”

The ACLU and People for the American Way and Americans United, none of them did the deep digging. None of them appeared to have read a few cases to figure out that in fact RFRA was a lie. It wasn’t restoring anything; it was creating a new extreme religious liberty standard that was now going to make it so that believers could challenge every law in the country. The law schools were teaching that the standard in RFRA was the standard all along, but it was the standard they wanted. It wasn’t the standard at the court.

In 1993, three years after *Smith*, the Supreme Court decided *Church of Lu-*

## RFRF wasn’t ‘restoring’ anything; it was creating a new extreme religious liberty standard.

*kumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah*. It was the first case the court decided in which it appeared there was real religious discrimination. The city of Hialeah, Fla., had banned animal sacrifice so that the Santeríaans could not practice their religion, but had left in place kosher slaughtering, which is virtually an identical practice.

The church argued the following:

The government cannot enforce this discriminatory law against us unless the government can prove it has a “compelling interest,” and that its regulation is the “least restrictive means” of regulating for these believers. In other words, the standard that was suggested to the Supreme Court was that every law had to be tailored closely to the demands of each believer.

The Supreme Court rejected it. The court said essentially, “Yes, when there’s targeting of religion, yes, the government must prove a ‘compelling interest,’ and that’s part of the tradition. But we’re not going to require the government to regulate so that each law is the ‘least restrictive’ for this believer. The law can’t be shaped to one believer.”

In the first free exercise of religion case in *Reynolds*, involving polygamy in 1878, the court held that no one may be a law unto themselves. The *Smith* court in 1990 and the *Lukumi* court in 1993 echoed that. Five months later RFRA was signed into law by President Clinton and celebrated as a restoration of the standard that purportedly had been in place before, but RFRA is the standard the court rejected in the *Lukumi* case for discrimination cases. It is beyond discussion that the First Amendment had never been interpreted to apply this extreme medicine to laws that are neutral and generally applicable to all.

Voilà, RFRA appears and dramatically shifts the balance between religious liberty and harm. Suddenly, if you can show you have a religious belief that is being “substantially burdened” by that law discriminatory or not, the government now bears the extraordinary burden of proving that that law was passed for a “compelling, or highly important, interest” and it is the “least restrictive means” of regulating this policy for this believer. In short, the law must be tailored to this believer. That’s the RFRA that President William Clinton signed into law in 1993.

## Boerne v. Flores

I challenged RFRA’s constitutionality at the Supreme Court. It was my first case, indeed my first oral argument. In *Boerne v. Flores*, I represented the city of Boerne (pronounced BUR-nee), Texas. It was 1997, and in Boerne, a Catholic church in the historic preservation district wanted to demolish the church and build basically a box. The city responded, “No, no boxes. You have to keep the front of that building. If you don’t keep the front of that building, then it doesn’t fit in with the historic district.” As always happens in land use applications across the United States, the parties sat down to find a middle ground.

They started negotiating and essentially reached the point where the city said, “You need to keep 70% of the façade.” The church said, “No, we’ll keep 50% of the façade.” Now it does not take a genius to know the middle ground between 70% and 50% is 60%, right? That was a solution that would have precluded going to court and would have led to building a new church for believers as soon as possible.

But then RFRA became law, and the archbishop of San Antonio invoked it with the message that they did not have



to abide by Boerne’s historic preservation law.

The case went all the way up to the Supreme Court. One of my favorite parts of representing the city of Boerne was that the mayor was a Methodist minister, Patrick Heath. He was 100% behind challenging RFRA because he thought that it was wrong. He had both a gentle soul and a practical bent and knew that a landowner should not be able to dictate land use policy just because it was a church.

We argued it was unconstitutional in about five different ways. The court ruled 6-3 that RFRA was unconstitutional in virtually every way that we had argued. Once *Boerne* came down, the religious lobbyists — largely at that point the Becket Fund and the Rutherford Institute — expanded their targets.

It used to be that *Smith* was the worst decision in history; now it was going to be the *Boerne* case. The religious lobbyists went back to Congress and said we want to do it all over again. We’ll agree to a few touch-ups but we want the same law again. Well by that point, groups that fight religious groups on a daily basis in our society had made themselves known to me: the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of Regulatory Agencies, every prison authority in the country, the attorneys general, the governors, the mayors, Children’s Healthcare Is a Legal Duty (CHILd).

All of them said, “This law must not be passed again; this law is a nightmare.” And frankly, I didn’t know that many people lobbied against religion when I first undertook to represent Boerne. I had no idea, but I was really taken with people like CHILd’s Rita Swan, who fights medical neglect, and I was persuaded that RFRA was not just a bad constitutional idea but also bad law and bad policy.

I testified against it and had members of Congress tell me, “Oh, I know it’s unconstitutional, but we have to pass it anyway.”

In addition to children’s groups, now we had other groups coming out of the woodwork and the ACLU began to stir. The Christian Legal Society and other conservative Christian groups were losing some of the battles on fair housing laws in the states and needed RFRA as a backstop to permit them to reject rental applicants who were unmarried, single mothers and/or same-sex couples. The ACLU saw that their own agendas were being undermined in the states.

No unanimous consent

There was back and forth from 1997 to 2000. First they tried to pass just RFRA redux. It doesn’t make it because everybody knows this is a law that’s intended to undermine civil rights. The House passed it 308-117 as a political nod, knowing the Senate would not take it up. Then there was the deal with the devil. The civil rights groups acquiesced with, “You can have RFRA as applied to federal law because the federal civil rights don’t apply to the LGBTQ community.” But no RFRA applicable to state laws, because LGBTQ and housing civil rights were making progress in some states.

At the time, Title VII didn’t protect sexual orientation but states were starting to, and the Supreme Court had yet to treat LGBTQ as a suspect class and worthy of heightened protection under equal protection. So a RFRA only against federal law wouldn’t cut back on LGBTQ rights. In other words, the ACLU agreed to a law that had the po-

Women are being discriminated against because they don’t believe what their employers believe.

tential to attack federal civil rights but was willing to let it go if it just didn’t do anything to the LGBTQ community.

Then James Dobson and Charles Colson came into the picture. Dobson purportedly was behind the push for rights for religious landowners to trump local land use laws. Colson, of Watergate fame, came in from his Prison Fellowship ministry saying he needed to be able to evangelize with fewer restrictions in the prisons.

It’s July 27, 2000. I get a call. We are told that we need to start putting together the panels because there are going to be hearings from the opponents to a new RFRA in September. We’ll bring in Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Sen. Patrick Moynihan, both of whom had asked to testify, the National League of Cities, International Municipal Lawyers Association. A lot of people wanted to explain what was wrong with this law.

That night I get a phone call from a reporter: “Did you know that RFRA and RLUIPA just passed?” I said, “No, they’re on summer recess.” He said, “You better talk to someone because I heard they passed.”

As soon as they went into recess and the members who were opponents had left town, leadership took RFRA and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which is RFRA applied to land use and to prisons in the states, and passed it by “unanimous consent” in one house and then the other. Unanimous consent is the phrase used by Congress when you have leadership bring a bill up with no

quorum, no roll call and no requirement of anybody being there but a handful.

They hired a courier to run it from the House to the Senate, and before anybody in opposition could learn what was going on, the new RFRA and RLUIPA was passed. To this day, they say they passed it “unanimously.” That is propaganda.

I’m on the phone to reporters and editors routinely, “How in the world could you not do the research to figure out that it wasn’t unanimous?” “Well, they told me.” I say, “Please do your homework.” It was not passed unanimously, ever, ever. It was passed by unanimous consent in 1993 in the House; it was passed 97-3 in the Senate. It was passed by unanimous consent in both houses in 2000, never a roll call, never a quorum.

So that is the bill that is so beloved, and that everybody says, “Well, how can you be against something that everybody loved?” Well, because it’s a bad bill. So at the same time they’re in Congress trying to get a new federal RFRA, the Rutherford Institute fanned out into the 50 state capitols in order to push for 50 state RFRAs.

The idea was that this super-strict standard would apply to the federal government from the federal RFRA and to all state laws through state RFRAs and thereby halt all laws for any religious believers. The thinking was that if we can’t get it at the federal level, we’ll do it at the state level. That had mixed results. California’s RFRA was killed twice, partly because someone accidentally faxed me the Christian Legal Society’s letter explaining the fair housing point, which I had not known up until then.

The group in California that really blocked it was the juvenile justice judges. They were very concerned about custody and family decisions and how a RFRA would take away the standard of the best interest of the child. But it’s now in place in 20 states; we now have 20 state RFRAs. We have a federal RFRA that only applies to federal law,

and we have RLUIPA applying to land use at the local and state levels and in prisons, and 20 state RFRAs.

First there were about 10 or so and then interest petered out for about a decade, but with same-sex marriage on the horizon, interest rose again and the last 10 have been a product of that movement.

Affordable Care Act

So the Affordable Care Act shows up, and conservatives don’t like it, to put it mildly, but it’s declared constitutional. They can’t wipe it out at the Supreme Court, so how could they attack it? They sought the tools available, and the tool available was RFRA. In come the Koch brothers — money — who founded the Cato Institute, you get the Greens’ money [Hobby Lobby], and you get the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Becket Fund [for Religious Liberty]. What do you get? You get an argument that Hobby Lobby, which sounds like a mom and pop organization, but has \$3.3 billion in annual sales, 23,000 employees and over 600 stores, needs protection. Why? They’re religious.

They come in and say they’re religious. Those of us who are on the inside are saying, “No, they’re not.” I was there, I know that we discussed that Exxon would never be thought to be religious, that a large for-profit non-religious corporation was not going to have the benefit of RFRA. We knew that was the deal that was cut.

The Dictionary Act defines the terms in every federal statute, and they had chosen “person” as the rights-holder in RFRA. [The 1871 Dictionary Act instructs courts to apply definitions of certain common words (including “person”) and basic rules of grammatical construction “unless context indicates otherwise.”]

In the Dictionary Act, a corporation is a person. It was either brilliant drafting or blind drafting. Justice Scalia’s favorite resource is a dictionary, and this was the Dictionary Act. So we get a ruling that says this humongous corporation with all of its political power has the right to refuse to provide contraception that it believes is an abortifacient, which is not scientifically an abortifacient.

It has the right not to include four types of contraception in its coverage. Let me explain how RFRA gets you to that unbelievable result, which in my view is a violation of women’s civil rights against gender and religious discrimination. They are being discriminated against because they don’t believe what their employers believe.

RFRA is the concoction of a legal standard that has never existed before, but it’s all terminology that has been pasted together from Supreme Court constitutional cases. So the first thing that has to happen is that the believer has to prove that there’s a “substantial burden” on their conduct. Normally, “substantial” has had quite a bit of bite to it. It means substantial, not *de minimis*.

In this case, an employer who’s putting money into fungible funds, will never know if an employee ever uses any contraception, let alone the types the employer doesn’t like. That’s because of the HIPAA [federal privacy] rules. This is about five times removed from any violation of Hobby Lobby’s religious liberty.

But five members of the Supreme Court believe it’s a “substantial burden.” I’ve litigated religious land use cases for cities all over the country. I have never seen substantial burden

Continued on next page



Ingrid Laas photo

Marci Hamilton addressing FFRF’s 2014 convention.



*Continued from previous page*

interpreted in that attenuated way. Then the court asks, “Well, does the government have a compelling interest in women having cost free access to contraception?” And the majority can’t bring themselves to say that there is a compelling interest in that. They say, “We’ll assume it.” Because they get to the part of the test that it is typically impossible for the government to win — the “least restrictive means” test.

RFRA is contagious

What is the “least restrictive means” for women to have cost-free contraceptive coverage that won’t substantially burden the Greens’ belief that four types of contraception are abortifacients when they’re actually not? That’s the question, and the court has the answer. The least restrictive means is for the government to pay for it. That’s not in the statute. The government has not allocated any funds to cover what the Greens aren’t paying for, or what the other 49 for-profit corporations are asking for since *Hobby Lobby* was decided.

These corporations are saying they have the right not to provide health care that serves the compelling interests of women’s health. Here is the single most important point I’m going to make tonight, by far: RFRA is not establishing a constitutional rule. It’s not a constitutional standard. It’s just a statute, so when you see talk about RFRA, what you see is politicians saying, “I’m in favor of religious rights,” it’s statutory rights, not constitutional rights.

The First Amendment stands for this: Each of us has a right under the Constitution to be free from discrimination from the government based on our beliefs and to have the government treat us like everybody else. If we engage in conduct, and anybody else does the same thing, we’re all treated alike. If the government discriminates against us, the First Amendment kicks in big time.

Believers also have a statutory RFRA right. And the RFRA right is *sui generis*, it’s made up, it’s on its own and it needs to be repealed. It is the wrong standard.

There are also some rather entertaining RFRA cases, if you have a really



Ingrid Laas photo

**Marci Hamilton received her Freethought Heroine Award from FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.**

sick sense of humor and nothing else to do. The fundamentalist Mormons [FLDS, led by imprisoned “prophet” Warren Jeffs] argued that they can’t testify about their practices in a proceeding involving an alleged violation of federal child labor laws, and the court agreed.

Another RFRA wrinkle is that Gitmo detainees see *Hobby Lobby* as a wonderful opening, not because they’re for-profit corporations, but because they think that “person” must also include nonresident detainees. So they’ve asked for the right to engage in communal prayer, which is not permitted at Gitmo because that’s where they “collude,” that’s where they pass messages. They have also asked for a right not to have a female guard because it’s against their religious beliefs to have a woman touch them.

The good news is that this is just a federal statute. The second good news is that it’s unconstitutional to apply it to the states. Even the state RFRAs are not bound by *Hobby Lobby*. It’s a federal interpretation of a federal statute.

