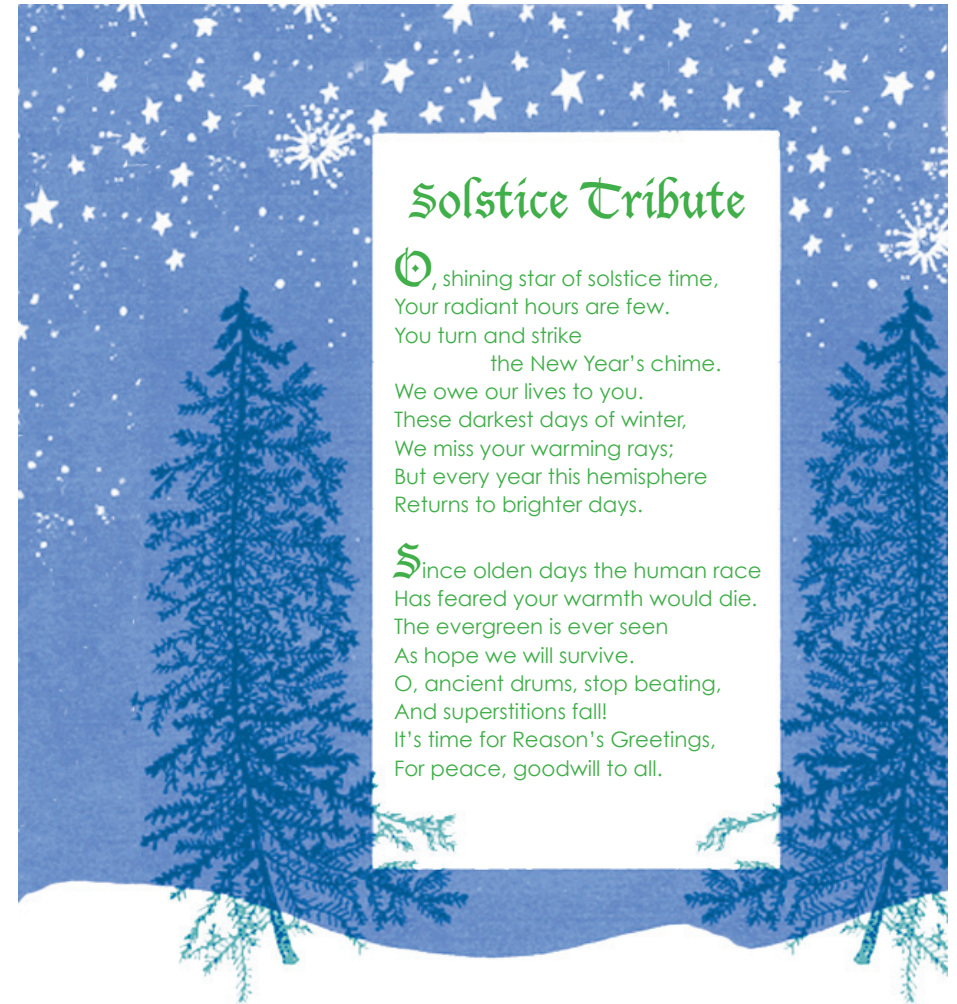


About FFRF's Natural Nativity



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"Solstice Tribute" by Dan Barker © 1987. Can be sung to "O, Little Town of Bethlehem"

Away with the manger—in with the Solstice!

*Statement by the Freedom From Religion Foundation
Upon placement of its “Winter Solstice Nativity”
Wisconsin State Capitol, Madison, Wis., Dec. 14, 2011*

For a fact, the Christians stole Christmas. We don't mind sharing the season with them, but we don't like their pretense that it is the birthday of Jesus. It is the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun — *Dies Natalis Invicti Solis*.

Christmas is a relic of sun worship.

For all of our major festivals, there were corresponding pagan festivals tied to natural events. We've been celebrating the Winter Solstice, this natural holiday, long before Christians crashed the party. For millennia, our ancestors in the Northern Hemisphere have greeted this seasonal event with festivals of light, gift exchanges and seasonal gatherings.

The Winter Solstice is the reason for the season. The Winter Solstice, Dec. 22 this year, heralds the symbolic rebirth of the Sun, the lengthening of days and the natural New Year.

We nonbelievers are quite willing to celebrate the fun parts of anybody's holidays. We just want to be spared the schmaltz, the superstition — and the state/church entanglements.

The customs of this time of year endure because they are pleasant customs. It's fun to hear from distant family and friends, to gather, to feast, to sing. Gifts, as freethinker Robert Ingersoll once remarked, are evidences of friendship, of remembrance, of love.

The evergreens displayed now as in centuries past flourish when all else seems dead, and are symbols, as is the returning sun, of enduring life.

In celebrating the Winter Solstice, we celebrate reality.

A Natural Nativity Scene

We are unveiling a tableau that celebrates the human family, reason and the Winter Solstice.

- Our wisepeople depict the atheists and scientific giants **Charles Darwin** and **Albert Einstein** who have enlarged human understanding of the natural world far more than the bible or any “holy books.” They were both nonbelievers as was progressive reformer Emma Goldman, representing wise women everywhere. Irreverent **Mark Twain** is thrown in for good measure.
- Although **Venus**, like Mary, was a mythical fertility figure, this image, after which a planet was named, represents our solar system.
- **Thomas Jefferson**, a Founding *Father*, was a passionate advocate of separation between religion and government, and would have disavowed Christian devotional scenes on church property.
- Our “angels” are also natural — the **Statue of Liberty** symbolizes freedom and the **astronaut** represents the human achievements of science unfettered by religious dogma.
- Our **baby** was chosen partly for simple egalitarianism, and because it's high time we adore girl children as much as boy children, and to acknowledge that humankind was birthed in Africa.

FFRF would vastly prefer that government buildings and seats of government be free from religion — and irreligion. It is divisive. The rotunda is getting very cluttered. But if a devotional nativity display is allowed, then there must be “room at the inn” for all points of view, including irreverency and freethought.