What that means is that a state right now, especially if it does not have a

RFRA, could pass a law that says every female employee has a right to contraceptive coverage. If she doesn’t get it, it’s a violation of her civil rights. If a RFRA-less state were to do that, all the Hobby Lobby stores in that state would have to provide their employees with contraceptive coverage.

What’s ahead?

What’s next is finally what I’ve been hoping for years. After the court declared in *Boerne* that RFRA was unconstitutional and I saw them going back to Congress, I started calling groups to say you have no idea what you are up against and you need to start fighting it now. There is a statute that is going to undermine your interests and you need to do something about it: RFRA.

I called groups like the National Organization for Women. They hung up on me. You know, at the time I sounded like a lunatic, right? A rational lunatic, but a lunatic. Now I don’t. Now I’m right.

Finally, the ACLU, People for the American Way, Americans United, Freedom From Religion Foundation, reproductive rights groups, women’s

rights groups — including NOW — children’s advocates, are all joining together to push back against the RFRA. I thought the best question this afternoon was, “What is FFRF doing with other groups?” It is going to take that kind of coalition of Americans to either repeal the RFRA or to inflict deaths by a thousand amendments.

It ought to be clearly stated in every RFRA that it does not trump civil rights, whether they are rights for women, race or the LGBTQ. How about a line in each RFRA that says it has no effect in cases involving the death of children, the abuse of children or the neglect of children? Let religious entities defend the right to do that.

Finally, there are two things that need to happen. The attorneys’ fees provisions should be repealed. They perversely force taxpayers to underwrite special treatment of religious entities and believers when they harm others like Hobby Lobby has.

There was a move starting last spring [2014] to enact state RFRA that would permit private businesses to invoke RFRA against their customers. So the pizzeria that doesn’t want to serve a homosexual could deny service. Or, the white supremacist who owns a tavern would be able to keep minorities out, or the black supremacist would be able to keep whites out. That’s the bill that Arizona was considering and that Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed. Why did she veto it? Because the National Football League and Major League Baseball threatened to pull their teams. Unfortunately, Mississippi did enact such a law.

You need to understand, however, that blocking this expansion of the RFRA to private disputes is not enough to redress how RFRA undergird discrimination. [After my talk, Indiana enacted a RFRA that applied to private transactions, and then “fixed it” but few understand that the “fixed” RFRA still permits discrimination by employers (like Hobby Lobby) against their employees based on religious belief.]

Discrimination against religion, discrimination against atheists, discrimination based on race, gender and sexual orientation have no place in our society. I hope we’ll wipe out RFRA.

Thank you again for this extraordinary honor.

Overheard

Then, one day, I did the unthinkable and looked at sites featuring comments and forums for former members of the church. Suddenly, everything made sense. I lasted 45 years, trying everything I could think of to be a good church member while still remaining true to myself, and everything crumbled in about 10 minutes. Maybe less.

**Profile of ex-Mormon Cathy Mason, College Ward, Utah, “Local atheist explains views in hopes of dispelling stigma”**  
*North Logan Herald Journal, 5-27-15*

Mount up, Pastor, and ride off into the sunset.

**William Hagen, Dacono, Colo., letter to the editor critical of Cowboy Church Pastor Randy Pfaff’s ongoing evangelization efforts at Florence High School, for which a teacher is suing the school district**  
*Denver Post, 5-29-15*

The prayer mat is priced at a hefty \$300, due to the very comprehensive

process of manufacturing and technology put into the production of TIMEZ5 physiological prayer mat.

**Story on a Canadian-born Muslim’s invention to ease aching joints, “New space technology prayer may unveiled”**  
*Pakistan Express Tribune, 6-1-15*

If you believe that Caitlyn Jenner has sinned because she was born with a Y-chromosome despite always feeling female, then so be it. I am all for religious freedom. But please do not ever try to tell me that that’s the same as a teenage boy feeling up his little sisters while they sleep.

**Jenny Erikson, blog criticizing Josh Duggar’s Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd, Pinnacle Cross Church, who compared allegations against Duggar to Bruce Jenner transitioning to female**  
*The Stir, 6-1-15*

On behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain, I want to express an unreserved apology for the failure of its current and earlier processes fully to protect children, young people and adults from physical and sexual abuse inflicted by some ministers.

**Rev. Martyn Atkins, Methodist Conference secretary, on a report of 1,885**

**cases of alleged sexual, physical, emotional and domestic abuse and neglect by clergy dating to 1950**  
*BBC News, 5-28-15*

He is making a mockery of the papal commission, of the pope himself, but most of all, of victims and survivors.

**Peter Saunders, British member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, calling for the dismissal of Australian Cardinal George Pell as Vatican finance czar for turning a blind eye to child sex abuse**  
*Source: CBS News, 6-1-15*

A Catholic reads the Bible, week 9: A talking ass saves the day.

**Laura Bernardini column on the Book of Numbers fable of how Balaam and his donkey are blocked three times by an angel**  
*CNN, 6-3-15*

The term “theist” applies to anyone who has some kind of belief in a god or gods. The Greek prefix “a-” is simply a negative, like the English “non-.” Anyone therefore who is not a theist is a “non-theist” or “atheist.” One can no more draw broad conclusions about atheists from that label than one could

about “non-chess players” or “non-knitters.” Technically, a newborn child is an atheist, as is my dog (although she seems to worship me).

**Richard Packham, Dixonville, Ore., retired college professor and attorney, op-ed**  
*Roseburg News-Review, 6-7-15*

It bothers me, not being a Christian, to hear that Jesus is our savior or we should be thankful to be here because of Jesus. It bothers me more as an American.

**A congressional staffer asking for anonymity while objecting to a prayer “in Jesus’ name” to open a U.S. House session, for which 28 of 29 guest chaplains have been Christian**  
*CQ Roll Call, 6-7-15*

But just as nobody should be ashamed to proclaim their religious beliefs, so too should atheists come out of the closet. Especially those of us who are parents. Because it’s important that even in the Bible Belt, other kids and parents can see that kids can be kind, loving, strong, and good — without God.

**Kate Tuttle op-ed, “I’m raising my children atheist in the Bible Belt”**  
*DAME, 6-8-15*



Letterbox

‘Christian nation’ claims are merely driv

Like so many who contribute to FFRF, I am incensed by the almost daily barrage of misinformation. I refer to the constant statements regarding our “Christian nation” and our “Christian founding fathers.” This incessant driv-el emanating from the self-deluded drove me to do a small amount of re-search into the actual beliefs of those who set this great republic on its feet.

Here are a few examples:

- “Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise.” — James Madison

- “My own mind is my own church.” — Thomas Paine

- “A man compounded of law and gospel is able to cheat a whole coun-try with his religion and then destroy them under color of law.” — Benjamin Franklin

There are dozens more all in the same vein. These men are “Christians” only in the minds of the ignorant. I once thought this stupidity would wane over the course of my life, but alas it is not to be. So on it goes, faith in various deities leading to murder and violence as it has for millennia.

I take pride in assisting in a small way the advance of enlightenment and look forward to FFRF’s next campaign.

**William Semans**  
**Minnesota**

• • •

I’d like to add a few thoughts to the May issue’s article by Kevin Kruse titled “A Christian nation?” We freethinkers often quote Article XI of the Treaty of Peace with Tripoli, which states that “The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion,” and that’s it. Let me suggest that we always add to that quote the most persuasive aspect of that treaty: that is that it was *unani-mously* ratified by the U.S. Senate.

How can we possibly be said to be a Christian nation?

**Theodore M. Utchen**  
**Illinois**

Churches get break secular businesses don’t

I am thrilled to have discovered FFRF and become a member. I can see you are making great inroads in ex-posing the hypocrisy and bullying tac-tics of many religions. One thing still troubles me. It doesn’t seem to me that there is separation of church and state if religions are free from taxes. Isn’t this the state catering to religions and making them stronger?

It’s shameful how churches own so much prime property, profitable busi-nesses and other means of wealth. For instance, does the Mormon Church pay the required amount of taxes on their Marriott Hotel chain? Should St. Patrick’s Cathedral occupy prime New York real estate tax-free?

The benefit should not apply to money-making enterprises that give churches advantages that secular com-panies don’t have. We all now know that Scientology blackmailed the IRS into giving them tax-exempt status and now they have accumulated billions. Is this really separation of church and state?

**Allan Provost**  
**Florida**

The pros and cons of black collar crime

Dan Barker’s *Godless* is one of the most interesting, informative, best-written disbeliever books I’ve ever read. I recommend anyone seeking intelligent reasons to doubt/discard religious dogma to buy it or borrow it from your library.

Secondly, while the black collar crime section can be interesting, I find the accounts awfully repetitive and rather boring. Same stuff issue after issue.

**Bob Varden**  
**Washington**

• • •

This information was in our news-paper today: “9 sex assault charges for itinerant preacher.” I enjoy your publi-cation and read each item in the black collar crime section. Thank you.

**James Ehernberger**  
**Wyoming**

• • •

Your excellent though shocking pages on black collar crime are a continuous reminder of the less than grand aspects of organized religion all around us. Do you think that a collec-tion of all your previous crime blot-ter pages would pay for itself in hard cover? Even if some religious zealots picketed Barnes & Noble and others, I can see where their presence would only spark some very healthy sales. The pages in FFRF can only reach so many readers.

I don’t know how long the blotter has been in existence, but I’d bet some of my vast Florida Lottery winnings (yeah, really!) that they would get plenty of attention, and business.

**Don Blair**  
**Florida**

*Editor’s note: The column began in the mid-1980s.*

New ‘Lifer’ sends check with admiration

You will find enclosed a check for \$1,000 for a Lifetime Membership. I’ve been meaning to do this for some time. Thank you for the wonderful work you do. Don’t know how you manage it all, but you have my greatest admiration and respect.

**Joyce McChesney**  
**South Carolina**

Adult in the room should be atheist

Every Sunday morning after picking up my wife from her church service, we’d go with some of the members to a restaurant for lunch. Before the meal, they would pray. After being a nice guy about this for years, I told my wife that I didn’t like to hear about the “dear heavenly father,” knowing what I do about the father’s failures to care for his children.


My wife told one of them and the word was out. For a couple of meals, we ate without “grace” first. (They had just come from a two-hour church ser-vice, so why would they want to pray even more?) Since then, they have not joined us for lunch.

This experience reminds me of oth-ers. I think they are behaving like petu-lant children. If they can’t have it their way, they won’t eat with me and will also avoid talking to me because I ask about their beliefs from a secular perspective.

Mark Your Calendar!

4<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
YOUTH SOCCER CAMP

Hosted by Waldensian Presbyterian Church



Camp: July 13-17, 2015  
For Rising 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> Graders

Location:  
Waldensian Presbyterian Church, 109 Main Street East, Valdese  
and  
Old Rock School (Joe Temple Athletic Field),  
400 West Main Street, Valdese

Registration: Saturday, June 6, 2015  
Waldensian Presbyterian Church  
9am-12pm (Pioneer Hall)

Cost due upon registration: \$50

Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Waldensian Presbyterian Church Office  
at (828) 874-2531 or e-mail at [office@waldensianpresbyterian.org](mailto:office@waldensianpresbyterian.org)

A North Carolina member writes about this flier that came home with her elementary school students: “I complained about this once to the school and was under the impression that this flier would never be sent home again. Is there anything you suggest? I do not want to see religious propaganda coming home from a public school.”

Legal Assistant Calli Miller notes that FFRF gets many such complaints. “Unfortunately, if the school system allows outside organizations to send fliers home with students, they cannot ‘discriminate’ against religious groups or churches. We have an FAQ on our website about this issue ([ffrf.org/faq/state-church](http://ffrf.org/faq/state-church) and scroll to Religious Take Home Fliers). The FAQ also gives you information on what you can do. For example, parents can urge schools to re-strict their flier policies to school-sponsored events only. If your school district does not allow outside groups to send home fliers, and this church is receiving special access, please let us know.”

We need an atheist sitcom where this is a predominant theme, one where the atheist is the only adult in the room and the believers behave like petulant children who refuse to grow up and face the evidence for evolution, cli-mate change and other viewpoints oth-er than their own. There is a cornuco-pia of ammunition. Freethought Today alone is filled with examples, especially the crank mail, First Amendment chal-lenges, the Charlie Hebdo killings over cartoons, and Justice Alito.

**Carl Scheiman**  
**Maine**

FFRF is ‘shining beacon in cloudy world’

I am proud to be a member of FFRF. I want to start out with that because I cannot imagine a world without such an organization. “Watchdog” outfits are hard to come by nowadays. I am of the opinion that you are doing a good job.

I want to let you know what I do with the “nontracts” I order from you. I leave them in public places where there are Christian tracts. What fanat-ics! Am I stooping to their level? I can’t help it, that stuff just plain old offends me. They have the right to preach in public. Well then, I am free to throw my nontracts at their feet, in public with people watching.

I like to work behind the scenes, but there are times when I will stop and say, “Now look.” I am not afraid

of standing my ground or stealing the evangelists’ spotlight. Unfortunately, my middle brother and middle sister have joined the ranks of the Christian cult. How can two people who rebelled against their strict Catholic upbringing go from the frying pan into the fire? I just don’t get it.

Thank you for being a shining bea-con in an otherwise cloudy world.

**Michael Mroz**  
**Colorado**

Don’t miss ‘Act of God’ on Broadway

For those who can possibly get to Studio 54 (yes, *that* Studio 54) in New York City between now and Aug. 2, I highly recommend “An Act of God” starring Jim Parsons of “Big Bang The-ory” fame. He portrays The Almighty, flanked by the archangels Michael (Christopher Fitzgerald) and Gabriel (Tim Kazurinsky from “Saturday Night Live”).

FFRF supporters will especially ap-preciate the Ten Commandments plaque removed from a public school, but everyone left of a fundamen-talist will love the entire show. Fantastic production values (loved the terrible “wrath of God” when Michael kept pressing Him for answers beyond “I work in mysterious ways”), side-split-ting gags and even a big musical pro-duction number. Beneath all the in-sights and good-natured barbs (even



Letterbox

poor God can't explain what the heck is the matter with Him), the message of the new and improved Ten Commandments is pure humanism.

For more on this first Broadway show based on tweets (from God, no less) by David Javerbaum ("The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," *The Last Testament: A Memoir and God@TheTweetOfGod*), read "Javerbaum's 'An Act of God' Adapts Tweets to Broadway" online at The New York Times. The show opened May 28. Then Jim has to get back to his day job as mere mortal, albeit dysfunctional, genius.

Joan Reisman-Brill  
New York

Thanks for perceptive Ahlquist speech

I found Jessica Ahlquist's speech [May15, "Wag more, bark less"] from the Los Angeles convention to be the most insightful piece in the paper in a while. Let us hope that her thoughts are widely promulgated and that she rises rapidly to a position of influence in the unbelief movement and beyond and displaces those currently in power who are far less perceptive and forward thinking.

Richard Slade  
Pennsylvania

Youth are wising up about religion

For 60 years, since I was a young news reporter in the 1950s, I have attempted to debunk supernaturalism. Through 10 books and 100 magazine essays, I sought to discredit invisible gods, devils, heavens, hells, angels, demons, miracles and other church dogmas. I tried to make it "respectable" for educated people to reject magical church claims, even here in Appalachia's bible belt.

Now, at last, I feel that we are winning this culture war. ARIS surveys since the 1990s show that religious beliefs and church membership are shriveling in America, as they did in Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan and other advanced societies. In May, a new Pew survey showing dramatic losses by U.S. churches and rapid increases in "nones" was icing on the cake.

At age 83, I feel rather victorious — that we're "saving" America for the honest, rational, intelligent, scientific worldview. I don't know whether our endless crusading helped cause the culture to shift, or whether it evolved through steady sociological transformation and improved education. Either way, I'm elated. I feel that my lifelong battle has been worth it.

James A. Haught  
Editor, The Charleston Gazette  
West Virginia

Mainstream media are prominently reporting that the percentage of non-religious in America has grown to 23%. Not only that, but the percentages are higher within younger age brackets. (As Niels Bohr said, "The opposition never yields, it merely dies off.") So, unless they somehow get sucked into religion by some means (and we can inoculate against that), tomorrow belongs to us.

This is tremendous vindication for those of us who were active during the most recent Great Awakening, when we saw people getting "born again" left and right, religious radio stations

opening up every week, private fundamentalist academies as well, and the Religious Right taking over the Republican Party.

Our efforts seemed for naught, and we wondered where it would end. It was a hugely discouraging time, but times have changed. So let's keep doing what we're doing — people are learning. Even in the bible belt!

Stephen Van Eck  
Pennsylvania

Graphic delight and graphic 'noncaption'

Thank you for featuring the "Get out of that 'mandatory' religion class" coupon on page 22 of the May issue.

Veronica Abbass  
Ontario

I am the creator of that colorful coupon on page 22 of your May issue. It is an honor to have my work in your pages. I have been a big fan of FFRF for about 20 years now. Keep up the good work!

Richard Young  
Ontario

I've been a fan of Don Addis' work for years but the cartoon on page 18 of the May issue [a priest inflating a blow-up God] is clearly his masterpiece! It clearly needs a caption, but I know that Don couldn't get it printed or published if [the "BJ" one I'm thinking of] was included. Sorry, I couldn't resist, but I'll bet I'm not alone.

Myron Smith  
Colorado

Thoughts shared on cultural Jewishness

I saw the letter from Jerry Oster [in the April issue, seeking input from nonpracticing Jews on how they deal with their heritage and anti-Semitism]. I, too was raised in a Jewish household, had a bat mitzvah (1963) in an Orthodox synagogue in Houston, Texas, and was treated as an inferior.

My brothers were both bar-mitzvahed and stood on the "Bima," looking at their Torah portion. I was only allowed on the lower step and not permitted to see the scroll. I think that was the start of my questioning. I found out late in her life that my mom was an atheist but kept her promise to my father to raise us as Jews, so I am second-generation atheist.

Having been to Israel eight times between 1987 and 2001, I have formed my own ideas about Israel. It is a place of refuge. It is a big salad bowl of people

from all over the world. Orthodox Jews make up only a small percentage of the population. Most who live there — Jews and Arabs, Russians and Ethiopians — have no belief in God, any God. There was no God when the country was legitimately created and attacked on all sides by enemies. Israelis know that.

Anti-Semitic comments are hate speech and must be answered due to their sheer ignorance. Anti-human comments deserve the same reaction.

Mr. Oster, you and I are Jews by heritage: cultural and genetic. I think that's why you feel defensive. I get defensive when ignorant people attack Jews, but then I get defensive about animals and children, too. Albert Einstein was a Jew until he died, but he believed none of it. I am on the email list for FFRF Free-thought of the Day. Look how many of those people started out as Jews!

I feel sadness when I think of my ancestors and their shallow gene pools. They have brought me all kinds of bad diseases because they thought they had to avoid marrying out of the group. In doing some genealogy, I found many of them who married first cousins. That is why the group with the highest breast cancer rate in the world is Ashkenazi Jewish women. That's me. So there is another reason to break up the group genetically.

Look for the atheist groups that are near you. Build your own community. FFRF is a tremendous resource. Being free of the constraints of God and religion is true freedom.

Myra Lemson, Life Member  
Washington

Clergy project smooths career transitions

Arizona members had this letter printed in the Prescott Daily Courier:

A recent letter by the pastor of the Alliance Bible Church demonstrated how important it is for an organization to help the less fortunate and bring them to Jesus. There is another unfortunate group that wishes to go in the opposite direction and for which there is now abundant help.

It is called the Clergy Project. It is a project that has been supported by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, of which we are Life Members. It is intended for clergy and other religious professionals who no longer hold a belief in the supernatural or the inerrancy of the bible.

These clergy are unfortunate because they know they will be ostracized by their church, their church members, their friends and possibly their families, if they declare that they have spent so long propagating an error.

This organization helps these clergy

to transition to another life. They are able to find a sense of community and support from other religious professionals that have gone on same path. From that, they get a renewed sense of hope and purpose for the future.

Robert and Jo Chanaud  
Arizona

Morality, religion not the same at all

Brian Myres: This was published May 12 in the Loveland, Colo., Reporter-Herald. I received nothing but positive comments from my friends in the Loveland Connection, a social group of which I'm president.

I must disagree with David Kovac's letter of May 6. He stated that younger people favor gay marriage more than their elders "due to the concerted effort to remove God and religion from our social fabric."

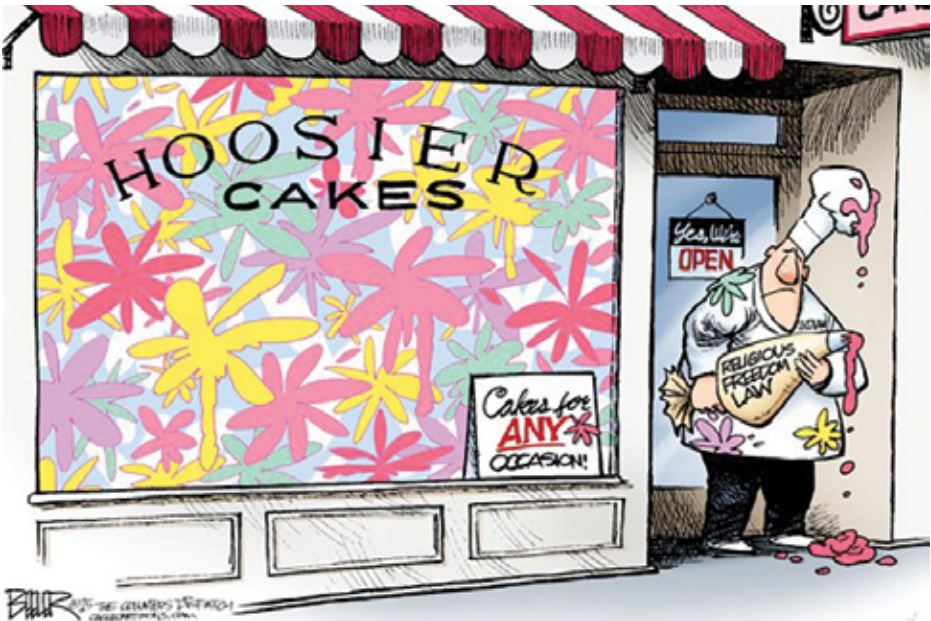
There is no such effort. When has anyone been restricted from engaging in religious activities in his private life? When will the religious right understand that one's moral compass often has very little to do with one's religion, and that we atheists, agnostics and humanists almost universally have our moral compasses fully engaged?

It comes not from the ridiculous fear that we will "burn in hell," but from logic and reason, from fully understanding that morality and ethics come from thinking and caring about others, from study of what the best good for society may be — certainly not from religious books that are full of contradictions and downright horror. Were we to follow the morality of Leviticus, actually suggested by some preachers, we would be no better than ISIS.

Kovacs needs to read the newspaper of the Freedom From Religion Foundation to see the moral lapses and degradations toward people by those who don't just profess religious convictions, but who are leaders in churches across the country. He may then reassess his idea that religion is required to have morality and ethics, or that they naturally follow from religious belief. This is not by any means a Christian country: It is a republic founded on religious freedom, and that includes not believing in a higher power. The framers of the Constitution recognized the problems with state religions and coziness between the state and religion, and wrote the First Amendment to solve that problem. The last thing they wanted was a theocracy.

Under our Constitution, the law of the land, the 14th Amendment, should secure the right of LGBT people to marry just as any other citizen has that right. In our country, it matters not what any religious book says: if people wish to follow those books, that is their right. But it is also the right of others not to be coerced into following those books if they disagree, and no American citizen who understands the concept of liberty should be complicit in demanding that his or her religious convictions become the law of the land.

Brian Myres  
Colorado



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.



# Scouting action alert gets good response

*Following is a sampling of letters (edited for print) that FFRF members sent to Boy Scouts of America President Robert Gates, responding to a May 28 action alert urging an end to BSA's discrimination against nonbelievers.*



Gary King in his uniform.

I am for the Boy Scouts of America becoming an American-friendly organization. I can't have freedom of religion unless I have freedom from religions that have abused so many. It was in Scouting that I learned of the rampant spiritual abuse of our Native tribes. They needed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 to restore their rights. Their spirituality is within the natural world and does not worship the supernatural.

I use science and reason to understand creation.

**Gary King**  
Colorado

...

I was a Boy Scout some 75 years ago in Berkeley, Calif. I left the Scouts because of its ritual, ceremony and religiosity, all of which put me off. Self-confident youth do not need any of that organized kind of teaching, especially before they're capable of making their own informed decisions; it diminishes them and the organization.

**Ken Herrick**  
California

...

I am writing to you as a 10-year Navy veteran and an atheist. When you were secretary of defense, you led a military that included many atheists and agnostics. Why do you want to keep men like us and our sons from joining the Boy Scouts of America?

Religious belief is not necessary for moral behavior or strong leadership. Please reconsider your prejudices about nonreligious people.

**Ben Dreidel**  
New York

...

The American populace is changing, and there are lots of hard-working, caring and socially active young people who don't believe in God. For example, at my Unitarian church in Golden, Colo., our youths volunteer regularly for service in the community, and yet almost none of them profess a belief in God. They work to make the world a better place because it's the right thing to do, not because of the strictures of any certain religion.

I understand there is a tradition in America that opposes atheism, but as I said, times have changed and it would be uplifting to see BSA policies change with the times. Please don't exclude boys from the awesome experience

of scouting based on this. These kids should be evaluated based on their deeds, not their beliefs.

Thank you for the work you do!

**Rick Fisher**  
Colorado

...

I'm the mother of two boys, both of whom were Boy Scouts in the 1970s and one of whom became an Eagle Scout in 1981. We lived in Dumfries, Va., at the time. My husband and I were never asked to sign a "Declaration of Religious Principles" document, and both our boys were able to climb the ranks without earning any religious merit badges or other awards. (My second son rose to the Life Scout rank.)

My second son quit scouting at 15 as he became more aware of his homosexuality and a sense (although indirect) that the scouts were opposed to his orientation. One result of that form of discrimination has been our family's opposition to the BSA since their anti-homosexual position became clear. None of our four grandsons is a Boy Scout for that reason.

The only purpose of my letter is to let you know that at least one BSA troop leadership ignored the religious requirement.

**Pat Dunlap**  
Virginia

...

I don't know why any boy in modern times, once aware of BSA's discriminatory practices, would want to join. Oh, I forgot, so many are indoctrinated into the "belief" system at so young an age, they really have no basis to think otherwise.

So keep up the good Christian-only work, but please change your name. You are not the Boy Scouts of America. You are the Boy Scouts of Christianity or the Boy Scouts of God Fearers at best.

**Ron B.**

...

I am 87 and an interior designer. First, isn't it a bit ludicrous for an organization founded by a gay Englishman to ban gay males? Simply because folks are born with certain furniture between their legs, does not mean that is how their brains work. Ask Dick Cheney *his* thoughts on this!

My grandson is an Eagle Scout and is graduating from Edinburgh University, Scotland, tomorrow. His troop was in Santa Monica, Calif.

I have been a proud American atheist forever, even though my parents were Christians. When my father was drinking, we attended Calvary Baptist Church in Altoona, Pa. When he was sober, we went to Third Presbyterian.

I advised my grandson not to mention atheist or be pro-gay in thinking at meetings. "Oh Grandmother, over half the people in my troop are atheists, and we have some gays as well."

"How do you know?"

"Grandmother, it's 2015. No one thinks like that anymore." Two years go by. My grandson told me, "Grandmother, 90% of our troop are atheists."

The USA is falling behind in many areas. *This* is one.

**Brigit Clarke-Smith**  
California

...

I am writing to share with you how extremely disappointed I was to recently learn that you, a longtime servant of the U.S. government with an esteemed and illustrious career in your many roles, had lent your name and your

energy to the Boy Scouts of America, an organization that has over the past several decades demonstrated itself to have become a discriminatory and even bigoted organization, which undermines its claims of providing a moral foundation for American youth by banning gays and atheists from being able to participate.

I participated in the BSA as a youth in the 1960s, even earning my Eagle Scout badge. That pride turned to embarrassment and shame when the BSA adopted a formal policy of driving out LGBT and atheist youth in the 1970s. As a nontheist myself, today I and my children would not be able to participate in the BSA's programs without being forced to hide our religious agnosticism.

I would think it not necessary to point out that forcing anyone, especially a child, to lie about themselves in order to be allowed to participate is pretty reprehensible behavior that only endorses bullying, shame and deception. Your reputation and clout in denouncing such un-American values would have been a powerful and admirable incentive for the BSA to change its ways, had you chosen to do so. Instead, you have significantly tarnished your reputation in my eyes by siding and promoting the organization.

Secretary Gates, you should certainly know from your exemplary career that discrimination and bigotry are wrong. I urge you to use your influence to convince the BSA to change its ways.

**Stuart Bechman**  
California

...

I write to urge you to drop your wholly unwarranted, thoroughly bigoted policies regarding religiosity. You would not, I'm quite sure, even consider having or defending a policy declaring that being a good scout or citizen required a boy to be light-skinned or a liberal Democrat. Yet you proudly declare that "The Boy Scouts of America maintain that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligation to God."

I was a Boy Scout for a number of years, and I maintain that I have been a successful, responsible citizen. But I recognize no "God" to whom anyone has an obligation. Please reconsider your policy.

**Ed Buckner**  
Georgia

...

Wake up! Boy Scouts of America is an old idea that needs to change. It should be changed to Scouts of America. SA! All should be included with no discrimination. That's the fight that needs to be fought.

**Christopher Mis**  
New Jersey

...

The Girl Scouts are in my will and the Boy Scouts are not. The Mormon church has hijacked the Boy Scouts.

**C. J. Welle**  
Utah

...

It is past time for BSA to stop placing dogma over people, by shunning those who hold the intellectually respectable position that we need proof before swallowing dogmatic claims. Religious litmus tests have no place in a fraternal organization with a congressional charter.

**Anna Alldredge**  
Alabama

...

Atheists are responsible, respectable citizens too. Commonly held beliefs about god have no basis in fact. Religious beliefs are widely accepted because they are promoted by close family and community as absolute truth. Close examination or consideration of differing views is discouraged or forbidden. But those of us who have abandoned traditional religion are still good citizens. Rejection is unfair and mindless. It is based on the assumption by BSA leaders that they have a monopoly on righteousness and good intentions, and those who differ must be weeded out.

**Norman Moyer**  
California



## You won't believe you're reading this!

A New Hampshire member notes the recent addition of this planter to the entrance of Concord Hospital in Concord, which is operated as a charitable nonprofit. "It seems this would discourage patients from seeking treatment at the Payson Cancer Center (turn left), or ultimately, the Hospice House (turn right, 200 feet away). Perhaps if this were billboard-sized, it would cut down on the heavy traffic from patients seeking cancer care?"



# Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

## Arrested / Charged

The **Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis** (a Minnesota corporation) faces 6 gross misdemeanors filed by the Ramsey County Attorney's Office for failure to protect children from abusive priest **Curtis Wehmeyer**. Such criminal charges, each carrying a \$3,000 fine, against a U.S. archdiocese are unprecedented.

"Today we are alleging a disturbing institutional and systemic pattern of behavior committed by the highest levels of leadership of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis over the course of decades," said Ramsey County Attorney John Choi.

"This is precedent setting," said Marci Hamilton, a law professor at Yeshiva University in New York and a national expert on clergy abuse litigation. "It sends a message that these are not cases against individual priests and individual victims, it's systemic."

Choi said the 20-month investigation involved interviews with more than 50 witnesses and review of 170,000 pages of documents.

The archdiocese's canon lawyer, Jennifer Haselberger, reported the abuse to law enforcement in 2012 and became the key whistleblower. *Source: Star Tribune, 6-5-15*

**William "Pete" McCullers, 64, Chipley, FL:** 10 counts of lewd and lascivious acts on 4 alleged victims under age 12. McCullers, former pastor at Tabernacle of Praise Church, was arrested in Dothan, AL, on a Florida warrant. *Source: Panama City News Herald, 6-5-15*

**Alan K. Robinson Jr., 31, Seth, W.VA:** Sexual abuse by a parent, guardian, custodian or person in a position of trust and soliciting a minor via computer. Robinson, a teacher at Sherman High School, also led Youth Christians in Action, a weekly program in which the alleged victim took part. He was arrested after the girl's parent found sexually explicit text messages on her phone. *Source: Charleston Gazette, 6-2-15*

**Daniel A. Jack, 31, Lower Burrell, PA:** Rape, involuntary deviant sexual intercourse, concealment of whereabouts of a child, sexual assault by sports official volunteer or employee of nonprofit association, corruption of minors, criminal use of communication facility and indecent assault. Jack, a youth leader at Amplify Church and technology employee at Kiski Area School District, allegedly raped a 16-year-old girl from his youth group earlier this year at her home.

The girl didn't fight a half-dozen other encounters "since she looked up to him as a mentor and father figure, that she would let him down and disappoint him if she would refuse," the complaint said. Her mother reported her missing after finding a suicide note and later found her in a shack in a wooded area where Jack had driven her. *Source: WPXI, 6-2-15*

**Steve Karro, 55, Miama Beach, FL:** Lewd and lascivious molestation of a child under 12 and lewd and lascivious conduct on a child under 16. 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, then kissed her on the neck after sitting her on his lap.

Karro allegedly told police he touched the girl's buttocks for "cleansing" because she was showing "negative energy."

"It's something very simple — love, harmony, cleansing, nothing else," he told a reporter outside the jail. *Source: CBS Miami, 5-29-15*

**Jules Anderson Jr., 56, Franklin, LA:** Indecent behavior with a juvenile. Anderson, former pastor and current overseer of Israelite Divine Spiritual Church of Christ II in Four Corners, was arrested when a deputy responded to a call about suspicious activity in a vehicle in a sugar cane field. Anderson had allegedly lured a 16-year-old boy there "with the intention of engaging in sexual acts," the report said. *Source: KATC, 5-29-15*

**Rudolph Walls, 64, Chadbourne, NC:** 2 counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct with a minor under the age of 16. Walls, pastor of Friendly Chapel in Dillon, SC, is accused of molesting 2 minors.

He has a 1989 conviction for indecent liberty with a minor and was released from prison in 1997. *Source: Florence News, 5-28-15*

**James Rapp, 75,** 3 counts of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct and 10 counts of 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct. Rapp served as a Catholic priest, teacher, maintenance supervisor and wrestling coach at **Lumen Christi High School in Jackson, MI**, from 1980-86, when the alleged crimes against male students occurred.

Rapp has been serving a 40-year prison sentence in Oklahoma on a 1999 conviction for abusing 2 boys in Duncan, where he was a

church pastor. *Source: mlive.com, 5-28-15*

**Vansan Josea Oatis, McComb, MS:** Crime of sexual activity between certain individuals and offenders incarcerated in correctional facilities or on correctional supervision. Oatis, a Columbia police officer and pastor at Walker's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church, is among 4 officers accused of having sex with a female inmate/parolee in 2013-14. *Source: WAPT, 5-27-15*

**Edgar Damian-Nicholas, 37, Teachey, NC:** 2 counts of indecent liberties with a child, 1st-degree statutory rape and statutory rape or sex offense where the defendant is greater than or equal to 6 years older than the victim.

Damian-Nicholas, pastor at Pentecostal Holiness Church, is charged with assaulting 2 girls, ages 14 and 15. One was allegedly a long-term victim. *Source: WITN, 5-26-15*

**Lynda-Lee A. Gonsalves-Barnes, 36, Kissimmee, FL:** Filing false Medicaid claims over \$50,000 and using Medicaid identification numbers without consent. She allegedly billed patients as young as 8 months old, her employees' children and others who never sought help at OAN Mental Health Center, affiliated with Gonsalves-Barnes' Omega Alpha Nu Ministries, OAN Life Church and OAN Christian Academy.

Prosecutors allege she received \$94,000 for mental health care that patients never received. An employee, **Jessica Allen, 32,** allegedly signed documents as a fictitious therapist named Elisabeth Delgado. The clinic is also accused of handing out gift cards as kickbacks to patients. *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 5-26-15*

**Boyd W. Holder Jr., 44, Kingsport, TN:** Theft and money laundering. Holder, pastor at Victory Apostolic Church, is accused of stealing church funds. As much as \$100,00 may be missing, and church members allege the discrepancies coincide with Holder's tenure as pastor starting in 2010.

Court documents state that grand jury witnesses included representatives from financial institutions, an auto repair business and the websites Online Buddies and Farmers Only.

According to an incident report, Holder and another man were warned by police in December about having sex in public after they were allegedly discovered in a church van in an empty parking lot. *Source: Times News, 5-22-15*

**An unidentified pastor, 42, of a Christian church on Malaita, Solomon Islands,** is accused of raping a 14-year-old girl under the church bell after she had gone out to ring it in July 2014. Bail conditions include requiring him to live with another pastor and not to communicate with the alleged victim. *Source: Solomon Star, 5-22-15*

**Michael Raji, 60, Agodo-Egbe, Nigeria:** Drug trafficking. "Prophet" Raji, resident pastor of the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim, was arrested in connection with an alleged plan to distribute 183 pounds of ephedrine and 200 pounds of methamphetamine worth an estimated \$3 million to S. Africa.

Raji allegedly told police he was lured into the plot by the devil. The task force also arrested **Daniel Akintola, 43,** pastor of Gospel Faith International Mission, Lagos, for having 4.4 pounds of heroin under a false bottom of his luggage at an Enugu airport on a flight from a pastors' conference in Uganda. *Source: Christian Post/Premium Times, 5-21-15*

**Yohandry Bravo, 39, Macon, GA:** Aggravated assault and 2 counts of rape. Bravo, pastor at Ministerio Internacional Jesús es el Señor, is accused of raping a 16-year-old girl at his home across from Smiley's Flea Market in January 2013.

## 'Hope you die in jail, you dog!' — Courtroom shout as pedophile priest David Rapson was led away

The alleged victim's family was living with Bravo because he apparently had asked congregation members to move in after his 15-year-old son was killed in a 2012 car-pedestrian accident. *Source: Macon Telegraph, 5-21-15*

**Kathryn Ronk, 30, Ypsilanti, MI:** Pleaded guilty to 2 counts of 3rd-degree criminal sexual conduct. Ronk, a Spanish teacher at Bishop Foley Catholic School in Madison Heights, was sentenced in March to 6 to 15 years in prison for having sex with a sophomore boy last year.

The new charges stem from incidents with the same boy in another county. *Source: Benchmark Reporter, 5-21-15*

**Danmore Magorimbo, Harare, Zimbabwe:** Rape, attempted rape and indecent assault. Magorimbo, pastor of Abundant Life Global Ministries, claims the sex he had with a married female congregant was consensual.

The woman, who was living with the pastor and his wife, alleged Magorimbo told her afterward that his ejaculate would cleanse demons planted in her by her husband. She further alleged Magorimbo repeated the abuse the next day, saying she needed a second dose of the anointing and telling her she risked the wrath of God if she said anything to anybody. *Source: New Zimbabwe, 5-18-15*

**John Haffner, 52, Ft. Collins, CO:** Patronizing a prostitute and soliciting. Haffner, a pastor at First United Methodist Church in Pierce and student graduation interventionist at Greeley Central High School, was among 8 men arrested in a prostitution sting. They responded to an ad placed on Backpage.com by police. *Source: The Coloradoan, 5-16-15*

**James James, 73, Genesee Township, MI:** Impersonating a public officer. James, a retired police chaplain and pastor of an unidentified church, was charged after a 19-year-old woman alleged he pulled her over and told her she was driving too fast.

Mt. Morris Police Chief Keith Becker said James had a sheriff's department shirt and coat and drove an unmarked 2006 Buick outfitted with sirens and lights. "He was apprehended a year ago [on a similar charge]. It was turned over to another department." *Source: mlive.com, 5-15-15*

**John H. Stone, 68, Belton, MO:** 4 counts of 1st-degree child molestation. Stone, a deacon at Grandview First Baptist Church who helped lead vacation bible school and bible study, is accused of molesting a 10-year-old and 12-year-old in their home over a period of 4 months in 2014.

According to a probable cause statement, when the parent asked Stone why he kissed the child's breast, a text message from Stone allegedly said, "Stupid is the only excuse I have. [Name redacted] said [name redacted] likes to suck it and I said, like this, and kissed it. Was stupid and wrong but was done in a sense of horseplay. Not sexual."

First Baptist Pastor Michael Nelson said, "We are deeply saddened by what has happened. This is a tragedy on many different fronts." *Source: fox4kc.com, 5-14-15*

**Cameron D. Gresham, 28, Wilkesboro, NC:** Felony breaking and entering and felony larceny. Gresham, pastor at Browns Temple Church, is accused of taking pews, a pulpit and air-conditioning units valued at \$4,850 from Macedonia Christian Center.

He allegedly admitted to police he took the items and planned to return them May 16. They were reported missing May 5. *Source: myfox8.com, 5-14-15*

**A pastor at an unidentified church in Indore, India:** Indulging in forced religious conversion activities. T.S. Baghel, Sanyogitaganj police station spokesman, said the priest and 2 aides were booked under provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act.

A group of villagers told police they were lured to the church and offered money and jobs if they converted to Christianity. *Source: Times of India, 5-13-15*

**Barry Starr, 65, Boston:** 1 count each of embezzlement by a fiduciary and larceny over \$250. Starr, who resigned last year as rabbi at Temple Israel in Sharon, MA, allegedly stole from the Conservative synagogue to pay off a man who was threatening to expose Starr's 2-year sexual relationship with a 16-year-old male.

**Nicholas Zemeitus, Boston,** who claims to be the teen's brother, is charged with extortion, 8 counts of larceny and 2 counts of receiving stolen property. Starr, a married father of 2, allegedly paid Zemeitus nearly \$500,000. *Source: JTA, 5-12-15*

**Duncan D. Aker Jr. 63, Greensburg, IN:** Sexual abuse and sodomy, involving an alleged victim under 12 years old. Aker, pastor at Greensburg Christian Church, was arrested on a Kentucky warrant.

State Police spokesman Joe Veeneman said Aker was minister at Vanceburg Christian Church when he allegedly molested a child multiple times over a 3-year period in his car, home and inside the church. *Source: WTHR, 5-12-15*

**Charles McCrory, 75, Tennessee:** 9 counts of 2nd-degree sexual assault (position of authority). McCrory was a traveling preacher in Cheyenne, WY, at the time of the alleged assaults in 1993.

Wyoming authorities began investigating after a woman, who was 12 in 1993, reported the allegations to Florida police in 2014. The women alleged assaults happened twice in a motel and 7 times in a Cheyenne home, describing them as "massive fondling." *Source: Tribune Eagle, 5-7-15*

**Tony Waller, 39, Jonesboro, AR:** Possession of child pornography. According to an affidavit, Waller, youth pastor at First Assembly of God, had tens of thousands of videos and images of nude pubescent girls, which his wife found on their computer. He was also a substitute bus driver for Jonesboro Public Schools.

A 2000 police report said Waller was investigated but never charged in Jonesboro when an 11-year-old girl's mother became concerned about Waller staying overnight with the family when he was associated with CitiTeam Ministries Center. She went to police after her daughter fought someone at school and her grades dropped. *Source: KAIT, 5-6-15*

**Brian M. Lederer, 29, Hibbing, MN:** 3 counts of 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct and 2 counts of 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct. Lederer, associate pastor at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Parish, is accused of molesting 2 sisters — one younger than 13 and the other between the ages of 13 and 16 — at Assumption Catholic School and at their home during a family celebration.

Another girl younger than 13 came forward after Lederer's arrest was made public to allege he touched her inappropriately during a hide-and-seek game at school, in a classroom at school and on a bus during a field trip. He was ordained in June 2012. *Source: Daily Tribune, 5-6-15*

**Michael Jones, 44, Norfolk, VA:** Burglary. Jones, associate pastor, music director and worship leader at Norfolk Apostolic Church, is accused of breaking into a congregant's home and hiding a camera under a desk, with the camera aimed at her bed. Court documents say surveillance video in the home shows Jones caught in the act. *Source: WTKR, 5-6-15*

**Jerry Allums, 56, Stockton, CA:** Multiple counts of lewd acts with a minor and 2 counts of violating or touching a child younger than 14. The police report, which said Allums was most recently associated with unspecified churches in the San Francisco Bay area, is charged with molesting 3 boys in Stockton in the 1990s. The youngest was 8. *Source: Fox 40, 5-4-15*

**Haim Boukris, 29, South Fallsburg, NY:** 1st-degree sexual abuse and 3 counts of predatory sexual assault against a child. Boukris, a rabbinical student at a South Fallsburg yeshiva, is charged with molesting an 11-year-old boy in 2011.

A bail provision required him to surrender his passport and those of his wife and 4 children. *Source: Times Herald-Record, 4-30-15*

**Dexter C. Pleasure, 51, Rancho Cucamonga, CA:** Suspicion of committing lewd and lascivious acts with a child under 14 and continued abuse of a child under 14. Pleasure told sheriff's officials he was a worship leader at an unidentified church and a social worker for private foster care agencies.

A "mandated reporter" called authorities about a possible case of sexual abuse against a child younger than 10, a press release said. *Source: Press-Enterprise, 4-29-15*

## Pleaded / Convicted

**Marcelo De Jesumaria, Arrowhead, CA:** Guilty by jury of abusive sexual contact. De Jesumaria, a Catholic priest who has been





removed from ministry by the Diocese of San Bernadino, was accused of intentional touching “of the groin, breast, inner thigh or buttocks of any person with the intent to abuse, humiliate, harass, degrade and arouse.”

“BD,” a woman on a US Airways flight last August, woke to find the priest’s “hands on her breast, groin and buttocks.” He’s a member of the Chicago-based Congregation of the Resurrection, which will determine his future in the priesthood. *Source: NBCLA, 5-29-15*

**Derrick “Duke” Hampsch, 35, Vincennes, IN:** Pleaded 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.

His jury trial is set on a similar charge, alleged to have occurred with a girl in a church closet in Vincennes in 2009. *Source: WTHI, 5-28-15*

**Nicholas Lawrence, 27, Pekin, IL:** Pleaded guilty to predatory criminal sexual assault of a child. He faces other charges involving the same alleged victim, whom he met through his work as a youth pastor at 3 Protestant churches. He pleaded not guilty to 4 felony counts alleging he had a 4-year sexual relationship with the girl starting when she was 12.

The girl’s parents called police last year after discovering numerous letters he wrote to their daughter, an affidavit said. *Source: WYZZ, 5-25-15*

**Joseph P. Jeyapaul, 60,** pleaded guilty to 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct. Still pending are 2 counts of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct. Charges stem from alleged assaults on 2 female minors in 2004-05 while Jeyapaul was a priest in the Catholic Diocese of Crookston, MN. He was extradited from his native India in November.

In the unresolved case, Megan Peterson, who has spoken out publicly, alleged Jeyapaul forced her to give him oral sex in the rectory of Blessed Sacrament Church in Greenbush when she was 14. *Source: Grand Forks Herald, 5-22-15*

**Todros Grynhaus, 50, Salford, England:** Guilty by jury of 5 counts of indecent assault and 2 counts of sexual assault against 2 girls aged 14 and 15 at the time of the assaults in the 1990s. Grynhaus, a religious studies teacher, father of 10 and prominent member of the haredi Orthodox Jewish community, allegedly told a colleague, “You have no idea of what demons were going through me at the time.”

One victim told a psychologist in 2009 she was abused, but instead of police being called in, Grynhaus was asked to meet with 2 rabbis and the psychologist. He agreed to see a therapist. In February 2013, while out on bail, he fled to Israel using a false passport. *Source: Daily Mail, 5-20-15*

**Bernard Hartman, 75, Dayton, OH:** Pleaded guilty to indecent assault in Melbourne, Australia, for molesting 4 children there in the 1970s and 1980s. Hartman, a Marianist Catholic brother, taught at St. Paul’s College, a secondary school in Melbourne, before teaching at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, where 19 former students have made 23 abuse allegations against Hartman and 7 other Marianist brothers. The Marianists acknowledged removing Hartman from the school without publicly explaining why, instead assigning him to clerical work in Dayton. *Source: WPXI, 5-15-15*

# ‘I don’t know how a kid makes it up to a priest’s rectory bedroom without parish staff seeing.’ — plaintiff’s attorney Anthony DeMarco

**James J. Monson, 44, Sparta, WI:** Guilty by jury of sexual assault of a child by a person who works or volunteers with children, exposing genitals to a child and sex with a child age 16 or older. Monson, pastor at Gaining Ground Community Church, was charged in 2012 after taking in a 16-year-old pregnant girl who ran away from home in Texas in 2011 to live with him and his wife, who were family friends.

The complaint says Monson had sex with the girl about 10 times while home-schooling her. *Source: WEAU, 5-15-15*

**Ioan Pop, 56, Toronto:** Pleaded guilty to 7 sexual assault charges and admitted the facts on 3 others. Pop, a Romanian Orthodox priest, was accused of making unwanted sexual advances on female parishioners from 1999 to 2013, including during confessions, weddings and funerals.

One woman alleged Pop groped her breast and kissed her knee during confession and told her how he’d pleasure her “if he were [my] hus-

band.” *Source: Toronto Sun, 5-7-15*

**Venije Singkoh, 70, Daly City, CA:** Pleaded no contest to misdemeanor child sexual annoyance. Singkoh, pastor at Indonesian Pentecostal Foursquare Church, originally faced 3 felony counts of child molestation for allegedly fondling and kissing a 9-year-old girl multiple times while holding her on his lap.

A judge ruled in December that some of the alleged conduct did not fall under “lewd intent.” *Source: San Mateo Daily Journal, 5-5-15*

## Sentenced

**Dennis F. Rutledge, 63, Lancaster, SC:** 25 years in prison after pleading guilty to 1st-degree sex assault with a child under age 11. The sentence will run concurrently with one of 13 years for pleading guilty to 3rd-degree criminal sexual conduct with a minor. He was music director at Camp Creek Baptist Church for over 40 years.

Multiple victims fell prey to Rutledge because of his age and position of authority at the church, prosecutors alleged. *Source: Charlotte observer, 6-3-15*

**Robert J. Weber, 48, Odessa, TX:** 90 days in jail and 10 years’ deferred adjudication and probation after pleading guilty to 9 counts of sexual assault of a child. Weber, a married youth pastor at Second Baptist Church, was indicted in 2009 for 3 alleged sexual encounters in which he had oral sex with a girl who was 15. *Source: Odessa American, 6-2-15*

**Tyler D. Bliss, 28, Oakdale, CA:** 5 years in prison and 15 years’ probation after pleading guilty to receiving child pornography. Bliss downloaded child porn on computers at home and at Bethel Church, where he was supervisor of student ministries for the Assemblies of God congregation.

Several of the 600 images depicted prepubescent children. Bliss told investigators he paid \$12.95 a month for a website subscription and sent the downloaded images to 4 other email accounts. *Source: Modesto Bee, 5-27-15*

**Raza-Ul-Mustafa Sabir, 30, Derby, UK:** 4 months in prison (suspended), banned from teaching children for 5 years, 120 hours of community service and \$1,000 in costs. A jury convicted him of common assault for kicking and dragging a 9-year-old boy at Jamiz Nizamia mosque, where Sabir was teaching the Quran.

Prosecutor Gillian Foxcroft presented evidence the imam used physical punishment when students failed to give the right answers. *Source: Daily Mail, 5-21-15*

**Dylan Ritterman, 28, Hillsboro, OR:** 80 months in prison after pleading guilty to 2 counts each of attempted 1st-degree sexual abuse and 2nd-degree sexual abuse. He admitted molesting 2 boys as youth pastor at Bethel United Pentecostal Church.

Prosecutor Kevin Barton told the court the boys were abused at church, inside Ritterman’s home and car and in a grocery parking lot. Police arranged for a “pretext phone call” during which a boy confronted Ritterman, who allegedly apologized for what he did.

“This was a worst-case scenario when it comes to a church and a pastor not cooperating [with authorities],” Barton said. However, the senior pastor later named a third victim, who’s developmentally disabled. The plea deal assures no charges will be brought in that case. “I wish there were a way to send him to prison longer,” Barton said. His wife cried as Ritterman was led out of court in handcuffs. *Source: The Oregonian, 5-21-15*

**Barry Freundel, 63, Washington:** 78 months in prison and \$13,000 in fines after pleading guilty to voyeurism for secretly recording 52 women preparing to take Jewish ritual purification baths while he was rabbi at Keshet Israel Congregation in Georgetown.

Prosecutors alleged more than 100 women were victimized. *Source: Washington Post, 5-16-15*

**Mack A. Davis, 74, Birmingham, AL:** 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to 1st-degree sodomy of a child between 12 and 16 and 2 counts each of 1st-degree sexual abuse of a child under 12 and 2nd-degree sexual abuse of a child between 12 and 16. David, youth minister at Lakeside Baptist Church, chided his victims at sentencing for not forgiving him. “If they are unwilling to forgive, then God can’t forgive them. That’s in the bible.”

One victim said he was 9 when the abuse began in the late 1970s and continued for 8 years. Davis retired in 1999 from his church positions.

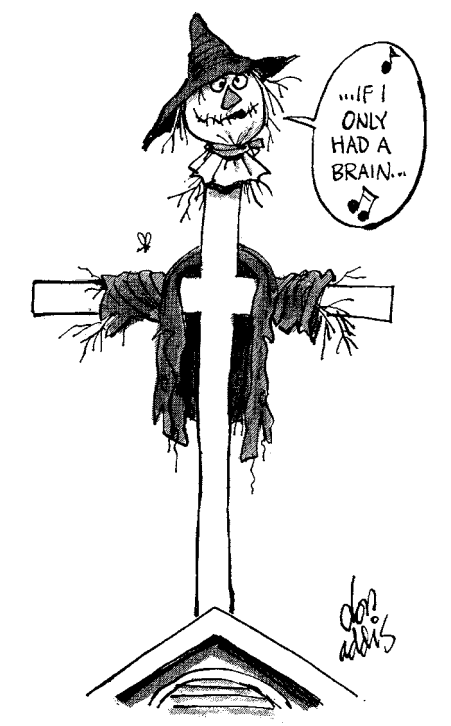
“I choose to forgive him and forget him,” said Andrew Guffey. Davis then told the judge, “I’ve met with Andy. We had prayer together. I thought everything was OK and a few days later I was arrested.” *Source: al.com, 5-15-15*

**Kevin Wallin, Bridgeport, CT:** 65 months in prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. The Catholic cleric nicknamed “Monsignor Meth” also ran an adult video shop named Land of Oz & Dorothy’s Place to launder money from drug sales.

Judge Alfred Covello told Wallin he could “not ignore your decision to infect your community” with meth. *Source: Fox News, 5-12-15*

Pedophile **Australian Catholic priest David Rapson, 61:** 9 years and 4 months in prison for sexual assaults on several students at 2 schools. One victim had surgery as a teen to repair a ruptured testicle.

“Hope you die in jail, you dog!” a man yelled as Rapson was led away. Judge James Parrish called him a “ruthless sexual predator” who has shown no remorse. *Source: The Age, 5-11-15*



## Civil Lawsuits Filed

**Catholic priests Virgilio Elizondo and Jesus A. Dominguez** are accused in a Texas suit against the Archdiocese of San Antonio of assaulting a male minor. “John Doe” alleges Dominguez molested him from 1980-83 while he was living in an orphanage and Dominguez was attending Assumption Seminary.

The suit states the plaintiff went to Elizondo for help in 1983: “Unfortunately, instead of listening to him and acting on his concerns, Father Elizondo began to fondle the Plaintiff’s genitals, taking advantage of the same sexual liberties Plaintiff complained of with Father Dominguez.”

Elizondo is now an endowed professor in the University of Notre Dame’s Department of Theology but maintains his primary residence in San Antonio. *Source: WSBT, 5-26-15*

“John Doe,” 41, is suing the **Catholic Archdiocese of Miami**, alleging he was molested at age 14 by Harry Ringenberger, pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Pembroke Pines, FL. The suit claims the archdiocese ignored complaints by the plaintiff and several other boys.

Ringenberger, 89, retired as a priest last year. The suit alleges he once took the plaintiff out to dinner before returning to the rectory and convincing him to wrestle in the nude. He had Doe lie on top of him while “Ringenberger rubbed his penis against John’s until Ringenberger ejaculated,” the suit says. Other alleged victims came forward with “wrestling” stories after complaints were made to the archdiocese in 1989. *Source: New Times, 5-21-15*

A Minnesota plaintiff, Quin Buchtel, is suing the **Catholic Diocese of Duluth**, alleging she was molested in 1960-61 by **Charles Gormly**, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish. She was 12 and 13 at the time. Gormly spent most of his career in Wyoming and died in Wisconsin in 1968.

He’s on the diocese’s public list of priests considered “credibly accused” of sexual abuse. *Source: Pioneer Press, 5-19-15*

An anonymous plaintiff is suing the **Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe, NM**, and the **Servants of the Paraclete**, alleging that **John Weisenborn**, pastor at St. Francis Xavier Church, molested him as an altar boy “several hundred times” from 1968-1973.

Weisenborn, who died in 1991, belonged to the Congregation of the Sacred Heart in Fairhaven, MA, before his transfer. The order’s superior general told the Vatican in a letter seeking Weisenborn’s removal from the order that he’d been arrested 3 times for having “relations with boys” in 1964 in Washington, DC.

In 2012, the archdiocese settled a similar suit by another former altar boy for an undisclosed amount. *Source: Albuquerque Journal, 5-13-15*

A “Doe” plaintiff alleges **Chris Cunningham, pastor at St. Louise de Marillac Catholic Church, Covina, CA**, molested him in 2001-02 at age 12. Cunningham was removed by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 2004 because of “emotional instability.” Cunningham, the church and the archdiocese are named defendants in the case.

“The archdiocese was especially sneaky in the way that they handled this case,” plaintiff’s attorney Anthony DeMarco said in a statement. “Despite all of their promises of transparency, Cardinal [Roger] Mahony refused to tell parishioners about the allegations in 2004.”

In 2013, Archbishop Jose Gomez “quietly released” Cunningham’s name on a list of accused priests but didn’t notify parishes where Cunningham had worked, DeMarco said.

“I don’t know how a kid makes it up to a priest’s rectory bedroom without parish staff seeing,” he said. *Source: San Gabriel Valley Tribune, 5-8-15*

## Civil Lawsuits Settled

Jeri Hubbard, 63, Sedro-Woolley, WA, settled a suit with the **Seattle Catholic Archdiocese** for \$1.2 million. She accused **Michael Cody** of molesting her for 5 years starting in 1967 when he was pastor at St. Charles Catholic Parish in Burlington and Assumption Parish in Bellingham.

A psychiatrist had diagnosed Cody as a pedophile in 1962 and church officials knew he’d molested at least 8 girls under the age of 12, Hubbard’s attorneys said in a press release. The settlement came at the end of a trial right before closing arguments were to start. Three pending suits against the archdiocese allege abuse by Cody, who is 84 and living in Nevada. *Source: Seattle Times, 5-18-15*

Fines of almost \$2 million against the **Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** and a **contractor** were levied by the U.S. Department of Labor for use of as many as 1,400 unpaid child and women laborers at a pecan harvest outside Hurricane, UT. Also fined was **Lyle Jeffs**, brother of imprisoned FLDS leader **Warren Jeffs**.

Rebecca Musser, former wife of Lyle Jeff’s father Rulon Jeffs, said forced pecan picking is “one of the more innocent ways they have broken the law.” *Source: Salt Lake Tribune, 5-13-15*

## Finances

The **Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, MO**, paid more than \$27 million in settlements and litigation costs related to clergy sex abuse cases in 2010-14. The diocese wasn’t alone in paying out millions. A new report by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops shows that since 2004, the Catholic Church nationwide has paid nearly \$3 billion in costs related to the sex abuse scandal. *Source Kansas City Star, 5-14-15*

## Legal Developments

Convicted Catholic priest **William Casey**, 81, sentenced to 30 years in 2011 for raping a Tennessee altar boy in 1979-80, wants a new trial. Casey’s lawyer filed a post-conviction relief petition in Sullivan County.

The state Supreme Court denied a new trial in 2014, but the law allows a year to file a petition for post-conviction relief.

SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said in a statement, “We’re sad that an admitted predator priest is rubbing salt into the wounds of his victims by making yet another desperate legal move to escape responsibility for his heinous crimes by exploiting legal technicalities.” *Source: WBIR, 6-5-15*

**Abdi Hersy, 46, Calgary, Alberta:** Hersy, a Somali national who is imam at Abu Bakr Musallah mosque and is wanted in the U.S. on criminal sexual conduct charges, is fighting in Canada to maintain his refugee status granted in 2008.

The Border Services Agency heard his appeal but did not immediately rule. Hersy is charged with sexual assault of 2 women while working as a respiratory therapist in Woodbury, MN. *Source: CBC, 6-2-15*

The **Nevada Supreme Court** unanimously overturned a \$500,000 jury verdict awarded in 2012 to “John Doe 119” from the **Catholic Diocese of Green Bay, WI**. The alleged abuse dated to 1984 when **John Patrick Feeney**, now 87, was serving as a priest at St. Francis de Sales Parish and the alleged victim was 13. The court ruled Nevada didn’t have jurisdiction over the diocese incorporated in Wisconsin and that Feeney was not the diocese’s agent during his ministry in Las Vegas.

He was convicted in 2004 of molesting 2 brothers in 1978 in Wisconsin and given a 15-year prison sentence. He was released in 2011. *Source: Review-Journal, 5-29-15*

**Francis Hoefgen, 64, Columbia Heights, MN**, was acquitted by a jury of 2 counts of criminal sexual conduct. He was accused of repeated abuse of a boy who was a student at St. Boniface Catholic School in Hastings in 1989-92 when Hoefgen was a priest.

Jeff Anderson, an attorney representing Hoefgen’s accuser in a civil suit, said he was not surprised by the verdict since the jury wasn’t allowed to hear about Hoefgen’s stay at St. Luke Institute in Maryland, a facility that often treats abusive priests.

“There is a mountain of evidence that the jury did not get to hear,” Anderson said. “At least two other victims were prepared to testify, but the court did not permit it.”

The accuser, now 36, testified the abuse progressed from fondling to oral and anal penetration when he was an altar boy. *Source: Star Tribune, 5-27-15*

Continued on page 22



## Secular invocations

**Deborah Maynard**  
**Iowa House of Representatives**  
**April 9, 2015**



Deborah Maynard

We call this morning to god, goddess, universe, that which is greater than ourselves to be with us here today. By the earth that is in our bones and centers us, may all here remember our roots and those we are here to represent. By the fire that gives us light and passion, may all here remain passionate about the work that must be done for the people of Iowa. By the air that gives us breath and logic, may all here find thoughtful solutions to the problems that are presented. By the water that flows through our blood and stirs our emotions, may all here draw an emotional intelligence which helps us see the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

We call this morning to spirit ever present, to help us respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Be with us and this legislative body and guide them to seek justice, equity and compassion in the work that is before them today. Blessed be, Aho and Amen.

*Deborah Maynard, Cedar Rapids, leads the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans and is a project manager for a private company. One Republican legislator turned his back during her invocation and several others came late to avoid hearing it.*

**Cheryl Kolbe**  
**Board of County Councilors, Clark County, Wash., April 7, 2015**  
**Yamhill Board of Commissioners, Yamhill, Ore., April 16, 2015**



Gus Frederick photo

Cheryl Kolbe

I invite you to take your seats and join me as I invoke reason. Reason: the basis or motive for an action, decision, or conviction, good judgment, sound sense.

R — Review the facts. Facts are verifiable. Facts provide crucial support for the assertion of an argument. Let's keep in our awareness that omission of some facts may foster misconceptions.

E — Evaluate the facts. Facts are only useful when we put them in context and draw conclusions. Albert Einstein is reported to have said, "It is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned in textbooks."

A — Apply rational thinking. Poor decisions are often the result of flawed or incomplete thinking, not the absence of thinking.

S — Sometimes the best solution isn't our personal first choice. What are the consequences of the proposed solution? Will there be a negative impact on some of the members of this community?

O — Only by looking for better ways to solve our problems will we find the best solution. Another quote widely attributed to Einstein: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

N — Never start with an assumption. An assumption is a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof.

I invite residents and board members to use reason as you work together for the benefit of the community.

*Cheryl Kolbe is founder and president of FFRF's Portland-area chapter. She retired from Portland Community College in 2004 as student systems support manager for enrollment services, with responsibility for software implementation.*

**Robert Ray**  
**Washington House of Representatives**  
**April 13, 2015**



Robert Ray

I would like to open this invocation by asking everyone look around you. Beside you, in front of you and behind you, is a person that is, in so many ways, the same as you. We may have different backgrounds and beliefs. We may come from different ethnicity and religions. But when it comes down to it, we are all sharing the same speck of dust floating through a vast and wondrous universe

Many have come before me in this chamber to speak of their faith. But I would, instead, like to speak of trust.

Of trust in humanity, trust in the fundamental good will within people. Trust that we all yearn to make the world a better place. Trust that some can answer to a higher calling. A calling many of us have in common, that is to serve our fellow humans to the best of our ability. I have trust that everyone in this chamber has felt this or you would not be here.

With that being said. I also ask that you use your trust in the same way that I have described. Reach out to one another. Try to understand and have empathy with those you may disagree with. Make an honest attempt at compromise, for that is what our secular government is based on.

With today being the 272nd birthday of Thomas Jefferson, I felt I should honor his memory with a quote: "He who receives an idea from me, receives instruction himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me."

So I thank you for this opportunity to bring my message of trust, humanity and humanism into this chamber.

And I will end with this simple phrase.

E Pluribus Unum.

*FFRF member Robert Ray is a secular activist and humanist celebrant. He's president of two humanist groups in northwest Washington and sits on the Humanists of Washington board of directors. In his "spare time" he works as an electrician and participates in the Society for Creative Anachronism.*

**Bernard Drumm, Gennadiy Gurariy, Ryan Davis**  
**City Council, Sparks, Nev., June 8, 2015**  
**(Invocation written by Bernard and Gennadiy and delivered by Ryan.)**

I would like to thank the council for inviting me to speak here today. Let us bow our heads in prayer.

We give thanks and praise to you, whom in all your teachings, guide us in our lives and give meaning to our existence and endow these fine people here today to perform their duties to serve all of us. Thank you, Satan.

Now, I am not a Satanist, but ladies and gentlemen, I imagine that these words are making some of you rather uncomfortable. You probably feel that they don't represent you or further the cause of the citizens of Sparks.

I would now like you to realize that this is exactly how the secular citizens of Sparks, statistically 20% of your constituents, feel when an invocation of *any kind* is given in this room.

I stand before you today with the daunting task of representing these numerous atheists, agnostics and secular individuals. And while it may not be possible to speak for them all, I ask you to meditate on the following thoughts:

While the desire to be inclusive and respectful to others is something to be condoned, the reality is that we cannot represent all religions, all of the time, and thus the only truly fair way to represent everyone is to not represent religion at all.

The constitution of the United States, which all members here swore an oath to uphold, was founded on secular principles and was the first of its kind. One of the cornerstones of being American is the freedom of religion and the freedom *from* religion. The only way to ensure that this freedom to

express our beliefs is maintained is to ensure that the government does not participate in any action that would endorse any religion or even the concept of religion itself.

When religious invocations are given in a government capacity, those of us who do not subscribe to such beliefs are alienated and not represented.

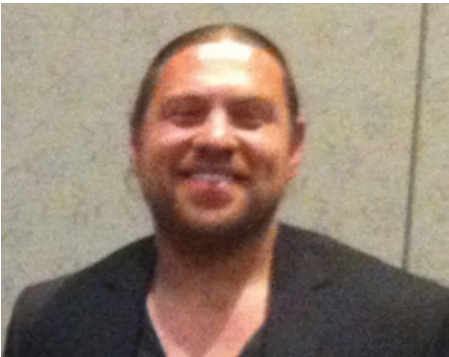
For people like me who are atheist, and others who are agnostic or simply secular, we invoke you to not use religious invocations in your meetings, which only deepens the divisions between us. But rather, focus on what all of your constituents, including the secular ones share. And that is the common humanistic desire to increase the happiness of all human beings. People like me can do this without religion, and likewise, those in government can do good without religion, too.

Thank you.

*Bernard Drumm is a native of the Republic of Ireland who moved to Reno for a post-doctoral position at the University of Nevada after receiving his Ph.D. in physiology in 2012. Bernard works primarily on researching smooth muscle contraction and has a passion for teaching science. He served as outreach coordinator for UN-Reno's Secular Student Alliance chapter and is now an organizing officer for the chapter group.*

*Gennadiy Gurariy completed his undergraduate degree in psychology in Ohio before moving to UN-Reno to begin a graduate degree program in cognitive neuroscience. He instigated the SSA chapter's discussion groups and continues to lead them as well as serving as the group's graduate president from 2013-15.*

*Ryan Davis is a Las Vegas native who moved to Reno in 2012 to pursue a double major in physics and mathematics. He is the chapter's undergraduate president.*



Gennadiy Gurariy

## Nothing Fails Like Prayer Contest

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

It's up to you!

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

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

Learn more at:

[ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer](http://ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer)



## They said what?

Class of 2015, you should not leave Stone Ridge High School thinking that you face challenges that are at all, in any important sense, unprecedented. Humanity has been around for at least some 5,000 years or so, and I doubt that the basic challenges as confronted are any worse now, or alas even much different, from what they ever were.

**Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, addressing graduates of Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, a Catholic girls school in Bethesda, Md. [Fossil evidence puts modern humans in Africa at least 100,000 years ago.]**  
*The Washington Post, 6-4-15*

We plead the Blood of Jesus over (name a different state for each Hail Mary) and every soul in that state.  
**The Patriotic Rosary, which blends the cross, the flag and out-of-context quotes from America’s founders**  
*medjugorje.com, 5-26-15*

We are becoming a department that is living on borrowed time. It is only but for the grace of God that an innocent third party hasn’t been killed.  
**Police Chief Mike Koval, Madison, Wis., on the arrests of seven people in connection with a spate of recent gun violence**  
*Wisconsin State Journal, 5-23-15*

I’m not saying everyone gets it, or that it happens every time, and people may well be doing yoga harmlessly. But there’s always a risk and that’s why the pope mentioned it and that’s why we talk about that in terms of the danger of the New Age movement and the danger of the occult today. That’s the fear.  
**Roland Colhoun, a Catholic priest in Northern Ireland, warning yoga practitioners about falling prey to Satan and “the fallen angels”**  
*Tech Times, 5-25-15*

The reason this story is in the national news right now is because of the power of the gospel. Eric Jackson came to the church, responded to the preaching of the Word of God, recognized that he was a false convert, embraced the true gospel, and was born again. His new heart compelled him to want to walk in the light. As a result, he confessed his sin.  
**Scott T. Brown, New Hope Baptist Church pastor, Wake Forest, N.C., crediting the gospel for the guilty plea of the oldest of four brothers who confessed to long-term rape of their sister in Perquimans County**  
*scottbrownonline.com, 5-15-15*

When I was a kid, it was often called “playing doctor,” there were just as many girls initiating this kind of behavior as boys. Most of those never went on to perp horrible things. The Dugers [sic], who I have never watched — am not a fan, did it properly and the 14 year old boy should probably be left alone to live a good life, just like girls who do the same thing. You troll the news for any little Christian misbehavior. Get a life! Go to Iraq and fight ISIS if you are seriously worried about women being treated well by men and society.  
**Carrie Hurd, Weatherford, Texas, a pastor’s wife and mother of 11, defending accused sister molester Joshua Duggar**  
*Facebook.com, 5-23-15*

God wanted me to stop this life of crime. That was why he allowed the police to arrest me.  
**Stanley Okorie, 20, an armed robbery suspect arrested by Lagos State Police in Nigeria**  
*Pulse.ng, 6-3-15*

We wholeheartedly reject the notion that the ministry’s airplane project is an imposition on our community or that it somehow takes advantage of our people. Quite to the contrary, this request is seen by our community as standard operating procedure for people of faith.  
**World Changers Church International board of directors statement backing purchase of a \$65-million jet for Pastor Creflo Dollar**  
*Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6-3-15*

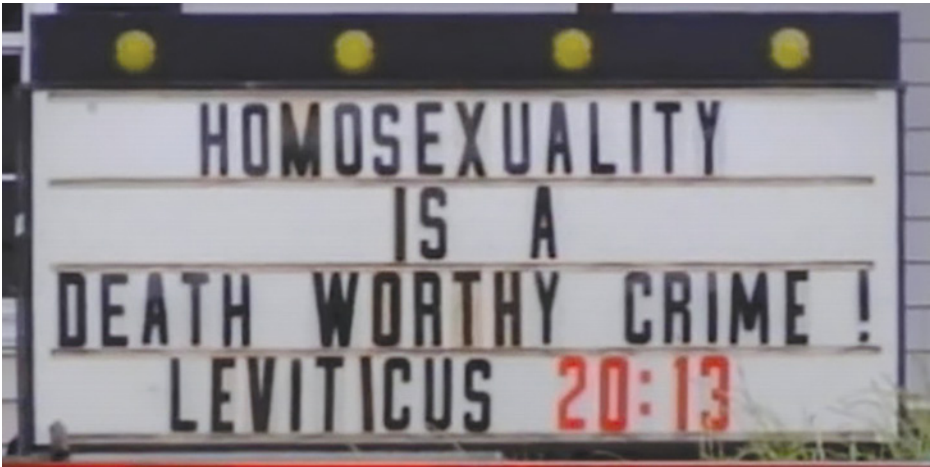
God, we thank you that ultimately he is not the swing vote — you are! And Father God, if it comes down to him, we pray you swing his vote!  
**David Gross, Assembly of God pastor, Columbus, Ohio, praying for Justice Anthony Kennedy at a rally against same-sex marriage**  
*Columbus Dispatch, 6-11-15*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Idaho County Central Committee encourages the Idaho legislature to draft and support a bill stating that the Bible is expressly permitted to be used in Idaho public schools for reference purposes to further the study of literature, comparative religion, English and foreign languages, U.S. and world history, comparative government, law, philosophy, ethics, astronomy, biology, geology, world geography, archaeology, music, sociology, and other topics of study where an understanding of the Bible may be useful or relevant;  
**Proposed resolution by Idaho GOP State Central Committee**  
*FriendlyAtheist.com, 6-9-15*

As far as God’s concerned, he knows the end from the beginning and he sees a little baby and that little baby could grow up to be Adolf Hitler, he could grow up to be Joseph Stalin, he could grow up to be some serial killer, or he could grow up to die of a hideous disease. God sees all of that, and for that life to be terminated while he’s a baby, he’s going to be with God forever in heaven, so it isn’t a bad thing.  
**Rev. Pat Robertson, answering a viewer’s question “Why did God allow my baby to die?”**  
*“The 700 Club,” 6-9-15*

May the fact that she’s never married and that she has no children not stand in the way of her preserving traditional marriage.  
**Pastor David Gross, praying for Justice Elena Kagen**  
*Columbus Dispatch, 6-11-15*

I don’t want to have to drive around, eventually, years gone by with my kids looking at all the nativity scenes during Christmas time and say, “Oh look kids, there’s the baby Jesus, way behind the Festivus pole, you can barely see him.”  
**Fox News host Gretchen Carlson complaining to the American Family Association about a secular display in the Washington Capitol in Olympia**  
*“AFA Today,” 6-6-15*



### Marquee madness

Pastor Robert Lee of Ten Commandments Church in Milledgeville, Ga., explained his sign to WGXA News: “The institution of marriage was instituted by God and it should not be changed by people who deserve not to live.”



### Blind faith

Lynn Lipton writes from New York: “My husband and I took a walk in Poughkeepsie yesterday and somehow Steve ‘bumped’ into this message. Ouch!”



### ‘The truth shall make you free’

To sleep in on Sunday? Robert Navrotski says he’s not chained to this or any religion in Canonsburg, Pa.



### Myth me?

Mark Welty, Iowa, says no one in Cedar Falls has reported any sightings of Elvis or Jesus.



# Black collar crimes

Continued from page 19

**Omer Desjardins, 82, a retired Canadian Catholic priest**, was ordered released from prison after serving 4 months of a 6-month sentence for sexually touching a 10-year-old girl in 1978. A 3-judge panel of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal took into account his age, passage of time since the offense and Desjardins’ struggle with alcohol at the time. *Source: StarPhoenix, 5-22-15*

U.S. marshals arrested **James T. Flanders, 46, Cochise, AZ**, a former pastor wanted for allegedly killing a Florida woman in 2011. Marie Carlson, 37, disappeared while she was living with Flanders in Ft. Walton Beach, where he was pastor at Calvary Emerald Coast Church. They had a child together.

Flanders told police he realized Carlson and her vehicle were missing but didn’t think to report it. He then disappeared but was tracked to Arizona, where he awaits extradition. *Source: Arizona Republic, 5-13-15*

## Allegations

Asher Lopatin, president of the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School, Bronx, NY, announced that the Bronx County District Attorney Bureau on Child Abuse and Sex Crimes is investigating allegations about **Jonathan Rosenblatt**, rabbi at Riverdale Jewish Center. “Please reach out even if you would like to remain anonymous and not have your name on the record, as they are in an information gathering phase at this point. Please also do so even if you believe your experience lies outside a statute of limitations as any information on patterns of behavior can be useful.”

According to claims in a news story (“Debate Over the Rabbi and the Sauna”) by alleged victims, Rosenblatt has long shown inordinate interest in mentoring boys in various stages of undress or who are naked. *Source: New York Times, 5-29-15*

The Jerusalem District Magistrate’s Court barred **Aharon Ramati** from teaching women for 70 days or until an indictment is filed. Ramati, an ultra-Orthodox rabbi who heads Be’er Miriam seminary with his wife, is under investigation on complaints the seminary is a cult at which young women are lured to live, while turning over their pay to Ramati. Fraud and theft of natural gas are also alleged. *Source: Jerusalem Post, 5-28-15*

**Buddhist monks and teachers in the Netherlands** have been molesting students for decades, said a broadcast report by Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, which has been interviewing alleged victims. A Thai monk named **Mettavihari**, who died in 2007, allegedly molested young men for nearly 2 decades with no charges ever filed.

NOS also reported allegations about **Gerhard Mattioli**, a “self-proclaimed lama” in Middelburg, molesting and harassing female students in 2001-08. **Pierre Krul** stepped down in 2001 as a monk at a monastery in Makkinga, Friesland, after being confronted about multiple sexual relationships with women and girls, some underage. No charges were ever filed.

At least 5 people in the last 5 years have come to him for help after being abused by different teachers. Buddhist teacher Frank Uytbroeck told NOS. *Source: nltimes.nl, 5-25-15*

Doug Lay, professor of English and literature at **St. Louis Christian College, Florissant, MO**, resigned to protest alleged failure by **First Christian Church**, closely tied to the bible college, to investigate claims of a youth pastor’s sexual abuse of minors. **Brandon Milburn** was sentenced to 25 years in January for statutory sodomy.

Lay and others say the church and its lead pastor **Steve Wingfield** failed to vigorously pursue allegations about Milburn. Wingfield filed a defamation lawsuit against Lay and other critics in April. *Source: Post Dispatch, 5-21-15*

Gordon Hill, 72, told the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse he was sexually and physically abused at **St. Joseph’s Home in Ballarat** starting when he was 5. He testified a nun told him, “Father wants to cleanse you, 29.” His locker number was 29.

After he was raped, Hill alleged the nun “was laughing at me and told me to get back to work.” Two more priests later molested him and nuns regularly thrashed him, he testified. *Source: 9news.au.com, 5-20-15*

David Ridsdale, 48, told the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that he called **Australian Cardinal George Pell** in 1993 to report being molested by his uncle, **Gerald Ridsdale**, a now-imprisoned pedophile priest.

David Ridsdale testified: “I remember with clarity the last three lines we spoke together. ME: Excuse me, George, what the [expletive] are you talking about? GEORGE: I want to know what it will take to keep you quiet. ME: [Expletive] you, George, and everything you stand for.”

He testified he called his sister afterward and told her “the bastard tried to bribe me.”

The commission also heard testimony that Gerald Ridsdale molested every boy aged 10-16 at St. Alipius Primary School. Philip Nagle held up a photo of his 4th-grade class and said 12 of the 33 boys have committed suicide.

Nagle testified he knew the molesting was going to start when he saw Brother Stephen Francis Farrell take off his glasses. *Source: The Guardian/The Telegraph, 5-20-15*

**Robert Cunningham, Catholic bishop of Syracuse, NY**, won’t release the names of 11 priests credibly accused of molesting children. The diocese will publicly confirm an accusation only if an alleged victim first discloses it.

Abuse victim Charles Bailey called the decision “disgusting,” adding, “You don’t just eat one potato chip. These priests don’t just abuse one child.”

“Releasing the names would dispel the negative cloud that’s hanging over everybody,” victim Kevin Braney said. *Source: Post-Standard, 5-14-15*

**Anonymous:** Your organizations is absolutely ridiculous and should not be in exist. Your countries constitution (u.s.a.) which allows you freedoms that you and your organization probably take for granted are founded on christian values. You are all lost in life and need serious help. I will be praying for your obsurd “beliefs” in “nothing”. Thanks — *Trent Heisler*

**Clown:** Keep your non beliefs to your self. — *Bozo D, Michigan*

**The Devil:** I would like to know how a person can say they’re not afraid of goin to hell and they obviously have never been there. ONE DAY,,”EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW & EVERY TOUNGE CONFESS”! — *Rodney King, Corinth, Miss.*

**Don’t worry about the Lambs:** You good folks better start worrying about the real problem. Separation of Mosque and State. Most Christians are tax payers and support most anything that is good..even schools that indoctrinate their children to science with philosophical rhetoric to fill voids are that obvious. So, focus on the real problem, and not fanciful idea that some professor with degree’s can explain the complexity of life. — *Jack Matson Jacoby*

## Removed / Resigned

**Graeme Bell**, pastor at Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Parish, **Saltcoats, Scotland**, was removed during a probe of church finances, including funds set up for pilgrimages to Lourdes, France, and missionary work in Guyana. A senior Diocese of Galloway source said Bell admitted a problem with online gambling when confronted. *Source: Herald Scotland, 6-1-15*

The Catholic Diocese of Toledo, OH, placed **Samuel Punnoor** on leave from his priestly duties due to an unspecified allegation. He came to Toledo in 2011 from the Diocese of Pathanamthitta in India.

Lucas County Children Services was notified May 6 about the allegation, a statement said. *Source: Toledo Blade, 5-22-15*

**Joshua Duggar**, 27, the oldest child in the Arkansas family that stars in TLC’s “19 Kids and Counting,” was investigated for sexual offense (forcible fondling) and sexual assault in 2002 at the family home in Springdale. Duggar was hired in 2013 but has now resigned as executive director of Family Research Council Action, the lobbying arm of the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian group based in Washington, D.C.

A TMZ story cited a police report stating that Duggar fondled the genitals and breasts of 5 girls, including 4 of his sisters, some of whom were sleeping. The report stemmed from a 2006 investigation into an anonymous tip alleging that Duggar molested multiple girls.

Charges were never filed. **Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar**, his parents, instead sent him to receive Christian-based counseling in Little Rock. *Source: TMZ/Fox News, 5-21-15*

**Matthew Makela** resigned as pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church & Schools in Midland, MI, after a story on the gay news website Queerty showed screenshots of sexual messages Makela posted to Grindr, a male social network. Makela confirmed the authenticity of the screenshots and declined comment. He’s a married father of 5 who has spoken out publicly to condemn gays. *Source: mlive.com, 5-19-15*

**Joseph Illo** was removed as chaplain at Star of the Sea Catholic Elementary School in **Richmond, CA**. Parents learned of a 2005 civil case which found that Illo inflicted emotional distress on an 11-year-old girl in Modesto in 2001 after she reported alleged sexual misconduct by a priest working under Illo.

**Patrick Driscoll**, the parish’s parochial vicar, will also no longer be involved with the school. He had given students in grades 2-6 “The Examination of Conscience and Catholic Doctrine” to prepare for confession. It asked questions such as, “Did I perform impure acts by myself (masturbation) or with another (adultery, fornication and sodomy)?” and, “Did I practice artificial birth control or was I or my spouse prematurely sterilized (tubal ligation or vasectomy)?” as well as, “Have I had or advised anyone to have an abortion?” *Source: The Examiner, 5-18-15*

**Brendan Curran**, pastor at St. Pius V Catholic Church in **Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood**, was suspended for an alleged “inappropriate

relationship” with an unmarried adult woman 5 years ago

The woman first came forward privately to the Archdiocese of Chicago and then to the Dominicans. “She deserves a sincere apology, and we also have a responsibility to respect her anonymity and her privacy,” said Fr. Charles Bouchard, Dominican spokesman. *Source: Sun-Times, 5-3-15*

**Kevin Gallagher**, 63, was removed by the Archdiocese of New York as pastor of Church of the Infant Saviour in **Pine Bush**. Gallagher is accused by Mikey Kyles, now 22, of molesting him and giving him money to feed his heroin habit. “He groomed me. He found a broken kid and when I needed the help the most he abused me.”

Kyles recounted an alleged incident with Gallagher in 2009 right after he officiated at Kyles’ twin brother’s funeral: “Don’t worry, Tyler is with you,” Gallagher said after giving him a Hennessy cognac, stroking his head and kissing him. “I hated going over there. But I loved the drug.” *Source: Times Herald-Record, 5-2-15*

## Other

**Seth Oiler**, 42, pastor at First United Methodist Church, **Newark, OH**, died by suicide at the parsonage. A letter sent to the congregation in May said he’d been placed on leave after admitting to “sexual misconduct with an adult in the congregation.”

An obituary said Oiler was a U.S. Navy veteran who “loved God, Ronald Reagan and Captain America.” *Source: Newark Advocate, 5-26-15*

**Mike Hintz**, 46, was appointed as pastor at Lifegate Church, **Papillion, NE**, despite a 2005 Iowa conviction on 3 misdemeanor counts of sexual exploitation by a counselor or therapist involving conduct with a 17-year-old girl.

“There was no force that we were aware of, however, there was a lot of emotional and mental uncertainty on the victim’s part that we feel Mr. Hintz took advantage of,” said Johnston, IA, Police Sgt. Lynn Aswegan.

Lifegate Church said in a statement: “Certainly, we are also aware that Mike has successfully completed all requirements by the State of Iowa for his one and only misconduct of more than a decade ago, and Iowa removed Mike from all [sex offender] registries.”

Hintz, a First Assembly of God youth pastor at the time, appeared with President George W. Bush in 2004 at a Des Moines campaign event. “The American people are starting to see what kind of leader President Bush is. People know where he stands.” *Source: WOWT, 5-15-15, 12-8-04*

The film “Spotlight” is set for release later this year. It details the Boston Globe’s investigation into child abuse in the **Massachusetts Catholic Church**, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2003 and led to the resignation of **Bernard Law** as archbishop of Boston. Stanley Tucci plays plaintiffs’ attorney Mitchell Garabedian. *Source: Variety, 5-14-15*

Email: [blackcollar@ffrf.org](mailto:blackcollar@ffrf.org)

## Sharing the Crank Mail

Neither sunlight nor gloom of night stays the crank mailers from the swift completion of their appointed screeds, printed as received.

**freedom:** yel yor foundation is a bruch of shit you won’t even talk to someone with about you foundation you hang up if you dont want to tell the trueth it a joke every one of you should be shot for a lie you tell. — *mike wells, liberty, kentucky*

**I saw you’re commercial:** I am appalled you’re an atheist,I love Jesus,am on Twitter,-Facebook got a few messages here they go!Jesus loves you!The Devil steals,kills,and destroy!He’s defeated. — *Kimberly Ferguson*

**ridiculous!** Why dont you just give up your citizenship and join another country, because noone really wants you here. Get a REAL job and a REAL life like everybody else. Maybe that is just how stupid atheist are that they would actually send money to you! — *Nancy Johnson*

**Freedom of religion:** We do not go to your houses and tell you how to pray or not to pray so if you are offended you can just excuse yourself from the circle for a few minutes then return. WE ARE TH MAJORITY AND THE MAJORITY RULES! — *Sammy Silly, Salt Lake City*



I found this snapshot on your website and I have hired several college kids who are RELIGIOUS and they are going across the country displaying the Honorary Board for all to see. All have ‘dead eyes’ which means they do not have a soul. If you don’t like anything about RELIGION. pack your bags and move to Cuba, Russia, or maybe you would fit in better with ISIS. [unsigned, postmarked Nashville, Tenn.]

Do you people treat Muslims the same way you treat Christians with your complaints? I guess not, because Muslims might actually show up and mame or kill you, right? Honestly, I wish great bodily harm and death would somehow befall you people. You well deserve a robust, full-throttled Muslim visitation. Good day. — *James M. Baker, Indianapolis*

**Please help!** Your going to hell unless you accept the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Go ahead, smirk and think you have nothing to worry about. — *Gohen Tohell, Liberty, Rhode Island*

**Contact:** You a trash organisation that needs to be dissolved. GOD bless America. — *GH*



# FFRF on the Road



## Orange County Freethought

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert addressed the Orange County Freethought Alliance conference May 3, in Fullerton, Calif. Her presentation “Modern-day champions of the First Amendment” featured FFRF members and plaintiffs in recent state/church lawsuits.



## International freethinking feminists

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor (center) at the “Give Peace a Chance” International Atheism Convention in Cologne, Germany, on May 23. Second from right is activist Maryam Namazi from Iran. Between her and Annie Laurie is Nada Peratovi from Croatia. On Annie Laurie’s other side is Morgan Elizabeth Romana, born in the U.S. but currently from Istanbul, Turkey, and organizer of the new Ateizm Dernegi group. Her friend (torn jeans) is also from Turkey.



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker at the Cologne, Germany conference in May with Valentin Abgottspon, a Swiss teacher who was fired because he removed a crucifix from his classroom. He sued the government and won a settlement. Dan’s shirt’s message is “Godless Happy” in German. Vanlentin’s “F” stands for Super Freidenker (freethinker).



Big smiles and cheers at the International Atheist Convention in Cologne, Germany, greeted the historic news May 23 that the Republic of Ireland had overwhelmingly defied Roman Catholic dogma to become the first nation to adopt marriage equality by popular vote. Michael Nugent, chair of Atheist Ireland (in red shirt next to Annie Laurie Gaylor) distributed rainbow-colored “YES Equality” buttons at the conference. Atheist Ireland campaigned heavily during the referendum.



## Washington, D.C.

From left at the April 30 Secular Coalition for America’s awards dinner in Washington were FFRF Staff Attorneys Patrick Elliott and Rebecca Markert, Mikhail Itkis, Tory Anderson and her husband. Rebecca and Patrick earlier spent the day lobbying for state/church separation. Honored at the dinner for their work on advocating for secular issues were Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del.; Rep. Jim Hines, D-Conn.; and Maryland Democratic state Sen. Jamie Raskin.



## Guess which side Dan was on?

Dan Barker duelled Justin Bass, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and lead pastor at the nondenominational 1042 Church in Frisco, Texas. The consortium “gets together once or twice a month to discuss cultural issues from a biblical standpoint, with people from any faith or no faith. And to have a beer or two in the process.”



Mikel Hensley photo

## Lexington, Ky.

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker (front, right) with attendees at the Kentucky Freethought Convention in Lexington on May 30 after his presentation. KFC featured “finger-lickin’ freethought” and a tribute to Isaac Asimov. Why Isaac Asimov, you ask? Mikel Hensley said he was chosen for his achievements in literature — both in science fiction and nonfiction — and for his outspoken atheism.





Register now for 38th annual convention, Oct. 9-11, Madison, Wis.

# Freethought Hall grand opening, Ron Reagan special attractions



The Freedom From Religion Foundation’s 38th annual national convention, featuring keynoter **Ron Reagan** and many powerful activists and authors, will also revolve around the grand opening of the “reborn” Freethought Hall in downtown Madison, Wis.

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 at **Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center**, 1 John Nolen Drive, on the weekend of Oct. 9-11.

The official grand opening of the five-story addition and renovation of the existing building is Friday morning, with a food reception and workshops in the afternoon.

**Reserve hotel rooms now to avoid disappointment** at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace, 9 E. Wilson St., next door to the convention center. Room rates are \$169 single or double. Phone 1-866-403-8838 (toll-free) or 1-608-255-5100. The group name is Freedom From Religion Foundation and the group code is FFRF. Book online at [ffrf.org/convention2015](http://ffrf.org/convention2015) — go to the hotel site section, which links directly to reservations. **The cutoff is Sept. 7**, or as long as rooms last.

There are additional rooms at the **Sheraton Madison Hotel**, 706 John Nolen Drive, which provides a free shuttle to and from the convention center every half hour from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sheraton rates are \$139 single/double/triple/quad. Make your reservations at 1-800-325-3535 and let them know you’re with “Freedom From Religion.”

You may wish to arrive Thursday in order to tour the “reborn” Freethought Hall Friday morning, which is six blocks from the convention center. An informal open house will be held from 9–11:30 AM. Please indicate if you plan to attend on the registration form, to help ensure FFRF orders enough refreshments.

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

**Speaker lineup**

Joining Reagan as confirmed speakers are:

**Kevin M. Kruse**, the Princeton University professor of history whose new book, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, is creating a lot of excitement. He recently appeared on NPR’s “Fresh Air” with Terry Gross, and has authored or co-edited four other books. His *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005), won several prizes.

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

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

**Anita Weier** will be honored as Freethought Heroine for introducing a historic ordinance to make “nonreligion” a protected class in Madison, Wis. Weier, former city editor for The Capital Times, served as an alderperson for two terms. Her “first of its kind” ordinance passed with no dissent on March 31.

**Steven Hewett** will be honored with

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

**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 20 or at [ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer](http://ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer)). The award includes opening a session of the conference with your secular words and a \$500 award, plaque, transportation and accommodations at the convention.

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

See the registration form for costs.

**General schedule**

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

The formal program opens at 7 p.m. Friday, ending with complimentary dessert and hot beverages. The convention resumes Saturday with an optional Non-Prayer Breakfast buffet at 8 a.m. The morning program starts at 9:30. After a two-hour lunch on your own/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.

**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

38th Annual National Convention

October 9–11, 2015

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		
Saturday Night Dinner		
____ Champagne Tilapia	____ Cranberry Chicken	____ 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

Address

City / State / ZIP

Phone / Email

Contact information for in house use only.